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death made by an agency or department of the United States or of a state; or

(4) If death occurred outside the United States, an official report of death by a United States Consul or other authorized employee of the State Department, or a certified copy of the public record of death in a foreign country.

(b) *Other evidence of death.* If the preferred evidence of death cannot be obtained, the individual who must furnish evidence of death will be asked to explain the reason therefor and to submit other convincing evidence, such as sworn statements of at least two persons who have personal knowledge of the death. These persons must be able to swear to the date, time, place, and cause of death.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 3220-0077)

§ 219.24 Evidence of presumed death.

When a person cannot be proven dead but evidence of death is needed, the Board may presume he or she died at a certain time if the Board receives the following evidence:

(a) A certified copy of, or extract from, an official report or finding by an agency or department of the United States that a missing person is presumed to be dead as stated in Federal law (5 U.S.C. 5565). Unless other evidence is submitted showing an actual date of death, the Board will use the date on which the person was reported missing as the date of death.

(b) Signed statements by those in a position to know that facts and other records which show that the person has been absent from his or her residence for no apparent reason and has not been heard from for at least 7 years. If there is no evidence available that that person continued in life after the date of disappearance, the Board will use as the date of death the date the person disappeared.

(c) When a person has been missing for less than 7 years but may be presumed dead due to drowning or common disaster (fire, accident, etc.), signed statements from the applicant and individuals who know the circumstances surrounding the occurrence leading to the person's disappear-

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ance. The best evidence is statements from individuals who witnessed the occurrence or saw the missing person at the scene of the occurrence shortly before it happened.

Subpart C—Evidence of Relationship

§ 219.30 When evidence of marriage is required.

(a) *When an application is filed for benefits.* Documentary evidence of marriage is required when an individual files for a monthly annuity, lump-sum death payment, residual lump sum, or Medicare coverage, as the wife, husband, widow, widower, divorced spouse or surviving divorced spouse, or step-parent of the employee. A claimant may also be required to submit evidence of another person's marriage when that person's marriage is necessary to determine the applicant's entitlement to benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act.

(b) *State law.* In deciding whether the marriage to the employee is valid or not, in a case where the employee is living, the Board will follow the law of the state where the employee had a permanent home when the applicant filed an application; in a case where the employee is dead, the Board will follow the law of the state where the employee had a permanent home when he or she died.

(c) *Types of evidence.* What evidence will be required depends on whether the employee's marriage was a ceremonial marriage, a common-law marriage, or a marriage that can be deemed to be valid.

§ 219.31 Evidence of a valid ceremonial marriage.

(a) *Preferred evidence.* Preferred evidence of a ceremonial marriage is—

(1) A copy of the public record of the marriage, certified by the custodian of the record or by a Board employee;

(2) A copy of a church record of the marriage certified by the custodian of the record or by a Board employee; or

(3) The original certificate of marriage.

(b) *Other evidence of a ceremonial marriage.* If preferred evidence of a ceremonial marriage cannot be obtained, the

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applicant must state the reason therefor in writing and submit either—

(1) A sworn statement of the clergyman or official who performed the marriage ceremony; or

(2) Other convincing evidence, such as the sworn statements of at least two persons who have direct knowledge of the marriage, preferably eyewitnesses to the marriage ceremony.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 3220-0140)

§ 219.32 Evidence of a common-law marriage.

(a) *Preferred evidence.* Evidence of a common-law marriage must give the reasons why the informant believes that a marriage exists. If the information described in this paragraph is not furnished on a form provided by the Board, it must be submitted in the form of a sworn statement. Preferred evidence of a common-law marriage is one of the following:

(1) If both the husband and wife are alive, each shall sign a statement and get signed statements from one blood relative of each. The statement of another individual may be submitted for each statement the husband or wife is unable to get from a relative. Each signed statement should show—

(i) That the husband and wife believed they were married;

(ii) The basis for this belief; and

(iii) That the husband and wife have presented themselves to the public as husband and wife.

(2) If either the husband or wife is dead, the surviving spouse shall furnish a signed statement and signed statements from two blood relatives of the dead spouse. The surviving spouse's statement should show that he or she and the dead spouse believed themselves to be married, the basis for this belief, and that they presented themselves to the public as husband and wife. The statements from relatives of the dead spouse should support the surviving spouse's statement.

(3) If both husband and wife are dead, the applicant shall get a signed statement from one blood relative of each dead spouse. Each statement should show that the husband and wife believed themselves to be married, the basis for this belief, and that they pre-

sented themselves to the public as husband and wife.

(4) Statements by relatives and other individuals described in paragraphs (a)(1), (2) and (3) of this section are not required when—

(i) The husband and wife entered into a ceremonial marriage which was void because of a legal impediment to the marriage;

(ii) After the impediment was removed, the husband and wife continued to live together as man and wife until the employee filed an application or one of them died; and

(iii) A valid common-law marriage was established, under the law of the State in which they lived, by their continuing to live together as man and wife.

(b) *Other evidence of common-law marriage.* When preferred evidence of a common-law marriage cannot be obtained, the claimant will be asked to explain the reason therefor and to furnish other convincing evidence of the marriage.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 3220-0021)

§ 219.33 Evidence of a deemed valid marriage.

(a) *Preferred evidence.* Preferred evidence of a deemed valid marriage is—

(1) Evidence of a ceremonial marriage as described in § 219.31;

(2) If both the employee and spouse are alive, the spouse's signed statement that he or she went through the ceremony in good faith and his or her reasons for believing the marriage was valid; or if the employee is dead, the widow or widower's signed statement to that effect;

(3) If required to remove a reasonable doubt, the signed statements of other persons who have information about what the parties knew about any previous marriage or other facts showing whether the parties went through the marriage ceremony in good faith; and

(4) Evidence that the parties were living in the same household when the employee applied for payments; or, if the employee is dead, when he or she died. See § 219.51 for the evidence required to demonstrate living in the same household.