

(b) When information claimed to be confidential is not requested under the Freedom of Information Act, the determination of confidentiality will be made within a reasonable period of time, at the discretion of the Chief Counsel.

§ 512.18 How will I be notified of the confidentiality determination?

(a) If a request for confidential treatment is granted, the submitter of the information will be notified in writing of the determination and of any appropriate limitations.

(b) If a request for confidential treatment is denied in whole or in part, the submitter of the information will be notified in writing of the determination, and the reasons for the denial, by certified mail, return receipt requested. The information may be made available to the public twenty (20) working days after the submitter of the information has received notice of the denial, unless a request for reconsideration is filed. The information may be released publicly on an earlier date, if the Chief Counsel determines in writing that the public interest requires that the information be made available to the public on such date.

§ 512.19 What can I do if I disagree with the determination?

(a) A submitter of information whose request for confidential treatment is denied in whole or in part, may petition for reconsideration of that decision. Petitions for reconsideration shall be addressed to and received by the Chief Counsel prior to the date on which the information would otherwise be made available to the public. The determination by the Chief Counsel upon such petition for reconsideration shall be administratively final.

(b) If a person is unable to submit a petition for reconsideration within twenty (20) working days of receiving notice that a claim for confidential treatment was denied, that person may submit a request for an extension of time. The Chief Counsel must receive any request for an extension of time before the date on which the information would be made available to the public, and the request must be accompanied by an explanation describing

the reason for the request and the length of time requested. The Chief Counsel will determine whether to grant or deny the extension and the length of the extension.

(c) If a petition for reconsideration is granted, the petitioner will be notified in writing of the determination and of any appropriate limitations.

(d) If a petition for reconsideration is denied in whole or in part, or if a request for an extension is denied, the petitioner will be notified in writing of the denial, and the reasons for the denial, and will be informed that the information will be made available to the public not less than twenty (20) working days after the petitioner has received notice of the denial. The information may be released publicly on an earlier date, if the Administrator determines in writing that the public interest requires that the information be made available to the public on such date.

Subpart E—Agency Treatment of Information Claimed To Be Confidential

§ 512.20 How does the agency treat information submitted pursuant to this part before a confidentiality determination is made?

(a) Information received by NHTSA, for which a properly filed confidentiality request is submitted, will be kept confidential until the Chief Counsel makes a determination regarding its confidentiality. Such information will not be disclosed publicly, except in accordance with this part.

(b) Redacted copies of documents submitted to NHTSA under this part will be disclosed to the public.

§ 512.21 How is information submitted pursuant to this part treated once a confidentiality determination is made?

(a) Once the Chief Counsel makes a determination regarding the confidentiality of the submitted information, all materials determined not to be entitled to confidential protection will be disclosed to the public in accordance with the determination, unless a timely petition for reconsideration is received by the agency.

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(b) Upon receipt of a timely petition for reconsideration under §512.19 of this part, the submitted information will remain confidential, pending a determination regarding the petition.

(c) Should the Chief Counsel, after considering a petition for reconsideration, decide that information is not entitled to confidential treatment, the agency may make the information available after twenty (20) working days after the submitter has received notice of that decision from the Chief Counsel unless the agency receives direction from a court not to release the information.

[68 FR 44228, July 28, 2003, as amended at 69 FR 21425, Apr. 21, 2004]

§512.22 Under what circumstances may NHTSA modify a grant of confidentiality?

(a) The Chief Counsel may modify a grant of confidentiality based upon:

- (1) Newly discovered or changed facts;
- (2) A change in the applicable law;
- (3) A change in class determination, pursuant to §512.16;
- (4) The passage of time; or
- (5) A finding that the prior determination is erroneous.

(b) If the Chief Counsel believes that an earlier determination of confidentiality should be modified based on one or more of the factors listed in paragraph (a) of this section, the submitter of the information will be notified in writing that the Chief Counsel has modified its earlier determination and of the reasons for the modification, and will be informed that the information will be made available to the public in not less than twenty (20) working days from the date of receipt of the notice of modification. The information may be released publicly on an earlier date, if the Administrator determines in writing that the public interest requires that the information be made available to the public on such date. The submitter may seek reconsideration of the modification, pursuant to §512.19.

§512.23 Under what circumstances may NHTSA publicly release confidential information?

(a) Information that has been claimed or determined to be confiden-

tial under this part may be disclosed to the public by the Administrator notwithstanding such claim or determination, if disclosure would be in the public interest as follows:

(1) Information obtained under chapter 325, 327, 329 or 331 of title 49 of the United States Code (formerly under the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act) may be disclosed when that information is relevant to a proceeding under the chapter under which the information was obtained.

(2) Information obtained under chapter 301 of title 49 of the United States Code (49 U.S.C. §30101 *et seq.*), relating to the establishment, amendment, or modification of Federal motor vehicle safety standards, may be disclosed when relevant to a proceeding under the chapter.

(3) Except as specified in the next sentence, information obtained under Chapter 301 of title 49 of the United States Code (49 U.S.C. 30101 *et seq.*), related to a possible defect or noncompliance, shall be disclosed when the Administrator decides the information will assist in carrying out sections 30117(b) and 30118 through 30121 of title 49 or is required to be disclosed under 30118(a) of title 49, except as provided in paragraph (a)(4) of this section.

(4) No information will be disclosed under paragraph (a) of this section unless the submitter of the information is given written notice of the Administrator's intention to disclose information under this section. Written notice will be given at least twenty (20) working days before the day of release, unless the Administrator finds that shorter notice is in the public interest. The notice under this paragraph will include a statement of the Administrator's reasons for deciding to disclose the information, and will afford the submitter of the information an opportunity to comment on the contemplated release of the information. The Administrator may also give notice of the contemplated release of information to other persons and may allow these persons the opportunity to comment. In making the determination to release information pursuant to this section, the Administrator will consider ways to release the information that will