

§ 2530.204-1

29 CFR Ch. XXV (7-1-06 Edition)

covers employees in a maritime industry.]

For purposes of this paragraph (c)(2)(iii), contributions shall not include amounts contributed: After December 31, 1978 by or on behalf of an employer where no contributions were made by or on behalf of that employer before that date, if the primary purpose of such contribution is to allow for the suspension of plan benefits in a geographic area not otherwise covered by the plan; or with respect to isolated projects performed in states where plan participants were not otherwise employed.

(3) *Employment in a maritime industry.* For plans covering employees employed in a maritime industry, as defined in § 2530.200b-6, the standard of “five or more days of service, as defined in § 2530.200b-7(a)(1)” shall be used in lieu of the standard “40 or more hours of service”, for purposes of determining whether an employee is employed in section 203(a)(3)(B) service.

(d) *Suspendable amount—(1) Life annuity.* In the case of benefits payable periodically on a monthly basis for as long as a life (or lives) continues, such as a straight life annuity or a qualified joint and survivor annuity, a plan may provide that an amount not greater than the portion of a monthly benefit payment derived from employer contributions may be withheld permanently for a calendar month, or for a four or five week payroll period ending in a calendar month, in which the employee is employed in section 203(a)(3)(B) service.

(2) *Other benefit forms.* In the case of benefits payable in a form other than the form described in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, a plan may provide for the permanent withholding of an amount of the employer-derived portion of benefit payments for a calendar month, or for a four or five week payroll period ending in a calendar month, in which the employee is employed in section 203(a)(3)(B) service, not exceeding the lesser of—

(i) The amount of benefits which would have been payable to the employee if he had been receiving monthly benefits under the plan since actual retirement based on a single life annu-

ity commencing at actual retirement age; or

(ii) The actual amount paid or scheduled to be paid to the employee for such month. Payments which are scheduled to be paid less frequently than monthly may be converted to monthly payments for purposes of this paragraph (d)(2)(ii).

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1210-0048)

[46 FR 8903, Jan. 27, 1981, as amended at 46 FR 59245, Dec. 4, 1981; 46 FR 60572, Dec. 11, 1981; 49 FR 18295, Apr. 30, 1984]

§ 2530.204-1 Year of participation for benefit accrual.

(a) *General.* Section 204(b)(1) of the Act and section 411(b)(1) of the Code contain certain requirements relating to benefit accrual under a defined benefit pension plan. Some of these requirements are based on the number of years of participation included in an employee’s period of service. Paragraph (b) of this section relates to service which must be taken into account in determining an employee’s period of service for purposes of benefit accrual. Section 2530.204-2 sets forth rules relating to the computation periods to be used in measuring years of participation for benefit accrual (“accrual computation periods”).

(b) *Service which may be disregarded for purposes of benefit accrual.* (1) In calculating an employee’s period of service for purposes of benefit accrual under a defined benefit pension plan, section 204(b)(3) of the Act and section 411(b)(3) of the Code permit the following service to be disregarded: service before an employee first becomes a participant in the plan; service which is not required to be taken into account under section 202(b) of the Act and section 410(b)(5) of the Code (relating to one-year breaks in service for purposes of eligibility to participate); and service which is not required to be taken into account under section 204(b)(3)(C) of the Act and section 411(b)(3)(C) of the Code (relating to 12-consecutive-month periods during which an employee’s service is less than 1,000 hours). In addition, in calculating an employee’s period of service for purposes of benefit accrual, a defined benefit plan shall not be required

to take into account service before the conclusion of a series of consecutive 1-year breaks in service occurs which permits a plan to disregard prior service under section 203(b)(3)(D) of the Act and section 411(a)(6)(D) of the Code.

(2) *Example.* The following example illustrates paragraph (b)(1) of this section. A plan has a calendar year vesting and accrual computation period and, under §2530.202-2 (a) and (b)(1), uses eligibility computation periods beginning on an employee's employment commencement date and anniversaries thereof. The plan provides that an employee who has at least 10 years of service has a vested right to 100 percent of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions. The plan provides that an employee who is credited with at least 1,000 hours of service in a calendar year accrual computation period is credited with at least partial year of participation for purposes of benefit accrual. An employee whose birthday is October 16, 1956, begins employment with an employer maintaining the plan on January 1, 1977. Under §2530.202-2(a)(1), January 1, 1977 is the employee's employment commencement date and the calendar year 1977 is the employee's initial eligibility computation period. The employee completes at least 1,000 hours of service in each of the calendar years from 1977 through 1981. On January 1, 1982 the employee is admitted to participation in the plan, having met the plan's age requirement (25 years) and service requirement (one year of service) for eligibility to participate. In 1982, the employee is credited with the number of hours of service required for a full year of participation (i.e., more than 1,000 hours of service). Under §2530.202-2(c), for purposes of applying section 202(b)(4) of the Act and section 410(a)(5)(D) of the Code (relating to years of service completed before a break in service for purposes of eligibility to participate), eligibility computation periods beginning on the employee's employment commencement date and anniversaries thereof are used under the plan to measure service prior to a break in service (in addition, under §2530.200b-4(a)(2), the same eligibility computation periods are used in measuring one-year breaks in service

