

*Permit* means any license, permit, certificate, or other approval issued by NOAA under an applicable statute.

*Permit holder* means the holder of a permit or any agent or employee of the holder, and includes the owner and operator of a vessel for which the permit was issued.

*Sanction* means suspension, revocation, or modification of a permit (see § 904.320).

*Vessel owner* means the owner of any vessel that is liable *in rem* for any civil penalty under this part, or whose permit may be subject to sanction as a result of civil penalty proceedings under this part.

*Written warning* means a notice in writing to a person that a violation of a minor or technical nature has been documented against the person or against the vessel which is owned or operated by the person.

### § 904.3 Filing and service of documents.

(a) Whenever this part requires service of a document or other paper, such service may effectively be made on the agent for service of process or on the attorney for the person to be served or other representative. Refusal by the person to be served, or his or her agent or attorney, of service of a document or other paper will be considered effective service of the document or other paper as of the date of such refusal. Service will be considered effective when the document is mailed to an addressee's last known address.

(b) Any documents or pleadings filed or served must be signed:

(1) By the person or persons filing the same,

(2) By an officer thereof if a corporation,

(3) By an officer or authorized employee if a government instrumentality, or

(4) By an attorney or other person having authority to sign.

(c) A pleading or document will be considered served and/or filed as of the date of the postmark (or as otherwise shown for government-franked mail); or (if not mailed) as of the date actually delivered in person; or as shown by electronic mail transmission.

(d) Time periods begin to run on the day following the date of the document, paper, or event that begins the time period. Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays will be included in computing such time, except that when such time expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, such period will be extended to include the next business day. This method of computing time periods also applies to any act, such as paying a civil penalty, required by this part to take place within a specified period of time. When the period of time prescribed or allowed is less than 11 days, intermediate Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays will be excluded in the computation.

(e) If an oral or written application is made to NOAA within 10 days after the expiration of a time period established in this part for the required filing of documents or other papers, NOAA may permit a late filing if NOAA finds reasonable grounds for an inability or failure to file within the time period. All extensions will be in writing. Except as specifically provided in this part, or by order of an Administrative Law Judge (Judge) under this part, no requests for an extension of time may be granted.

## Subpart B—Civil Penalties

### § 904.100 General.

This subpart sets forth the procedures governing NOAA administrative proceedings for the assessment of civil penalties under the statutes cited in § 904.1(c).

### § 904.101 Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA).

(a) A NOVA will be issued by NOAA and served personally or by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, upon the person alleged to be subject to a civil penalty (the respondent). A copy of the NOVA will similarly be served upon the permit holder or the vessel owner, if the holder or owner is not the respondent. The NOVA will contain:

(1) A concise statement of the facts believed to show a violation;

(2) A specific reference to the provisions of the Act, regulation, license, permit, agreement, or order allegedly violated;

(3) The findings and conclusions upon which NOAA bases the assessment; and

(4) The amount of the civil penalty assessed. The NOVA will also advise of the respondent's rights upon receipt of the NOVA, and will be accompanied by a copy of the regulations in this part governing the proceedings.

(b) In assessing a civil penalty, NOAA will take into account information available to the Agency concerning any factor to be considered under the applicable statute, and any other information that justice or the purposes of the statute require.

(c) The NOVA may also contain a proposal for compromise or settlement of the case. NOAA may also attach documents that illuminate the facts believed to show a violation.

**§ 904.102 Procedures upon receipt of a NOVA.**

(a) The respondent has 30 days from receipt of the NOVA in which to respond. During this time the respondent may:

(1) Accept the penalty or compromise penalty, if any, by taking the actions specified in the NOVA;

(2) Seek to have the NOVA amended, modified, or rescinded under paragraph (b) of this section;

(3) Request a hearing under paragraph (e) of this section;

(4) Request an extension of time to respond under paragraph (c) of this section; or

(5) Take no action, in which case the NOVA becomes final in accordance with § 904.104. The procedures set forth in paragraphs (a) (2), (3), (4), and (5) of this section may also be exercised by the permit holder or vessel owner.

(b) The respondent, the permit holder, or the vessel owner may seek amendment or modification of the NOVA to conform to the facts or law as that person sees them by notifying Agency counsel at the telephone number or address specified in the NOVA. If amendment or modification is sought, Agency counsel will either amend the NOVA or decline to amend it, and so notify the respondent, permit holder, or vessel owner, as appropriate.

(c) The respondent, permit holder, or vessel owner may, within the 30-day period specified in paragraph (a) of this

section, request an extension of time to respond. Agency counsel may grant an extension of up to 30 days unless he or she determines that the requester could, exercising reasonable diligence, respond within the 30-day period. If Agency counsel does not respond to the request within 48 hours of its receipt, the request is granted automatically for the extension requested, up to a maximum of 30 days. A telephonic response to the request within the 48-hour period is considered an effective response, and will be followed by written confirmation.

(d) Agency counsel may, for good cause, grant an additional extension beyond the 30-day period specified in paragraph (c) of this section.

(e) If the respondent, the permit holder, or the vessel owner wishes a hearing, the request must be dated and in writing, and must be served either in person or mailed to the address specified in the NOVA. The requester must either attach a copy of the NOVA or refer to the relevant NOAA case number. Agency counsel will promptly forward the request for hearing to the Office of Administrative Law Judges.

(f) Any denial, in whole or in part, of any request under this section that is based upon untimeliness will be in writing.

(g) Agency counsel may, in his or her discretion, treat any communication from a respondent, a permit holder, or vessel owner as a request for a hearing under paragraph (e) of this section.

**§ 904.103 Hearing and administrative review.**

(a) Any hearing request under § 904.102(e) is governed by the hearing and review procedures set forth in subpart C.

(b) In any hearing held in response to a request under § 904.102(e), the Administrative Law Judge (Judge) will render an initial decision. Any party to the hearing may seek the Administrator's review of the Judge's initial decision, subject to the provisions of subpart C.

**§ 904.104 Final administrative decision.**

(a) If no request for hearing is timely filed as provided in § 904.102(e), the NOVA becomes effective as the final