

your request for an award for fees and expenses may still be filed, but it will not be considered by the ALJ until a final decision is rendered.

§ 134.415 How will proceedings relating to my application for fees and expenses be conducted?

Proceedings will be conducted in accordance with the provisions in subpart B of this part.

§ 134.416 How will I know if I receive an award?

The ALJ will issue an initial decision on the merits of your request for an award which will become final in 30 days unless a request for review is filed under § 134.228. The decision will include findings on your eligibility, on whether SBA's position was substantially justified, and on the reasonableness of the amount you requested. Where applicable, there will also be findings on whether you have unduly protracted the proceedings or whether other circumstances make an award unjust, and an explanation of the reason for the difference, if any, between the amount requested and the amount awarded. If you have sought an award against more than one federal agency, the decision will allocate responsibility for payment among the agencies with appropriate explanation.

§ 134.417 May I seek review of the ALJ's decision on my award?

You may request review of the ALJ's decision on your award by filing a request for review in accordance with § 134.228. You may seek judicial review of a final decision as provided in 5 U.S.C. 504(c)(2).

§ 134.418 How are awards paid?

If you are seeking payment of an award, you must submit a copy of the final decision, along with your certification that you are not seeking judicial review of either the decision in the adversary adjudication, or of the award, to the following address: Chief Financial Officer, Office of Financial Operations, SBA, P.O. Box 205, Denver, CO 80201-0205. SBA will pay you the amount awarded within 60 days of receipt of your request unless it is notified that you or another party has sought judicial review of the underlying decision or the award.

PART 132—[REMOVED]

2. Part 132 is hereby removed.

PARTS 112, 113, 124, and 136—[AMENDED]

3. In accordance with the list below, for each section indicated in the left

column, remove the reference indicated in the middle column from wherever it appears in the section, and add in its place the reference in the right column:

Section	Remove	Add
112.11(b)	134.34	134.228
112.11(b)	134.19	134.222
112.11(b)	134.21	134.211
112.11(c)	134.32(b)	134.227(b)
113.7(b)	134.34	134.228
113.7(b)	134.19	134.222
113.7(b)	134.21	134.211
113.7(c)	134.32(b)	134.227(b)
124.210(b)	134.11(a)	134.203(a)
124.210(d)(2)	134.12	134.202
124.211(g)	134.19	134.222
136.170(j)(2) ..	134.34(a)	134.228(a)
136.170(j)(2) ..	134.34(b)	134.228(a)
136.170(j)(2) ..	134.32(b)(3) ..	134.227(b)

Philip Lader,
Administrator.
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13 CFR Part 142

Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act Regulations

AGENCY: Small Business Administration.
ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: In response to President Clinton's government-wide regulatory reform initiative, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has completed a page-by-page, line-by-line review of all of its existing regulations to determine which might be revised or eliminated. This rule renumbers, reorganizes, condenses and rewrites in plain language the existing regulation implementing the "Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986". The goal of the plain language style is to eliminate redundancies, ambiguities and cumbersome wording. The goal of the reorganization and revision is to make this part consistent in practice and procedure with other parts of this title and to clarify requirements under this regulation and applicable statutes of the United States.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This rule is effective February 28, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheri Wolff, Chief Counsel for General Litigation; Office of General Counsel, at (202) 205-6643.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On March 4, 1995, President Clinton issued a Memorandum to each federal agency, directing them to simplify their regulations. In response to this directive, SBA completed a page-by-page, line-by-line review of all of its

existing regulations to determine which might be revised or eliminated. This rule reorganizes and rewords former provisions for clarity and user-friendliness. Extensive renumbering was necessary for reorganization, simplification and clarification of existing provisions. No substantive changes to existing provisions were made.

SBA published its proposed changes to Part 142 in the Federal Register on November 27, 1995 (60 FR 58297), inviting the public to comment during a thirty day comment period. Since no comments were received, SBA has decided to issue the final rule substantially as proposed (subject only to minor typographical corrections).

Compliance With Executive Orders 12612, 12778, and 12866, the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601, et seq.), and the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Ch. 35)

SBA certifies that this rule does not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities within the meaning of Executive Order 12866 or the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601, et seq. This rule renumbers, reorganizes and rewrites the existing regulation for clarity and ease of use. Contracting opportunities and financial assistance for small business are not affected by this rule. Therefore, it is not likely to have an annual economic effect of \$100 million or more, result in a major increase in costs or prices, or have a significant adverse effect on competition or the United States economy.

For purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35, SBA certifies that this rule contains no new reporting or recordkeeping requirements. For purposes of Executive Order 12612, SBA certifies that this rule does not have any federalism implications warranting the preparation of a Federalism Assessment. For purposes of Executive Order 12778, SBA certifies that this rule is drafted, to the extent practicable, in accordance with the standards set forth in Section 2 of that Order.

List of Subjects in 13 CFR Part 142

Administrative practice and procedure, Claims, Fraud, Penalties.

For the above reasons, SBA revises Part 142 of Title 13 of the Code of Federal Regulations to read as follows:

PART 142—PROGRAM FRAUD CIVIL REMEDIES ACT REGULATIONS

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Authority: 15 U.S.C. 634(b); 31 U.S.C. 3803(g)(2).

Overview and Definitions

§ 142.1 Overview of regulations.

(a) *Statutory basis.* This part implements the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986, 31 U.S.C. 3801–3812 ("the Act"). The Act provides SBA and other federal agencies with an administrative remedy to impose civil penalties and assessments against persons making false claims and statements. The Act also provides due process protections to all persons who are subject to administrative proceedings under this part.

(b) *Possible remedies for program fraud.* In addition to any other penalty which may be prescribed by law, a person who submits, or causes to be submitted, a false claim or a false statement to SBA is subject to a civil penalty of not more than \$5,000 for each statement or claim, regardless of whether property, services, or money is actually delivered or paid by SBA. If SBA has made any payment, transferred property, or provided services in reliance on a false claim, the person submitting it is also subject to an assessment of not more than twice the amount of the false claim. This assessment is in lieu of damages sustained by SBA because of the false claim.

§ 142.2 What kind of conduct will result in program fraud enforcement?

(a) Any person who makes, or causes to be made, a false, fictitious, or fraudulent claim or written statement to SBA is subject to program fraud enforcement. A "person" means any individual, partnership, corporation, association, or other legal entity.

(b) If more than one person makes a false claim or statement, each person is liable for a civil penalty. If more than one person makes a false claim which has induced SBA to make payment, an assessment is imposed against each person. The liability of each such person to pay the assessment is joint and several, that is, each is responsible for the entire amount.

(c) No proof of specific intent to defraud is required to establish liability under this part.

§ 142.3 What is a claim?

(a) Claim means any request, demand, or submission:

- (1) Made to SBA for property, services, or money;
- (2) Made to a recipient of property, services, or money from SBA or to a party to a contract with SBA for property or services, or for the payment of money. This provision applies only when the claim is related to the

property, services or money from SBA or to the contract with SBA; or

(3) Made to SBA which decreases an obligation to pay or account for property, services, or money.

(b) A claim can relate to grants, loans, insurance, or other benefits, and includes SBA guaranteed loans made by participating lenders. A claim is made when it is received by SBA, an agent, fiscal intermediary, or other entity acting for SBA, or when it is received by the recipient of property, services, or money, or the party to the contract.

(c) Each voucher, invoice, claim form, or individual request or demand for property, services, or money constitutes a separate claim.

§ 142.4 What is a statement?

A "statement" means any written representation, certification, affirmation, document, record, or accounting or bookkeeping entry made with respect to a claim or with respect to a contract, bid or proposal for a contract, grant, loan or other benefit from SBA. "From SBA" means that SBA provides some portion of the money or property in connection with the contract, bid, grant, loan, or benefit, or is potentially liable to another party for some portion of the money or property under such contract, bid, grant, loan, or benefit. A statement is made, presented, or submitted to SBA when it is received by SBA or an agent, fiscal intermediary, or other entity acting for SBA.

§ 142.5 What is a false claim or statement?

(a) A claim submitted to SBA is a "false" claim if the person making the claim, or causing the claim to be made, knows or has reason to know that the claim:

- (1) Is false, fictitious or fraudulent;
- (2) Includes or is supported by a written statement which asserts or contains a material fact which is false, fictitious, or fraudulent;
- (3) Includes or is supported by a written statement which is false, fictitious or fraudulent because it omits a material fact that the person making the statement has a duty to include in the statement; or

(4) Is for payment for the provision of property or services which the person has not provided as claimed.

(b) A statement submitted to SBA is a false statement if the person making the statement, or causing the statement to be made, knows or has reason to know that the statement:

- (1) Asserts a material fact which is false, fictitious, or fraudulent; or
- (2) Is false, fictitious, or fraudulent because it omits a material fact that the person making the statement has a duty

to include in the statement. In addition, the statement must contain or be accompanied by an express certification or affirmation of the truthfulness and accuracy of the contents of the statement.