for purposes of eligibility to participate). Thus, as of January 1, 1983, the employee is credited with six years of service for purposes of eligibility to participate and is credited with one year of participation. In accordance with section 203(b)(1)(A) of the Act and section 411(a)(4)(A) of the Code, the plan provides that years of service completed before age 22 are disregarded for purposes of vesting. As of January 1, 1983, therefore, the employee is credited with four years of service for purposes of vesting. In 1983 the employee terminates employment with the employer, incurring one-year breaks in service in each of the calendar years from 1983 through 1986. As of December 31, 1986, the employee's consecutive one-year breaks in service equal the employee's four years of service for vesting before such breaks. Under section 203(b)(3)(D) of the Act and section 410(a)(5)(D) of the Code and the terms of the plan, the four years of service for vesting completed by the employee before his four consecutive one-year breaks in service are not taken into account for purposes of vesting. Under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, therefore, in calculating the employee's period of service for purposes of benefit accrual, the plan may disregard the year of participation completed by the employee before his four consecutive one-year breaks in service for vesting, because the four consecutive one-year breaks in service equal the four years of service credited to the employee for vesting. The employee is re-employed by the employer on January 1, 1987 completing an hour of service on that date. Under §2530.200b-4(b)(1), therefore, January 1, 1987 is the employee's reemployment commencement date. In 1987, the employee completes the number of hours of service required for a full year of participation (i.e., more than 1,000 hours of service). For 1987, therefore, the employee is credited with a year of service for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting, and with a year of participation. As of December 31, 1987, the employee is credited with one year of service for purposes of vesting, since service before the employee's four consecutive one-year breaks in service—including the year of service completed in 1982—

is not taken into account. Because under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the year of participation credited to the employee for 1982 is not required to be taken into account for purposes of benefit accrual, the employee is credited with one year of participation as of December 31, 1987.

§ 2530.204-2 Accrual computation period.

(a) *Designation of accrual computation periods.* A plan may designate any 12-consecutive-month period as the accrual computation period except that the period so designated must apply equally to all participants. This requirement may be satisfied even though the actual time periods are not the same for all participants. For example, the accrual computation period may be designated as the vesting computation period, the plan year, or the 12-consecutive-month period beginning on either of two semi-annual dates designated for entry to participation under a plan.

(b) *Participation prior to effective date.* For purposes of applying the accrual rules of section 204(b)(1)(D) of the Act and section 411(b)(1)(D) of the Code (relating to accrual requirements for defined benefit plans for periods prior to the effective date of those sections), all service from the date of participation in the plan as determined in accordance with applicable plan provisions, shall be taken into account in determining an employee's period of service. When the plan documents do not provide a definite means for determining the date of commencement of participation, the date of commencement of employment covered under the plan during the period that the employer maintained the plan shall be presumed to be the date of commencement of participation in the plan. The plan may rebut this presumption by demonstrating from circumstances surrounding the operation of the plan, such as the date of commencement of mandatory employee contributions, that participation actually began on a later date.

(c) *Partial year of participation.* (1) Under section 204(b)(3)(C) of the Act and section 411(b)(3)(C) of the Code, in calculating an employee's period of

service for purposes of benefit accrual, a plan is not required to take into account a 12-consecutive-month period during which the employee's service is less than 1,000 hours of service. In measuring an employee's service for purposes of section 204(b)(3)(C) of the Act and section 411(b)(3)(C) of the Code, a plan shall use the accrual computation period designated under paragraph (a) of this section. Under section 204(b)(3)(B) of the Act and section 411(b)(3)(B) of the Code, in the case of an employee whose service is not less than 1,000 hours of service during an accrual computation period, the calculation of such employee's period of service will not be treated as made on a reasonable and consistent basis unless service during such computation period is taken into account. To the extent that the employee's service during the accrual computation period is less than the service required under the plan for a full year of participation, the employee must be credited with a partial year of participation equivalent to no less than a ratable portion of a full year of participation.

(2) For purposes of calculating the portion of a full year of participation to be credited to an employee whose service during a computation period is not less than 1,000 hours of service but is less than service required for a full year of participation in the plan, the plan may credit the employee with a greater portion of a full year of participation than a ratable portion, or may credit an employee with a full year of participation even though the employee's service is less than the service required for a full year of participation, provided that such crediting is reasonable and is consistent for all employees within the same job classifications, reasonably established.

(3) In the case of an employee who commences participation in a plan (or recommences participation in the plan upon the employee's return after one or more 1-year breaks in service) on a date other than the first day of an applicable accrual computation period, all hours of service required to be credited to the employee during the entire accrual computation period, including