

registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, a reporting dealer who makes primary markets in securities of the United States Government or of an agency of the United States Government and reports daily to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York its positions with respect to such securities and borrowings thereon, or a bank supervised by the United States or a State, shall not be deemed to be a fiduciary, within the meaning of section 4975(e)(3), with respect to an employee benefit plan solely because such person executes transactions for the purchase or sale of securities on behalf of such plan in the ordinary course of its business as a broker, dealer, or bank, pursuant to instructions of a fiduciary with respect to such plan, if:

(i) Neither the fiduciary nor any affiliate of such fiduciary is such broker, dealer, or bank; and

(ii) The instructions specify (A) the security to be purchased or sold, (B) a price range within which such security is to be purchased or sold, or, if such security is issued by an open-end investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (15 U.S.C. 80a-1, *et seq.*), a price which is determined in accordance with Rule 22c-1 under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (17 CFR 270.22c-1), (C) a time span during which such security may be purchased or sold (not to exceed five business days), and (D) the minimum or maximum quantity of such security which may be purchased or sold within such price range, or, in the case of security issued by an open-end investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, the minimum or maximum quantity of such security which may be purchased or sold, or the value of such security in dollar amount which may be purchased or sold, at the price referred to in paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(B) of this section.

(2) A person who is a broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank which is a fiduciary with respect to an employee benefit plan solely by reason of the possession or exercise of discretionary authority or discretionary control in the management of the plan or the management or disposition of plan assets in connection with the execution of a transaction or transactions for the

purchase or sale of securities on behalf of such plan which fails to comply with the provisions of paragraph (d)(1) of this section, shall not be deemed to be a fiduciary regarding any assets of the plan with respect to which such broker-dealer, reporting dealer or bank does not have any discretionary authority, discretionary control or discretionary responsibility, does not exercise any authority or control, does not render investment advice (as defined in paragraph (c)(1) of this section) for a fee or other compensation, and does not have any authority or responsibility to render such investment advice, provided that nothing in this paragraph shall be deemed to:

(i) Exempt such broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank from the provisions of section 405(a) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 concerning liability for fiduciary breaches by other fiduciaries with respect to any assets of the plan; or

(ii) Exclude such broker-dealer, reporting dealer, or bank from the definition of the term *disqualified person* (as set forth in section 4975(e)(2)) with respect to any assets of the plan.

(e) *Affiliate and control.* (1) For purposes of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section, an “affiliate” of a person shall include:

(i) Any person directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries, controlling, controlled by, or under common control with such person;

(ii) Any officer, director, partner, employee or relative (as defined in section 4975(e)(6)) of such person; and

(iii) Any corporation or partnership of which such person is an officer, director or partner.

(2) For purposes of this paragraph, the term *control* means the power to exercise a controlling influence over the management or policies of a person other than an individual.

[T.D. 7386, 40 FR 50841, Oct. 31, 1975]

§ 54.4975-11 “ESOP” requirements.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Type of plan.* To be an “ESOP” (employee stock ownership plan), a plan described in section 4975(e)(7)(A) must meet the requirements of this section. See section 4975(e)(7)(B).

(2) *Designation as ESOP.* To be an ESOP, a plan must be formally designated as such in the plan document.

(3) *Continuing loan provisions under plan—(i) Creation of protections and rights.* The terms of an ESOP must formally provide participants with certain protections and rights with respect to plan assets acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan. These protections and rights are those referred to in the third sentence of § 54.4975-7(b)(4), relating to put, call, or other options and to buy-sell or similar arrangements, and in § 54.4975-7(b) (10), (11), and (12), relating to put options.

(ii) *“Nonterminable” protections and rights.* The terms of an ESOP must also formally provide that these protections and rights are nonterminable. Thus, if a plan holds or has distributed securities acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan and either the loan is repaid or the plan ceases to be an ESOP, these protections and rights must continue to exist under the terms of the plan. However, the protections and rights will not fail to be nonterminable merely because they are not exercisable under § 54.4975-7(b) (11) and (12)(ii). For example, if, after a plan ceases to be an ESOP, securities acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan cease to be publicly traded, the 15-month period prescribed by § 54.4975-7(b)(11) includes the time when the securities are publicly traded.

(iii) *No incorporation by reference of protections and rights.* The formal requirements of paragraph (a)(3) (i) and (ii) of this section must be set forth in the plan. Mere reference to the third sentence of § 54.4975-7(b)(4) and to the provisions of § 54.4975-7(b) (10), (11), and (12) is not sufficient.

