

## § 209.323

(7) Convene, recess, reconvene, adjourn, and otherwise regulate the course of the hearing;

(8) Hold conferences for settlement, simplification of the issues, or any other proper purpose; and

(9) Take any other action authorized by or consistent with the provisions of this subpart and permitted by law that may expedite the hearing or aid in the disposition of an issue raised therein.

(c) FRA has the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, as to the facts alleged in the notice of proposed disqualification, the reasonableness of the conditions of the qualification proposed, and, except as provided in § 209.329(a), the respondent's lack of fitness to perform safety-sensitive functions. The Chief Counsel may offer relevant evidence, including testimony, in support of the allegations contained in the notice of proposed disqualification and conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full disclosure of the material facts.

(d) The respondent may appear and be heard on respondent's own behalf or through respondent's designated representative. The respondent may offer relevant evidence, including testimony, in defense of the allegations or in mitigation of the proposed disqualification and conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full disclosure of the material facts. Respondent has the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, as to any affirmative defense, including that respondent's actions were in obedience to the direct order of a railroad supervisor or higher level official.

(e) The record shall be closed at the conclusion of the hearing, unless the parties request the opportunity to submit proposed findings and conclusions. When the presiding officer allows the parties to submit proposed findings and conclusions, documents previously identified for introduction into evidence, briefs, or other posthearing submissions the record shall be left open for such time as the presiding officer grants for that purpose.

[54 FR 42907, Oct. 18, 1989, as amended at 60 FR 53136, Oct. 12, 1995]

## 49 CFR Ch. II (10-1-07 Edition)

### § 209.323 Initial decision.

(a) The presiding officer shall prepare an initial decision after the closing of the record. The initial decision may dismiss the notice of proposed disqualification, in whole or in part, sustain the charges and proposed disqualification, or sustain the charges and mitigate the proposed disqualification.

(b) If the presiding officer sustains the charges and the proposed disqualification, dismisses some of the charges, or mitigates the proposed disqualification, the presiding officer shall issue and serve an appropriate order disqualifying respondent from engaging in the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303. If the presiding officer dismisses all of the charges set forth in notice of proposed disqualification, a dismissal order shall be issued and served.

(c) Each initial decision shall contain:

(1) Findings of fact and conclusions of law, as well as the reasons or bases therefor, upon all the material issues of fact and law presented on the record;

(2) An order, as described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(3) The dates any disqualification is to begin and end and other conditions, if any, that the respondent must satisfy before the disqualification order is discharged;

(4) The date upon which the decision will become final, as prescribed in § 209.325; and

(5) Notice of the parties' appeal rights, as prescribed in § 209.327.

(d) The decision shall be served upon the FRA Chief Counsel and the respondent. The Chief Counsel shall provide a copy of the disqualification order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed.

### § 209.325 Finality of decision.

(a) The initial decision of the presiding officer shall become final 35 days after issuance. Such decisions are not precedent.

(b) *Exception.* The initial decision shall not become final if, within 35 days after issuance of the decision, any party files an appeal under § 209.327. The timely filing of such an appeal shall stay the order in the initial decision.