§ 142.6 What does the phrase "know or have reason to know" mean?

A person knows or has reason to know (that a claim or statement is false) if the person:

- (a) Has actual knowledge that the claim or statement is false, fictitious, or fraudulent; or
- (b) Acts in deliberate ignorance of the truth or falsity of the claim or statement; or
- (c) Acts in reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of the claim or statement.

Procedures Leading to Issuance of a Complaint

§ 142.7 Who investigates program fraud?

The Inspector General, or his designee, is responsible for investigating allegations that a false claim or statement has been made. In this regard, the Inspector General has authority under the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act and the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App. 3), as amended, to issue administrative subpoenas for the production of records and documents. The methods for serving a subpoena are set forth in Part 101 of this chapter.

§ 142.8 What happens if program fraud is suspected?

(a) If the investigating official concludes that an action under this Part is warranted, the investigating official submits a report containing the findings and conclusions of the investigation to a reviewing official. The reviewing official is the General Counsel or his designee. If the reviewing official determines that the report provides adequate evidence that a person submitted a false claim or statement, the reviewing official transmits to the Attorney General written notice of an intention to refer the matter for adjudication, with a request for approval of such referral. This notice will include the reviewing official's statements concerning:

- (1) The reasons for the referral;
- (2) The claims or statements upon which liability would be based;
- (3) The evidence that supports liability;
- (4) An estimate of the amount of money or the value of property, services, or other benefits requested or demanded in the false claim or statement;

(5) Any exculpatory or mitigating circumstances that may relate to the claims or statements known by the reviewing official or the investigating official; and

(6) The likelihood of collecting the proposed penalties and assessments.

(b) If at any time, the Attorney General or designee requests in writing that this administrative process be stayed, the Administrator must stay the process immediately. The Administrator may order the process resumed only upon receipt of the written authorization of the Attorney General.

§ 142.9 When will SBA issue a complaint?

SBA will issue a complaint:

- (a) If the Attorney General (or designee) approves the referral of the allegations for adjudication; and
- (b) In a case of submission of false claims, if the amount of money or the value of property or services demanded or requested in a false claim, or a group of related claims submitted at the same time, does not exceed \$150,000. A group of related claims submitted at the same time includes only those claims arising from the same transaction (such as a grant, loan, application, or contract) which are submitted together as part of a single request, demand, or submission.

§ 142.10 What is contained in a complaint?

(a) A complaint is a written statement giving notice to the person alleged to be liable under 31 U.S.C. 3802 of the specific allegations being referred for adjudication and of the person's right to request a hearing with respect to those allegations. The person alleged to have made false statements or to have submitted false claims to SBA is referred to as the "defendant."

(b) The reviewing official may join in a single complaint false claims or statements that are unrelated or were not submitted simultaneously, regardless of the amount of money or the value of property or services demanded or requested.

(c) The complaint will state that SBA seeks to impose civil penalties, assessments, or both, against each defendant and will include:

- (1) The allegations of liability against each defendant, including the statutory basis for liability, identification of the claims or statements involved, and the reasons liability allegedly arises from such claims or statements;
- (2) The maximum amount of penalties and assessments for which each defendant may be held liable;
- (3) A statement that each defendant may request a hearing by filing an answer and may be represented by a representative;

(4) Instructions for filing such an answer;

(5) A warning that failure to file an answer within 30 days of service of the complaint will result in imposition of the maximum amount of penalties and assessments.

(d) The reviewing official must serve any complaint on the defendant and provide a copy to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA). If a hearing is requested, an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from OHA will serve as the Presiding Officer.

§ 142.11 How will the complaint be served?

(a) The complaint must be served on individual defendants directly, a partnership through a general partner, and on corporations or on unincorporated associations through an executive officer or a director, except that service also may be made on any person authorized by appointment or by law to receive process for the defendant.

(b) The complaint may be served either by:

(1) Registered or certified mail (return receipt requested) addressed to the defendant at his or her residence, usual dwelling place, principal office or place of business; or by

(2) Personal delivery by anyone 18 years of age or older.

(c) The date of service is the date of personal delivery or, in the case of service by registered or certified mail, the date of postmark.

(d) Proof of service—

(1) When service is made by registered or certified mail, the return postal receipt will serve as proof of service.

(2) When service is made by personal delivery, an affidavit of the individual serving the complaint, or written acknowledgment of receipt by the defendant or a representative, will serve as proof of service.

(e) When served with the complaint, the defendant also should be served with a copy of this part 142 and 31 U.S.C. 3801–3812.

Procedures Following Service of a Complaint

§ 142.12 How does a defendant respond to the complaint?

(a) A defendant may file an answer with the reviewing official and the Office of Hearings and Appeals within 30 days of service of the complaint. An answer will be considered a request for an oral hearing.

(b) In the answer, a defendant—

- (1) Must admit or deny each of the allegations of liability contained in the

complaint (a failure to deny an allegation is considered an admission);

(2) Must state any defense on which the defendant intends to rely;

(3) May state any reasons why he or she believes the penalties, assessments, or both should be less than the statutory maximum; and

(4) Must state the name, address, and telephone number of the person authorized by the defendant to act as defendant's representative, if any.

(c) If the defendant is unable to file an answer which meets the requirements set forth in paragraph (b) of this section, the defendant may file with the reviewing official a general answer denying liability, requesting a hearing, and requesting an extension of time in which to file a complete answer. A general answer must be filed within 30 days of service of the complaint.

(d) If the defendant initially files a general answer requesting an extension of time, the reviewing official must promptly file with the ALJ the complaint, the general answer, and the request for an extension of time.

(e) For good cause shown, the ALJ may grant the defendant up to 30 additional days within which to file an answer meeting the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section. Such answer must be filed with OHA and a copy must be served on the reviewing official.

§ 142.13 What happens if a defendant fails to file an answer?

(a) If a defendant does not file any answer within 30 days after service of the complaint, the reviewing official will refer the complaint to the ALJ.

(b) Once the complaint is referred, the ALJ will promptly serve on the defendant a notice that an initial decision will be issued.

(c) The ALJ will assume the facts alleged in the complaint to be true and, if such facts establish liability under the statute, the ALJ will issue an initial decision imposing the maximum amount of penalties and assessments allowed under the statute.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this section, when a defendant fails to file a timely answer, the defendant waives any right to further review of the penalties and assessments imposed in the initial decision.

(e) The initial decision becomes final 30 days after it is issued.

(f) If, at any time before an initial decision becomes final, a defendant files a motion with the ALJ asking that the case be reopened and describing the extraordinary circumstances that prevented the defendant from filing an answer, the initial decision will be

stayed until the ALJ makes a decision on the motion. The reviewing official may respond to the motion.

(g) If, in his motion to reopen, a defendant demonstrates extraordinary circumstances excusing his failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ will withdraw the initial decision, and grant the defendant an opportunity to answer the complaint.

(h) A decision by the ALJ to deny a defendant's motion to reopen a case is not subject to review or reconsideration.

§ 142.14 What happens once an answer is filed?

(a) When the reviewing official receives an answer, he must file concurrently, the complaint and the answer with the ALJ, along with a designation of an SBA representative.

(b) When the ALJ receives the complaint and the answer, the ALJ will promptly serve a notice of oral hearing upon the defendant and the representative for SBA, in the same manner as the complaint, service of which is described in § 142.11. The notice of oral hearing must be served within six years of the date on which the claim or statement is made.

(c) The notice must include:

(1) The tentative time, place and nature of the hearing;

(2) The legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) The matters of fact and law to be asserted;

(4) A description of the procedures for the conduct of the hearing;

(5) The name, address, and telephone number of the defendant's representative and the representative for SBA; and

(6) Such other matters as the ALJ deems appropriate.

Hearing Provisions

§ 142.15 What kind of hearing is contemplated?

The hearing is a formal proceeding conducted by the ALJ during which a defendant will have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, present testimony, and dispute liability.

§ 142.16 At the hearing, what rights do the parties have?

(a) The parties to the hearing shall be the defendant and SBA. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3730(c)(5), a private plaintiff in an action under the False Claims Act may participate in the hearing to the extent authorized by the provisions of that Act.

(b) Each party has the right to:

(1) Be represented by a representative;

(2) Request a pre-hearing conference and participate in any conference held by the ALJ;

(3) Conduct discovery;

(4) Agree to stipulations of fact or law which will be made a part of the record;

(5) Present evidence relevant to the issues at the hearing;

(6) Present and cross-examine witnesses;

(7) Present arguments at the hearing as permitted by the ALJ; and

(8) Submit written briefs and proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law after the hearing, as permitted by the ALJ.

§ 142.17 What is the role of the ALJ?

An ALJ from OHA serves as the Presiding Officer at all hearings, with authority as set forth in § 134.218(b) of this chapter.

§ 142.18 Can the reviewing official or ALJ be disqualified?

(a) A reviewing official or an ALJ may disqualify himself or herself at any time.

(b) Upon motion of any party, the reviewing official or ALJ may be disqualified as follows:

(1) The motion must be supported by an affidavit containing specific facts establishing that personal bias or other reason for disqualification exists, including the time and circumstances of the discovery of such facts;

(2) The motion must be filed promptly after discovery of the grounds for disqualification, or the objection will be deemed waived; and

(3) The party, or representative of record, must certify in writing that the motion is made in good faith.

(c) Once a motion has been filed to disqualify the reviewing official, the ALJ will halt the proceedings until resolving the matter of disqualification. If the ALJ determines that the reviewing official is disqualified, the ALJ will dismiss the complaint without prejudice. If the ALJ disqualifies himself or herself, the case will be promptly reassigned to another ALJ.

§ 142.19 How are issues brought to the attention of the ALJ?

All applications to the ALJ for an order or ruling are made by motion, stating the relief sought, the authority relied upon, and the facts alleged. Procedures for filing motions under this section are governed by § 134.211 of this chapter.

§ 142.20 How are papers served?

Except for service of a complaint or a notice of hearing under § 142.11 and § 142.14(b) respectively, service of papers must be made as prescribed by § 134.204 of this chapter.

§ 142.21 How will the hearing be conducted and who has the burden of proof?

(a) The ALJ conducts a hearing in order to determine whether a defendant is liable for a civil penalty, assessment, or both and, if so, the appropriate amount of the civil penalty and/or assessment. The hearing will be recorded and transcribed, and the transcript of testimony, exhibits admitted at the hearing, and all papers and requests filed in the proceeding constitute the record for a decision by the ALJ.

(b) SBA must prove a defendant's liability and any aggravating factors by a preponderance of the evidence.

(c) A defendant must prove any affirmative defenses and any mitigating factors by a preponderance of the evidence.

(d) The hearing will be open to the public unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ for good cause shown.

§ 142.22 How is evidence presented at the hearing?

(a) Witnesses at the hearing must testify orally under oath or affirmation unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ. At the discretion of the ALJ, testimony may be admitted in the form of a written statement or deposition, a copy of which must be provided to all other parties, along with the last known address of the witness, in a manner which allows sufficient time for other parties to subpoena the witness for cross-examination at the hearing.

(b) The ALJ determines the admissibility of evidence in accordance with § 134.223 (a) and (b) of this chapter.

§ 142.23 Are there limits on disclosure of documents or discovery?

(a) Upon written request to the reviewing official, the defendant may review all non-privileged, relevant and material documents, records and other material related to the allegations contained in the complaint. After paying SBA a reasonable fee for duplication, the defendant may obtain a copy of the records described.

(b) Upon written request to the reviewing official, the defendant may obtain a copy of all exculpatory information in the possession of the reviewing official or investigating official relating to the allegations in the complaint. If the document would otherwise be privileged, only the portion of the document containing exculpatory information must be disclosed. As used in this section, the term "information" does not include legal materials such as statutes or case law obtained through legal research.

(c) The notice sent to the Attorney General from the reviewing official is not discoverable under any circumstances.

(d) Other discovery is available only as ordered by the ALJ and includes only those methods of discovery allowed by § 134.213 of this chapter.

§ 142.24 Can witnesses be subpoenaed?

A party seeking the appearance and testimony of any individual or the production of documents or records at a hearing may request in writing that the ALJ issue a subpoena. Any such request must be filed with the ALJ not less than 15 days before the scheduled hearing date unless otherwise allowed by the ALJ for good cause. A subpoena shall be issued by the ALJ in the manner specified by § 134.214 of this chapter.

§ 142.25 Can a party or witness object to discovery?

Any party or prospective witness may file a motion to quash a subpoena or to limit discovery or the disclosure of evidence. Motions to limit discovery or to object to the disclosure of evidence are governed by § 134.213 of this chapter. Motions to limit or quash subpoenas are governed by § 134.214(d) of this chapter.

§ 142.26 Can a party informally discuss the case with the ALJ?

No. Such discussions are forbidden as ex parte communications with the ALJ as set forth in § 134.220 of this chapter. This does not prohibit a party from communicating with other employees of OHA to inquire about the status of a case or to ask routine questions concerning administrative functions and procedures.

§ 142.27 Are there sanctions for misconduct?

The ALJ may sanction a party or representative, as set forth in § 134.219 of this chapter.

§ 142.28 Where is the hearing held?

The ALJ will hold the hearing in any judicial district of the United States:

- (a) In which the defendant resides or transacts business; or
- (b) In which the claim or statement on which liability is based was made, presented or submitted to SBA; or
- (c) As agreed upon by the defendant and the ALJ.

§ 142.29 Are witness lists exchanged before the hearing?

(a) At least 15 days before the hearing or at such other time as ordered by the ALJ, the parties must exchange witness lists and copies of proposed hearing exhibits, including copies of any written

statements or transcripts of deposition testimony that the party intends to offer in lieu of live testimony.

(b) If a party objects, the ALJ will not admit into evidence the testimony of any witness whose name does not appear on the witness list or any exhibit not provided to an opposing party unless the ALJ finds good cause for the omission or concludes that there is no prejudice to the objecting party.

(c) Unless a party objects within the time set by the ALJ, documents exchanged in accordance with this section are deemed to be authentic for the purpose of admissibility at the hearing.

Decisions and Appeals**§ 142.30 How is the case decided?**

(a) The ALJ will issue an initial decision based only on the record. It will contain findings of fact, conclusions of law, and the amount of any penalties and assessments imposed.

(b) The ALJ will serve the initial decision on all parties within 90 days after close of the hearing or expiration of any allowed time for submission of post-hearing briefs. If the ALJ fails to meet this deadline, he or she shall promptly notify the parties of the reason for the delay and set a new deadline.

(c) The findings of fact must include a finding on each of the following issues:

- (1) Whether any one or more of the claims or statements identified in the complaint violate this part; and
- (2) If the defendant is liable for penalties or assessments, the appropriate amount of any such penalties or assessments, considering any mitigating or aggravating factors.

(d) The initial decision will include a description of the right of a defendant found liable for a civil penalty or assessment to file a motion for reconsideration with the ALJ or a notice of appeal with the Administrator.

§ 142.31 Can a party request reconsideration of the initial decision?

(a) Any party may file a motion for reconsideration of the initial decision with the ALJ within 20 days of receipt of the initial decision. If the initial decision was served by mail, there is a rebuttable presumption that the initial decision was received by the party 5 days from the date of mailing.

(b) A motion for reconsideration must be accompanied by a supporting brief and must describe specifically each allegedly erroneous decision.

(c) Any response to a motion for reconsideration must be filed within 20 days of receipt of such motion.

(d) The ALJ will dispose of a motion for reconsideration by denying it or by issuing a revised initial decision.

(e) If the ALJ issues a revised initial decision upon motion of a party, that party may not file another motion for reconsideration.

§ 142.32 When does the initial decision of the ALJ become final?

(a) The initial decision of the ALJ becomes the final decision of SBA, and shall be binding on all parties 30 days after it is issued, unless any party timely files a motion for reconsideration or any defendant adjudged to have submitted a false claim or statement timely appeals to the SBA Administrator, as set forth in § 142.33.

(b) If the ALJ disposes of a motion for reconsideration by denying it or by issuing a revised initial decision, the ALJ's order on the motion for reconsideration becomes the final decision of SBA 30 days after the order is issued, unless a defendant adjudged to have submitted a false claim or statement timely appeals to the Administrator, within 30 days of the ALJ's order, as set forth in § 142.33.

§ 142.33 What are the procedures for appealing the ALJ decision?

(a) Any defendant who submits a timely answer and is found liable for a civil penalty or assessment in an initial decision may appeal the decision.

(b) The defendant may file a notice of appeal with the Administrator within 30 days following issuance of the initial decision, serving a copy of the notice of appeal on all parties and the ALJ. The Administrator may extend this deadline for up to thirty additional days if an extension request is filed within the initial 30 day period and shows good cause.

(c) The defendant's appeal will not be considered until all timely motions for reconsideration have been resolved.

(d) If a timely motion for reconsideration is denied, a notice of appeal may be filed within 30 days following such denial or issuance of a revised initial decision, whichever applies.

(e) A notice of appeal must be supported by a written brief specifying why the initial decision should be reversed or modified.

(f) SBA's representative may file a brief in opposition to the notice of appeal within 30 days of receiving the defendant's notice of appeal and supporting brief.

(g) If a defendant timely files a notice of appeal, and the time for filing motions for reconsideration has expired, the ALJ will forward the record of the proceeding to the Administrator.

§ 142.34 Are there any limitations on the right to appeal to the Administrator?

(a) A defendant has no right to appear personally, or through a representative, before the Administrator.

(b) There is no right to appeal any interlocutory ruling.

(c) The Administrator will not consider any objection or evidence that was not raised before the ALJ unless the defendant demonstrates that the failure to object was caused by extraordinary circumstances. If the appealing defendant demonstrates the satisfaction of the Administrator that extraordinary circumstances prevented the presentation of evidence at the hearing, and that the additional evidence is material, the Administrator may remand the matter to the ALJ for consideration of the additional evidence.

§ 142.35 How does the Administrator dispose of an appeal?

(a) The Administrator may affirm, reduce, reverse, compromise, remand, or settle any penalty or assessment imposed by the ALJ in the initial decision or reconsideration decision.

(b) The Administrator will promptly serve each party to the appeal and the ALJ with a copy of his or her decision. This decision must contain a statement describing the right of any person, against whom a penalty or assessment has been made, to seek judicial review.

§ 142.36 Can I obtain judicial review?

If the initial decision is appealed, the decision of the Administrator is the final decision of SBA and is not subject to judicial review unless the defendant files a petition for judicial review within 60 days after the Administrator serves the defendant with a copy of the final decision.

§ 142.37 What judicial review is available?

31 U.S.C. 3805 authorizes judicial review by the appropriate United States District Court of any final SBA decision imposing penalties or assessments, and specifies the procedures for such review. To obtain judicial review, a defendant must file a petition in a timely fashion.

§ 142.38 Can the administrative complaint be settled voluntarily? (a)

(a) Parties may make offers of compromise or settlement at any time. Any compromise or settlement must be in writing.

(b) The reviewing official has the exclusive authority to compromise or settle the case from the date on which the reviewing official is permitted to issue a complaint until the ALJ issues an initial decision.

(c) The Administrator has exclusive authority to compromise or settle the case from the date of the ALJ's initial decision until initiation of any judicial review or any action to collect the penalties and assessments.

(d) The Attorney General has exclusive authority to compromise or settle the case while any judicial review or any action to recover penalties and assessments is pending.

(e) The investigating official may recommend settlement terms to the reviewing official, the Administrator, or the Attorney General, as appropriate. The reviewing official may recommend settlement terms to the Administrator or the Attorney General, as appropriate.

§ 142.39 How are civil penalties and assessments collected?

31 U.S.C. 3806 and 3808(b) authorize the Attorney General to bring specific actions for collection of such civil penalties and assessments including administrative offset under 31 U.S.C. 3716. The penalties and assessments may not, however, be administratively offset against an overpayment of federal taxes (then or later owed) to the defendant by the United States.

§ 142.40 What if the investigation indicates criminal misconduct?

(a) Any investigating official may:
 (1) Refer allegations of criminal misconduct directly to the Department of Justice for prosecution or for suit under the False Claims Act or other civil proceeding;

(2) Defer or postpone a report or referral to the reviewing official to avoid interference with a criminal investigation or prosecution; or

(3) Issue subpoenas under other statutory authority.

(b) Nothing in this part limits the requirement that SBA employees report suspected violations of criminal law to the SBA Office of Inspector General or to the Attorney General.

§ 142.41 How does SBA protect the rights of defendants?

These procedures separate the functions of the investigating official, reviewing official, and the ALJ, each of whom report to a separate organizational authority in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3801. Except for purposes of settlement, or as a witness or a representative in public proceedings, no investigating official, reviewing official, or SBA employee or agent who helps investigate, prepare, or present a case may (in such case, or a factually related case) participate in the initial decision or the review of the initial decision by the Administrator.

This separation of functions and organization is designed to assure the independence and impartiality of each government official during every stage of the proceeding. The representative for SBA may be employed in the offices of either the investigating official or the reviewing official.

Dated: January 22, 1996.

John T. Spotila,

Acting Administrator.

[FR Doc. 96-1349 Filed 1-26-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. 96-NM-03-AD; Amendment 39-9491; AD 96-01-52]

Airworthiness Directives; Airbus Model A310 and A300-600 Series Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Final rule; request for comments.

SUMMARY: This document publishes in the Federal Register an amendment adopting Airworthiness Directive (AD) T96-01-52 that was sent previously to all known U.S. owners and operators of Airbus Model A310 and A300-600 series airplanes by individual telegrams. Among other things, this AD requires repetitive inspections to ensure correct synchronization of the hydraulic control valves of the trimmable horizontal stabilizer (THS) actuator; replacement of the horizontal stabilizer actuator motors with new or serviceable motors and resynchronization of the valves, or adjustment of the synchronization, if necessary; and a functional test of the THS. This amendment is prompted by a report of desynchronization of the hydraulic control valves that direct fluid to the horizontal stabilizer actuator motors, which resulted in uncommanded movement of the THS. The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent such desynchronization, which could lead to runaway of the horizontal stabilizer to its full up or down position, subsequent reduced maneuvering capability, and potential pitch upset.

DATES: Effective February 5, 1996, to all persons except those persons to whom it was made immediately effective by telegraphic AD T96-01-52, issued January 9, 1996, which contained the requirements of this amendment.

The incorporation by reference of certain publications listed in the regulations is approved by the Director of the Federal Register as of February 5, 1996.

Comments for inclusion in the Rules Docket must be received on or before March 29, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments in triplicate to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transport Airplane Directorate, ANM-103, Attention: Rules Docket No.96-NM-03-AD, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056.

The applicable service information may be obtained from Airbus Industrie, 1 Rond Point Maurice Bellonte, 31707 Blagnac Cedex, France. This information may be examined at the FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington; or at the Office of the Federal Register, 800 North Capitol Street NW., suite 700, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Groves, Aerospace Engineer, Standardization Branch, ANM-113, FAA, Transport Airplane Directorate, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton, Washington 98055-4056; telephone (206) 227-1503; fax (206) 227-1149.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile (DGAC), which is the airworthiness authority for France, recently notified the FAA that an unsafe condition may exist on certain Airbus Model A310 and A300-600 series airplanes. The DGAC advises that it recently received a report indicating that uncommanded movement of the trimmable horizontal stabilizer (THS) occurred on a Model A310 series airplane after the engine was started while the airplane was on the ground. Both pitch trim levers and the autopilot (AP) 1 tripped; additionally, the servo control push button (P/B) of one of the hydraulic systems illuminated. The servo control P/B was reset successfully following engagement of the pitch trim and AP1.

The crew attempted to command the pitch trim by using one of the rocking switches; however, the pitch trim and AP1 tripped again. Then, without further action on the part of the crew, the pitch trim control wheel moved to a position of 14 degrees up (end of travel).

During subsequent bench testing of the motor on one of the hydraulic systems of the airplane, the positioning pin on the cam plate was found to be broken. This pin is not designed to carry loads. The shape of the pin hole indicated that the pin was bent and ruptured.

Further investigation revealed that the pin rupture was caused by desynchronization of the hydraulic control valves that direct fluid to the horizontal stabilizer actuator (HSA) motors. Desynchronization of the hydraulic control valves can result in one hydraulic motor being pressurized before the other. In this case, the nonpressurized motor opposes the torque of the motor that is pressurized first, which causes load to be applied to the positioning pin of the nonpressurized motor. Consequently, the pin can rupture due to fatigue. Such rupturing of the positioning pin of one motor can result in jamming of the THS actuator and can contribute to subsequent failure of the hydraulic system of the other motor.

These conditions, if not corrected, could result in runaway of the horizontal stabilizer to its full up or down position, and subsequent reduced maneuvering capability and a potential pitch upset.

The horizontal stabilizer actuator installed on Model A310 series airplanes is similar in design to the one installed on Model A300-600 series airplanes. Therefore, the FAA finds that Model A300-600 series airplanes are subject to the same unsafe condition identified in the Model A310.

Airbus has issued All Operators Telex (AOT) 27-21, Revision 1, dated January 5, 1996, which describes procedures for repetitive inspections to ensure correct synchronization of the hydraulic control valves of the THS actuators; replacement of the hydraulic motors with new or serviceable motors and resynchronization of the valves, or adjustment of the synchronization, if necessary; and a functional test of the THS.

For airplanes on which the hydraulic motor or hydraulic valve block of the HSA has been subject to previous maintenance action, the AOT also describes procedures for replacement of both hydraulic motors of the HSA with new or serviceable motors.

In lieu of replacing the motors, the AOT also describes procedures for removal of the hydraulic motors of the HSA, accomplishment of various follow-on actions, and repair of any discrepancy found. (The follow-on actions include checking the motors and the cam seats, assembling the motors, and metal stamping the modification plate of the motors.)

Additionally, the AOT describes procedures for eventual removal of certain motors for inspection to detect any wear or damage caused by desynchronization; and, if necessary, either replacement of the motors with