(iv) *Certain remedial amendments.* Notwithstanding the limits under paragraph (a) (4) and (10) of this section on the retroactive effect of plan amendments, a remedial plan amendment adopted before December 31, 1979, to meet the requirements of paragraph (a)(3) (i) and (ii) of this section is retroactively effective as of the later of the date on which the plan was designated as an ESOP or November 1, 1977.

(4) *Retroactive amendment.* A plan meets the requirements of this section as of the date that it is designated as

an ESOP if it is amended retroactively to meet, and in fact does meet, such requirements at any of the following times:

(i) 12 months after the date on which the plan is designated as an ESOP;

(ii) 90 days after a determination letter is issued with respect to the qualification of the plan as an ESOP under this section, but only if the determination is requested by the time in paragraph (a)(4)(i) of this section; or

(iii) A later date approved by the district director.

(5) *Addition to other plan.* An ESOP may form a portion of a plan the balance of which includes a qualified pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan which is not an ESOP. A reference to an ESOP includes an ESOP that forms a portion of another plan.

(6) *Conversion of existing plan to an ESOP.* If an existing pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan is converted into an ESOP, the requirements of section 404 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) (88 Stat. 877), relating to fiduciary duties, and section 401(a) of the Code, relating to requirements for plans established for the exclusive benefit of employees, applying to such conversion. A conversion may constitute a termination of an existing plan. For definition of a termination, see the regulations under section 411(d)(3) of the Code and section 4041(f) of ERISA.

(7) *Certain arrangements barred—(i) Buy-sell agreements.* An arrangement involving an ESOP that creates a put option must not provide for the issuance of put options other than as provided under § 54.4975-7(b) (10), (11) and (12). Also, an ESOP must not otherwise obligate itself to acquire securities from a particular security holder at an indefinite time determined upon the happening of an event such as the death of the holder.

(ii) *Integrated plans.* A plan designated as an ESOP after November 1, 1977, must not be integrated directly or indirectly with contributions or benefits under title II of the Social Security Act or any other State or Federal law. ESOP's established and integrated before such date may remain integrated. However, such plans must not be

amended to increase the integration level or the integration percentage. Such plans may in operation continue to increase the level of integration if under the plan such increase is limited by reference to a criterion existing apart from the plan.

(8) *Effect of certain ESOP provisions on section 401(a) status*—(i) *Exempt loan requirements.* An ESOP will not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(2) merely because it gives plan assets as collateral for an exempt loan under § 54.4975-7(b)(5) or uses plan assets under § 54.4975-7(b)(6) to repay and exempt loan in the event of default.

(ii) *Individual annual contribution limitation.* An ESOP will not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(16) merely because annual additions under section 415(c) are calculated with respect to employer contributions used to repay an exempt loan rather than with respect to securities allocated to participants.

(iii) *Income pass-through.* An ESOP will not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a) merely because it provides for the current payment of income under paragraph (f)(3) of this section.

(9) *Transitional rules for ESOP's established before November 1, 1977.* A plan established before November 1, 1977 that otherwise satisfies the provisions of this section constitutes an ESOP if it is amended by December 31, 1977, to comply from November 1, 1977 with this section even though before November 1, 1977 the plan did not satisfy paragraphs (c) and (d) (2), (4), and (5) of this section.

(10) *Additional transitional rules.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(9) of this section, a plan established before November 1, 1977, that otherwise satisfies the provisions of this section constitutes an ESOP if by December 31, 1977, it is amended to comply from November 1, 1977, with this section even though before such date the plan did not satisfy the following provisions of this section:

- (i) Paragraph (a) (3) and (8) (iii);
- (ii) The last sentence of paragraph (d)(3); and
- (iii) Paragraph (f)(3).

(b) *Plan designed to invest primarily in qualifying employer securities.* A plan

constitutes an ESOP only if the plan specifically states that it is designed to invest primarily in qualifying employer securities. Thus, a stock bonus plan or a money purchase pension plan constituting an ESOP may invest part of its assets in other than qualifying employer securities. Such plan will be treated the same as other stock bonus plans or money purchase pension plans qualified under section 401a with respect to those investments.

(c) *Suspense account.* All assets acquired by an ESOP with the proceeds of an exempt loan under section 4975(d)(3) must be added to and maintained in a suspense account. They are to be withdrawn from the suspense account by applying § 54.4975-7(b) (8) and (15) as if all securities in the suspense account were encumbered. Such assets acquired before November 1, 1977, must be withdrawn by applying § 54.4975-7(b)(8) or the provision of the loan that controls release from encumbrance. Assets in such suspense accounts are assets of the ESOP. Thus, for example, such assets are subject to section 401(a)(2).

