cost-of-living increases) for members of this group whose benefits were computed from the benefit table in effect in December 1978 on the basis of either the old-start computation method in §§ 404.240 through 404.242 or the guaranteed alternative computation method explained in §§ 404.230 through 404.233. However, as can be seen from the extended table in appendix III, the lowest primary insurance amount under this method is now $1.70 for individuals for whom the minimum benefit has been repealed.

Example: In the example in § 404.221(d), we computed Mr. B's average monthly wage to be $502. We refer to the December 1978 benefit table in appendix III. Then we find his average monthly wage in column III of the table. Reading across, his primary insurance amount is on the same line in column IV and is $390.50. A 9.9 percent automatic cost-of-living benefit increase was effective for June 1979, increasing Mr. B's primary insurance amount to $429.20, as explained in §§ 404.270 through 404.277. Then, we increase the $429.20 by the 14.3 percent June 1980 cost-of-living benefit increase and get $490.60, and by the 11.2 percent June 1981 increase to get $545.60.

[47 FR 30734, July 15, 1982, as amended at 48 FR 46142, Oct. 11, 1983]

GUARANTEED ALTERNATIVE FOR PEOPLE REACHING AGE 62 AFTER 1978 BUT BEFORE 1984

§ 404.230 Guaranteed alternative.

(a) *General.* If you reach age 62 after 1978 but before 1984, we compute your primary insurance amount under a modified average-monthly-wage method as a *guaranteed alternative* to your primary insurance amount computed under the average-indexed-monthly-earnings method. We also compute your primary insurance amount under the old-start method (§§ 404.240 through 404.242) and under the special rules for a person who had a period of disability (§§ 404.250 through 404.252), if you are eligible. In §§ 404.231 through 404.233, we explain the average-monthly-wage method as the alternative to the average-indexed-monthly-earnings method.

(b) *Restrictions.* (1) To qualify for this guaranteed-alternative computation, you must have some creditable earnings before 1979.

(2) You or your survivors do not qualify for a guaranteed-alternative computation if you were eligible (you attained age 62, became disabled, or died before age 62) for social security benefits based on your own earnings at any time before 1979 unless—

(i) Those benefits were disability insurance benefits which were terminated because you recovered from your disability or you engaged in substantial gainful activity; and

(ii) You spent at least 12 months without being eligible for disability benefits again.

(3) This guaranteed alternative method applies only to old-age insurance benefits and to survivor benefits where the deceased worker reached the month of his or her 62nd birthday after 1978 but before 1984 and died after reaching age 62.

§ 404.231 Steps in computing your primary insurance amount under the guaranteed alternative—general.

If you reach age 62 after 1978 but before 1984, we follow three major steps in finding your guaranteed alternative:

(a) First, we compute your average monthly wage, as described in § 404.232;

(b) Second, we find the primary insurance amount that corresponds to your average monthly wage in the benefit table in appendix III.

(c) Then we apply any automatic cost-of-living or *ad hoc* increases in primary insurance amounts that have become effective in or after the year you reached age 62.

§ 404.232 Computing your average monthly wage under the guaranteed alternative.

(a) *General.* With the exception described in paragraph (b) of this section, we follow the rules in § 404.221 to compute your average monthly wage.

(b) *Exception.* We do not use any year after the year you reach age 61 as a computation base year in computing your average monthly wage for purposes of the guaranteed alternative.

§ 404.233 Adjustment of your guaranteed alternative when you become entitled after age 62.

(a) If you do not become entitled to benefits at the time you reach age 62, we adjust the guaranteed alternative computed for you under § 404.232 as described in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) To the primary insurance amount computed under the guaranteed alternative, we apply any automatic cost-of-living or *ad hoc* increases in primary insurance amounts that go into effect in the year you reach age 62 and in years up through the year you become entitled to benefits. (See appendix VI for a list of the percentage increases in primary insurance amounts since December 1978.)

Example: Mr. C reaches age 62 in January 1981 and becomes entitled to old-age insurance benefits in April 1981. He had no social security earnings before 1951 and his year-by-year social security earnings after 1950 are as follows:

Year	Earnings
1951	$3,600
1952	3,600
1953	3,600
1954	3,600
1955	4,200
1956	4,200
1957	4,200
1958	4,200
1959	4,800
1960	4,800
1961	4,800
1962	4,800
1963	4,800
1964	4,800
1965	4,800
1966	6,600
1967	6,600
1968	7,800
1969	7,800
1970	7,800
1971	7,800
1972	9,000
1973	10,800
1974	13,200
1975	14,100
1976	15,300
1977	16,500
1978	17,700
1979	22,900
1980	25,900
1981	29,700

Mr. C's elapsed years are the 30 years 1951 through 1980. We subtract 5 from his 30 elapsed years to find that we must use 25 benefit computation years in computing his average monthly wage. His computation base years are 1951 through 1980 which are years after 1950 up to the year he reached age 62. We will use his 25 computation base years with the highest earnings to compute his average monthly wage. Thus, we exclude the years 1951–1955. The year 1981 is not a base year for this computation.

We total his earnings in his benefit computation years and get $236,000. We then divide by the 300 months in his 25 benefit computation years, and find his average monthly wage to be $786.66 which is rounded down to $786.

The primary insurance amount in the benefit table in appendix III that corresponds to Mr. C's average monthly wage is $521.70. The 9.9 percent and 14.3 percent cost of living increase for 1979 and 1980, respectively, are not applicable because Mr. C reached age 62 in 1981.

The average indexed monthly earnings method described in §§ 404.210 through 404.212 considers all of the earnings after 1950, including 1981 earnings which, in Mr. C's case cannot be used in the guaranteed alternative method. Mr. C's primary insurance amount under the average indexed earnings method is $548.40. Therefore, his benefit is based upon the $548.40 primary insurance amount. As in the guaranteed alternative method, Mr. C is not entitled to the cost of living increases for years before the year he reaches age 62.

Old-Start Method of Computing Primary Insurance Amounts

§ 404.240 Old-start method—general.

If you had all or substantially all your social security earnings before 1951, your primary insurance amount computed under the ''1977 simplified old-start'' method may be higher than any other primary insurance amount computed for you under any other method for which you are eligible. As explained in § 404.242, if you reach age 62 after 1978, your primary insurance amount computed under the old-start method is used, for purposes of the guaranteed alternative described in § 404.230, if the old-start primary insurance amount is higher than the one found under the average-monthly-wage method. We may use a modified computation, as explained in § 404.243, if you are entitled to a pension based on your employment which was not covered by Social Security.

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§ 404.241 1977 simplified old-start method.

(a) *Who is qualified.* To qualify for the old-start computation, you must meet the conditions in paragraphs (a) (1), (2), or (3) of this section:

(1) You must—

(i) Have one ''quarter of coverage'' (see §§ 404.101 and 404.110 of this part) before 1951;