

determine, at his or her option, whether to dismiss the violation(s) set forth in the Penalty Notice or to issue an Order Instituting Proceedings to initiate the hearing process. The Order shall be served on the respondent(s) as provided in § 501.705(c)(1). The Director may, in his or her discretion, withdraw an Order Instituting Proceedings at any time prior to the issuance of a decision by the Administrative Law Judge.

(a) *Content of Order.* The Order Instituting Proceedings shall:

(1) Be prepared by the Office of the Chief Counsel or other counsel assigned by the General Counsel and based on information provided by the Director;

(2) State the legal authority under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) Contain a short and plain statement of the alleged violation(s) to be considered and determined (including the matters of fact and law asserted) in such detail as will permit a specific response thereto;

(4) State the amount of the penalty sought in the proceeding; and

(5) Be signed by the Director.

(b) *Combining penalty actions.* The Director may combine claims contained in two or more Penalty Notices involving the same respondent, and for which hearings have been requested, into a single Order Instituting Proceedings.

(c) *Amendment to Order Instituting Proceedings.* Upon motion by the Director, the Administrative Law Judge may, at any time prior to issuance of a decision, permit the Director to amend an Order Instituting Proceedings to include new matters of fact or law that are within the scope of the original Order Instituting Proceedings.

**§ 501.714 Answer to Order Instituting Proceedings.**

(a) *When required.* Not later than 45 days after service of the Order Instituting Proceedings, the respondent shall file, with the Administrative Law Judge and the Office of Chief Counsel, an answer to each of the allegations contained therein. If the Order Instituting Proceedings is amended, the Administrative Law Judge may require that an amended answer be filed and, if such an answer is required, shall specify a date for the filing thereof.

(b) *Contents; effect of failure to deny.* Unless otherwise directed by the Administrative Law Judge, an answer shall specifically admit, deny, or state that the respondent does not have, and is unable to obtain, sufficient information to admit or deny each allegation in the Order Instituting Proceedings. When a respondent intends to deny only a part of an allegation, the respondent shall specify so much of it as is true and shall deny only the remainder. A statement of lack of information shall have the effect of a denial. A defense of res judicata, statute of limitations or any other matter constituting an affirmative defense shall be asserted in the answer. Any allegation not specifically addressed in the answer shall be deemed admitted.

(c) *Motion for more definite statement.* A respondent may file with an answer a motion for a more definite statement of specified matters of fact or law to be considered or determined. Such motion shall state the respects in which, and the reasons why, each such matter of fact or law should be required to be made more definite. If the motion is granted, the order granting such motion shall set the periods for filing such a statement and any answer thereto.

(d) *Amendments.* A respondent may amend its answer at any time by written consent of the Director or with permission of the Administrative Law Judge. Permission shall be freely granted when justice so requires.

(e) *Failure to file answer: default.* If a respondent fails to file an answer required by this subpart within the time prescribed, such respondent may be deemed in default pursuant to § 501.716(a). A party may make a motion to set aside a default pursuant to § 501.726(e).

**§ 501.715 Notice of Hearing.**

(a) If the Director issues an Order Instituting Proceedings, the respondent shall receive not less than 45 days notice of the time and place of the hearing.

(b) *Time and place of hearing.* All hearings shall be held in the Washington, DC metropolitan area unless, based on extraordinary reasons, otherwise mutually agreed by the respondent and the Director. The time for any

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hearing shall be fixed with due regard for the public interest and the convenience and necessity of the parties or their representatives. Requests to change the time of a hearing may be submitted to the Administrative Law Judge, who may modify the hearing date(s) and/or time(s) and place. All requests for a change in the date and time and/or place of a hearing must be received by the Administrative Law Judge and served upon the parties no later than 15 days before the scheduled hearing date.

(c) *Failure to appear at hearings: default.* Any respondent named in an order instituting proceedings as a person against whom findings may be made or penalties imposed who fails to appear (in person or through a representative) at a hearing of which he or she has been duly notified may be deemed to be in default pursuant to §501.716(a). Without further proceedings or notice to the respondent, the Administrative Law Judge may enter a finding that the right to a hearing was waived, and the Penalty Notice shall constitute final agency action as provided in §501.709(a)(2). A respondent may make a motion to set aside a default pursuant to §501.726(e).

**§501.716 Default.**

(a) A party to a proceeding may be deemed to be in default and the Administrative Law Judge (or the Secretary's designee during review proceedings) may determine the proceeding against that party upon consideration of the record if that party fails:

(1) To appear, in person or through a representative, at any hearing or conference of which the party has been notified;

(2) To answer, to respond to a dispositive motion within the time provided, or otherwise to prosecute or defend the proceeding; or

(3) To cure a deficient filing within the time specified by the Administrative Law Judge (or the Secretary's designee) pursuant to §501.729(b).

(b) In deciding whether to determine the proceedings against a party deemed to be in default, the Administrative Law Judge shall consider the record of the proceedings (including the Order Instituting Proceedings) and shall con-

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strue contested matters of fact and law against the party deemed to be in default.

(c) For information and procedures pertaining to a motion to set aside a default, see §501.726(e).

**§501.717 Consolidation of proceedings.**

By order of the Administrative Law Judge, proceedings involving common questions of law and fact may be consolidated for hearing of any or all the matters at issue in such proceedings. The Administrative Law Judge may make such orders concerning the conduct of such proceedings as he or she deems appropriate to avoid unnecessary cost or delay. Consolidation shall not prejudice any rights under this subpart and shall not affect the right of any party to raise issues that could have been raised if consolidation had not occurred.

**§501.718 Conduct and order of hearings.**

All hearings shall be conducted in a fair, impartial, expeditious and orderly manner. Each party has the right to present its case or defense by oral and documentary evidence and to conduct such cross examination as may be required for full disclosure of the relevant facts. The Director shall present his or her case-in-chief first. The Director shall be the first party to present an opening statement and a closing statement and may make a rebuttal statement after the respondent's closing statement.

**§501.719 Ex parte communications.**

(a) *Prohibition.* (1) From the time the Director issues an Order Instituting Proceedings until the date of final decision, no party, interested person, or representative thereof shall knowingly make or cause to be made an ex parte communication.

(2) Except to the extent required for the disposition of ex parte communication matters as authorized by law, the Secretary's designee and the Administrative Law Judge presiding over any proceeding may not:

(i) Consult a person or party on an issue, unless on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate; or