

§ 209.311

extension is served before the expiration of the period provided in paragraph (g) of this section.

§ 209.311 Request for hearing.

(a) If the respondent elects to request a hearing, he or she must submit a written request within the time periods specified in § 209.307(a) or § 209.309(g) to the Chief Counsel referring to the case number that appears on the notice of proposed disqualification. The request must contain the following:

(1) The name, address, and telephone number of the respondent and of the respondent's designated representative, if any;

(2) A specific response admitting, denying, or explaining each allegation of the notice of disqualification order.

(3) A description of the claims and defenses to be raised by the respondent at the hearing; and

(4) The signature of the respondent or the representative, if any.

(b) Upon receipt of a request for a hearing complying with the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, the Chief Counsel shall arrange for the appointment of a presiding officer and transmit the disqualification file to the presiding officer, who shall schedule the hearing for the earliest practicable date within the time period set by § 209.321(a) of this subpart.

(c) Upon assignment of a presiding officer, further matters in the proceeding generally are conducted by and through the presiding officer, except that the Chief Counsel and respondent may settle or voluntarily dismiss the case without order of the presiding officer. The Chief Counsel shall promptly notify the presiding officer of any settlement or dismissal of the case.

§ 209.313 Discovery.

(a) Disqualification proceedings shall be conducted as expeditiously as possible with due regard to the rights of the parties. Discovery is designed to enable a party to obtain relevant information needed for preparation of the party's case. These regulations are intended to provide a simple, timely, and relatively economical system for discovery. They shall be interpreted and applied so as to avoid delay and facilitate adjudication of the case.

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(b) Discovery may be obtained by requests for admission under § 209.6, requests for production of documentary or other tangible evidence under § 209.7, and depositions under § 209.8.

(c) A party may initiate the methods of discovery permitted under paragraph (b) of this section at any time after respondent requests a hearing under § 209.311.

(d) Discovery shall be completed within 90 days after receipt of respondent's request for a hearing under § 209.311. Upon motion for good cause shown, the presiding officer may extend this time period for an additional 30 days. The presiding officer may grant an additional 30 day extension only when the party requesting the extension shows by clear and convincing evidence that the party was unable to complete discovery within the prescribed time period through no fault or lack of due diligence of such party, and that denial of the request would result in irreparable prejudice.

(e) If a party fails to comply with a discovery order or an order to compel, the presiding officer may:

(1) Strike any appropriate part of the pleadings or other submissions of the party failing to comply with such order;

(2) Prohibit the party failing to comply with such order from introducing evidence relating to the information sought;

(3) Draw an inference in favor of the requesting party with regard to the information sought; and

(4) Permit the requesting party to introduce secondary evidence concerning the information sought.

§ 209.315 Subpoenas.

Once a notice of proposed disqualification has been issued in a particular matter, only the presiding officer may issue, deny, quash, or modify subpoenas under this subpart in accordance with § 209.7.

§ 209.317 Official record.

The notice of proposed disqualification, respondent's reply, exhibits, and verbatim record of testimony, if a hearing is held, and all pleadings, stipulations, and admissions filed and rulings and orders entered in the course of

the proceeding shall constitute the exclusive and official record.

§ 209.319 Prehearing conference.

(a) The parties shall confer with the presiding officer, either in person or by telephone, for a conference at least 10 days before the hearing to consider:

- (1) Formulation and simplification of the issues;
- (2) Stipulations, admissions of fact, and admissions of the contents and authenticity of documents;
- (3) Advance rulings from the presiding officer on the admissibility of evidence;
- (4) Identification of witnesses, including the scope of their testimony, and of hearing exhibits;
- (5) Possibility of settlement; and
- (6) Such other matters as the presiding officer deems necessary to expedite the disposition of the proceeding.

(b) The record shall show the matters disposed of by order and by agreement in such a prehearing conference. The subsequent course of the hearing shall be controlled by such action.

(c) The prehearing conference shall be held within 150 days after receipt of respondent's request for a hearing under § 209.311.

§ 209.321 Hearing.

(a) Upon receipt of a hearing request complying with § 209.311, an administrative hearing for review of a notice of proposed disqualification shall be conducted by a presiding officer, who can be any person authorized by the FRA Administrator, including an administrative law judge. The hearing shall begin within 180 days from receipt of respondent's hearing request. Notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be given to the parties at least 20 days before the hearing. Testimony by witnesses shall be given under oath and the hearing shall be recorded verbatim. The hearing shall be open to the public, unless the presiding official determines that it would be in the best interests of the respondent, a witness, or other affected persons, to close all or any part of it. If the presiding official makes such a determination, an appropriate order, which sets forth the reasons therefor, shall be entered.

(b) The presiding officer may:

- (1) Administer oaths and affirmations;
- (2) Issue subpoenas as provided by § 209.7;
- (3) Adopt procedures for the submission of evidence in written form;
- (4) Take or cause depositions to be taken as provided in § 209.8;
- (5) Rule on offers of proof and receive relevant evidence;
- (6) Examine witnesses at the hearing;
- (7) Convene, recess, reconvene, adjourn, and otherwise regulate the course of the hearing;
- (8) Hold conferences for settlement, simplification of the issues, or any other proper purpose; and
- (9) Take any other action authorized by or consistent with the provisions of this subpart and permitted by law that may expedite the hearing or aid in the disposition of an issue raised therein.

(c) FRA has the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, as to the facts alleged in the notice of proposed disqualification, the reasonableness of the conditions of the qualification proposed, and, except as provided in § 209.329(a), the respondent's lack of fitness to perform safety-sensitive functions. The Chief Counsel may offer relevant evidence, including testimony, in support of the allegations contained in the notice of proposed disqualification and conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full disclosure of the material facts.

(d) The respondent may appear and be heard on respondent's own behalf or through respondent's designated representative. The respondent may offer relevant evidence, including testimony, in defense of the allegations or in mitigation of the proposed disqualification and conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full disclosure of the material facts. Respondent has the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, as to any affirmative defense, including that respondent's actions were in obedience to the direct order of a railroad supervisor or higher level official.

(e) The record shall be closed at the conclusion of the hearing, unless the parties request the opportunity to submit proposed findings and conclusions. When the presiding officer allows the parties to submit proposed findings and