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damages sustained by the United States because of such claim.

(b) Statements. (1) Any person who makes, presents, or submits, or causes to be made, presented, or submitted, a written statement that—

(i) The person knows or has reason to know—

(A) Asserts a material fact which is false, fictitious, or fraudulent; or

(B) Is false, fictitious, or fraudulent because it omits a material fact that the person making, presenting or submitting such statement had a duty to include in such statement; and

(ii) Contains or is accompanied by an express certification or affirmation of the truthfulness and accuracy of the contents of the statement.

Shall be subject to, in addition to any other remedy that may be prescribed by law, a civil penalty of not more than \$5,500 for each such statement.

(2) Each written representation, certification, or affirmation constitutes a separate statement.

(3) A statement shall be considered made, presented, or submitted to the Postal Service when such statement is actually made to an agent, fiscal intermediary, or other entity, including any State or political subdivision thereof, acting for or on behalf of the Postal Service.

(c) In any case in which it is determined that more than one person is liable for making a claim or statement under this section, the civil penalty referred to in paragraph (a)(1) of this section may be imposed on each such person without regard to the amount of any penalties collected or demanded from others.

(d) In any case in which it is determined that more than one person is liable for making a claim under this section on which the Government has made payment, an assessment may be imposed against any such person or jointly and severally against any combination of such persons. The aggregate amount of the assessments collected with respect to such claim shall not exceed twice the portion of such claim determined to be in violation of paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

[52 FR 12901, Apr. 20, 1987, as amended at 56 FR 55825, Oct. 30, 1991; 61 FR 55750, Oct. 29, 1996]

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§ 273.4 Non-exclusivity of penalty authority.

(a) A determination by the Reviewing Official that there is adequate evidence to believe that a person is liable under 31 U.S.C 3802, or a final determination that a person is liable under such statute, may provide the Postal Service with grounds for commencing any administrative or contractual action against such person which is authorized by law and which is in addition to any action against such person under chapter 38 of title 31, United States Code.

(b) In the case of an administrative or contractual action to suspend or debar any person from eligibility to enter into contracts with the Postal Service, a determination referred to in paragraph (a) of this section shall not be considered as a conclusive determination of such person's responsibility pursuant to Postal Service procurement regulations.

§ 273.5 Investigations of alleged violations.

(a) Investigations of allegations of liability under 31 U.S.C. 3802 shall be conducted by the Investigating Official.

(b)(1) For purposes of an investigation under this part, the Investigating Official may issue a subpoena requiring the production of all information, documents, reports, answers, records, accounts, papers, and data not otherwise reasonably available to the Postal Service. Any subpoena issued by the Investigating Official under this authority shall cite 31 U.S.C. 3804(a) as the authority under which it is issued, shall be signed by the Investigating Official, and shall command each person to whom it is directed to produce the specified documentary material at a prescribed time and place.

(2) In the case of contumacy or refusal to obey a subpoena issued pursuant to paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the district courts of the United States have jurisdiction to issue an appropriate order for the enforcement of such subpoena. Any failure to obey such order of the court may be punishable as contempt. In any case in which the Postal Service seeks the enforcement of a subpoena under this section,

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the Postal Service shall request the Attorney General to petition the district court for the district in which the person receiving the subpoena resides or conducts business to issue such an order.

(c) Upon completing an investigation under this part, the Investigating Official shall submit to the Reviewing Official a report containing the findings and conclusions of his investigation, including:

(1) A description of the claims or statements for which liability under 31 U.S.C. 3802 is alleged;

(2) A description of any evidence which supports allegations of liability under 31 U.S.C. 3802, or where applicable, a description of any evidence that tends to support a conclusion that such statute has not been violated;

(3) An estimate of the amount of money or the value of property or services allegedly requested or demanded in violation of 31 U.S.C. 3802;

(4) A statement of any exculpatory or mitigating circumstances which may relate to the claims or statements under investigation;

(5) A statement of the amount of penalties and assessments that, considering the information described in paragraphs (c) (3) and (4) of this section, the Investigating Official recommends be demanded from the person alleged to be liable; and

(6) An estimate of the prospects of collecting the amount specified in paragraph (c)(5) of this section, and any reasons supporting such estimate.

(d) Nothing in these regulations modifies any responsibility of the Investigating Official to report violations of criminal law to the Attorney General

[52 FR 12901, Apr. 20, 1987, as amended at 56 FR 55825, Oct. 30, 1991]

§ 273.6 Evaluation by reviewing official.

(a) Based upon the investigatory report prepared by the Investigating Official, the Reviewing Official shall determine whether there is adequate evidence to believe that a person is liable under 31 U.S.C. 3802, and, if so, whether prosecution would likely result in the imposition and collection of civil penalties and applicable assessments.

(b) If the Reviewing Official determines that a case has merit and should be referred to the Judicial Officer for assignment to a Presiding Officer, he must first transmit to the Attorney General a written notice containing the following information:

(1) A statement setting forth the Reviewing Official's reasons for proposing to refer the case to a Presiding Officer;

(2) A description of the claims or statements for which liability under 31 U.S.C. 3802 is alleged;

(3) A statement specifying the evidence that supports the allegations of liability;

(4) An estimate of the amount of money or the value of property or services allegedly requested or demanded in violation of 31 U.S.C. 3802;

(5) A statement of any exculpatory or mitigating circumstances which may relate to the claims or statements under investigation;

(6) A statement of the amount of penalties and assessments that, considering the factors listed in paragraphs (b)(4) and (5) of this section, the Reviewing Official recommends be demanded from the person alleged to be liable; and

(7) A statement that, in the opinion of the Reviewing Official, there is a reasonable prospect of collecting the amount specified in paragraph (b)(6) of this section and the reasons supporting such statement.

(c) No allegations of liability under 31 U.S.C. 3802 with respect to any claim made, presented, or submitted by any person shall be referred to the Judicial Officer if the Reviewing Official determines that (1) an amount of money in excess of \$150,000; or (2) property or service with a value in excess of \$150,000 is requested or demanded in violation of section 3802 in such claim or in a group of related claims which are submitted at the time such claim is submitted.

§ 273.7 Concurrence of Attorney General.

(a) The Attorney General is required by 31 U.S.C. 3803(b) to respond to the Reviewing Official's written notice described in § 273.6 within 90 days. The Reviewing Official may refer allegations of liability to the Judicial Officer