

§ 209.303

disciplinary actions taken against such employees by railroads.

§ 209.303 Coverage.

This subpart applies to the following individuals:

(a) Railroad employees who are assigned to perform service subject to the Hours of Service Act (45 U.S.C. 61–64b) during a duty tour, whether or not the person has performed or is currently performing such service, and any person who performs such service.

(b) Railroad employees or agents who:

(1) Inspect, install, repair, or maintain track and roadbed;

(2) Inspect, repair or maintain, locomotives, passenger cars, and freight cars;

(3) Conduct training and testing of employees when the training or testing is required by the FRA's safety regulations; or

(c) Railroad managers, supervisors, or agents when they:

(1) Perform the safety-sensitive functions listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section;

(2) Supervise and otherwise direct the performance of the safety-sensitive functions listed in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section; or

(3) Are in a position to direct the commission of violations of any of the requirements of parts 213 through 236 of this title.

§ 209.305 Notice of proposed disqualification.

(a) FRA, through the Chief Counsel, begins a disqualification proceeding by serving a notice of proposed disqualification on the respondent charging him or her with having violated one or more rules, regulations, orders, or standards promulgated by FRA, which render the respondent unfit to perform safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303.

(b) The notice of proposed disqualification issued under this section shall contain:

(1) A statement of the rule(s), regulation(s), order(s), or standard(s) that the respondent is alleged to have violated;

(2) A statement of the factual allegations that form the basis of the initial determination that the respondent is

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not fit to perform safety-sensitive functions;

(3) A statement of the effective date, duration, and other conditions, if any, of the disqualification order;

(4) A statement of the respondent's right to answer the charges in writing and furnish affidavits and any other documentary evidence in support of the answer;

(5) A statement of the respondent's right to make an informal response to the Chief Counsel;

(6) A statement of the respondent's right to request a hearing and the procedures for requesting a hearing;

(7) A statement of the respondent's right to counsel or other designated representative; and

(8) Notice of the consequences of the respondent's failure to take any of the actions described in § 209.307(a).

(c) The Chief Counsel shall enclose with the notice of proposed disqualification a copy of the material that is relied on in support of the charges. Nothing in this section precludes the Chief Counsel from presenting at a subsequent hearing under § 209.321 any evidence of the charges set forth in the notice that the Chief Counsel acquires after service thereof on the respondent. The Chief Counsel, however, shall serve a copy of any such evidence on the respondent at or before the prehearing conference required under § 209.319. Failure to furnish such evidence to respondent at or before the prehearing conference bars its introduction at the hearing.

(d) The Chief Counsel shall provide a copy of the notice of proposed disqualification to the railroad that employs the respondent.

§ 209.307 Reply.

(a) Within 30 days after receipt of the notice of proposed disqualification issued under § 209.305, the respondent shall reply in writing to the charges. The respondent may furnish affidavits and any other documentary evidence in support of the reply. Further, the respondent may elect to—

(1) Stipulate to the charges and consent to the imposition of the disqualification order under the conditions set forth in the notice;

(2) Make an informal response as provided in § 209.309; or

(3) Request a hearing as provided in § 209.311.

(b) The Chief Counsel may extend the reply period for good cause shown, provided the request for extension is served before the expiration of the period provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

(c) Failure of the respondent to reply to the notice of proposed disqualification within the period provided in paragraph (a) of this section or an extension thereto provided under paragraph (b) of this section constitutes a waiver of the respondent's right to appear and contest the charges or the proposed disqualification. Respondent's failure to reply authorizes the Chief Counsel, without further notice to the respondent, to find the respondent unfit for the performance of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 and to order the respondent disqualified from performing them for the period and under the other conditions described in the notice of proposed disqualification. The Chief Counsel shall serve respondent with the disqualification order and provide a copy of the order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed.

§ 209.309 Informal response.

(a) If the respondent elects to make an informal response to a notice of proposed disqualification, he or she shall submit to the Chief Counsel such written explanations, information, or other materials as respondent may desire in answer to the charges or in mitigation of the proposed disqualification.

(b) The respondent may include in an informal written response a request for a conference. Upon receipt of such a request, the Chief Counsel shall arrange for a conference at a time and place designated by the Chief Counsel.

(c) Written explanations, information, or materials submitted by the respondent and relevant information presented during any conference held under this section shall be considered by the Chief Counsel in reviewing the notice of proposed disqualification, including the question of the respondent's fitness and the conditions of any disqualification that may be imposed.

(d) After consideration of an informal response, including any relevant information presented at a conference, the Chief Counsel shall take one of the following actions:

(1) Dismiss all the charges and terminate the notice of proposed disqualification;

(2) Dismiss some of the charges and mitigate the proposed disqualification;

(3) Mitigate the proposed disqualification; or

(4) Sustain the charges and proposed disqualification.

(e) Should the Chief Counsel sustain, in whole or in part, the charges and proposed disqualification and reach settlement with the respondent, the Chief Counsel shall issue an appropriate disqualification order reflecting the settlement and shall provide a copy of that order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed. The duration of the disqualification period may be less than, but shall be no greater than, the period set forth in the notice. Any settlement reached shall be evidenced by a written agreement, which shall include declarations from the respondent stipulating to the charges contained in the disqualification order, consenting to the imposition of the disqualification under the conditions set forth in the disqualification order, and waiving his or her right to a hearing.

(f) If settlement of the charges against the respondent is not achieved, the Chief Counsel shall terminate settlement discussions no later than 30 days from service of the informal response upon the Chief Counsel by serving respondent written notice of termination of settlement negotiations.

(g) By electing to make an informal response to a notice of proposed disqualification, the respondent does not waive the right to a hearing. However, the respondent must submit the hearing request required by § 209.311(a) within 10 days after receipt of the notice of termination of settlement negotiations from the Chief Counsel. Failure to submit such a request constitutes a waiver of the respondent's right to appear and contest the charges or the proposed disqualification.

(h) The Chief Counsel may extend the period for requesting a hearing for good cause shown, provided the request for