(d) *Allocations to accounts of participants*—(1) *In general.* Except as provided in this section, amounts contributed to an ESOP must be allocated as provided under § 1.401-1(b)(ii) and (iii) of this chapter, and securities acquired by an ESOP must be accounted for as provided under § 1.402(a)-1(b)(2)(ii) of this chapter.

(2) *Assets withdrawn from suspense account.* As of the end of each plan year, the ESOP must consistently allocate to the participants' accounts non-monetary units representing participants' interests in assets withdrawn from the suspense account.

(3) *Income.* Income with respect to securities acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan must be allocated as income of the plan except to the extent that the ESOP provides for the use of income from such securities to repay the loan. Certain income may be distributed currently under paragraph (f)(3) of this section.

(4) *Forfeitures.* If a portion of a participant's account is forfeited, qualifying employer securities allocated under paragraph (d)(2) of this section must be forfeited only after other assets. If interests in more than one class

of qualifying employer securities have been allocated to the participant's account, the participant must be treated as forfeiting the same proportion of each such class.

(5) *Valuation.* For purposes of § 54.4975-7(b) (9) and (12) and this section, valuations must be made in good faith and based on all relevant factors for determining the fair market value of securities. In the case of a transaction between a plan and a disqualified person, value must be determined as of the date of the transaction. For all other purposes under this subparagraph (5), value must be determined as of the most recent valuation date under the plan. An independent appraisal will not in itself be a good faith determination of value in the case of a transaction between a plan and a disqualified person. However, in other cases, a determination of fair market value based on at least an annual appraisal independently arrived at by a person who customarily makes such appraisals and who is independent of any party to a transaction under § 54.4975-7(b) (9) and (12) will be deemed to be a good faith determination of value.

(e) *Multiple plans—(1) General rule.* An ESOP may not be considered together with another plan for purposes of applying section 401(a) (4) and (5) or section 410(b) unless:

(i) The ESOP and such other plan exist on November 1, 1977, or

(ii) Paragraph (e)(2) of this section is satisfied.

(2) *Special rule for combined ESOP's.* Two or more ESOP's, one or more of which does not exist on November 1, 1977, may be considered together for purposes of applying section 401(a) (4) and (5) or section 410(b) only if the proportion of qualifying employer securities to total plan assets is substantially the same for each ESOP and:

(i) The qualifying employer securities held by all ESOP's are all of the same class; or

(ii) The ratios of each class held to all such securities held is substantially the same for each plan.

(3) *Amended coverage, contribution, or benefit structure.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section, if the coverage, contribution, or benefit

structure of a plan that exists on November 1, 1977 is amended after that date, as of the effective date of the amendment, the plan is no longer considered to be a plan that exists on November 1, 1977.

(f) *Distribution—(1) In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (f) (2) and (3) of this section, with respect to distributions, a portion of an ESOP consisting of stock bonus plan or a money purchase pension plan is not to be distinguished from other such plans under section 401(a). Thus, for example, benefits distributable from the portion of an ESOP consisting of a stock bonus plan are distributable only in stock of the employer. Also, benefits distributable from the money-purchase portion of the ESOP may be, but are not required to be, distributable in qualifying employer securities.

(2) *Exempt loan proceeds.* If securities acquired with the proceeds of an exempt loan available for distribution consist of more than one class, a distributee must receive substantially the same proportion of each such class. However, as indicated in paragraph (f)(1) of this section, benefits distributable from the portion of an ESOP consisting of a stock bonus plan are distributable only in stock of the employer.

(3) *Income.* Income paid with respect to qualifying employer securities acquired by an ESOP in taxable years beginning after December 31, 1974, may be distributed at any time after receipt by the plan to participants on whose behalf such securities have been allocated. However, under an ESOP that is a stock bonus plan, income held by the plan for a 2-year period or longer must be distributed under the general rules described in paragraph (f)(1) of this section. (See the last sentence of section 803(h), Tax Reform Act of 1976.)

(Sec. 4975(e)(7), (88 Stat. 976; 26 U.S.C. 4975(e)(7))

[T.D. 7506, 42 FR 44393, Sept. 2, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7571, 44 FR 1978, Jan. 9, 1979]

§ 54.4975-12 Definition of the term "qualifying employer security".

(a) *In general.* For purposes of section 4975(e)(8) and this section, the term "qualifying employer security" means an employer security which is: