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SUBCHAPTER A—INCOME TAX (Continued)

PART 1—INCOME TAX; TAXABLE YEARS BEGINNING AFTER DECEMBER 31, 1953 (Continued)

Normal Taxes and Surtaxes (Continued)

DEFERRED COMPENSATION, ETC.

Pension, Profit-Sharing, Stock Bonus Plans, etc.

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DEFERRED COMPENSATION, ETC.

PENSION, PROFIT-SHARING, STOCK BONUS PLANS, ETC.

§ 1.401–0 Scope and definitions.

(a) *In general.* Sections 1.401 through 1.401–14 (inclusive) reflect the provisions of section 401 prior to amendment by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. The sections following § 1.401–14 and preceding § 1.402(a)–1 (hereafter referred to in this section as the ''Post-ERISA Regulations'') reflect the provisions of section 401 after amendment by such Act.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of the Post-ERISA regulations—

(1) *Qualified plan.* The term ''qualified plan'' means a plan which satisfies the requirements of section 401(a).

(2) *Qualified trust.* The term ''qualified trust'' means a trust which satisfies the requirements of section 401(a).

(Sec. 411 Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42320, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.401–1 Qualified pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans.

(a) *Introduction.* (1) Sections 401 through 405 relate to pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, and annuity plans, compensation paid under a deferred-payment plan, and bond purchase plans. Section 401(a) prescribes the requirements which must be met for qualification of a trust forming part of a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan.

(2) A qualified pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan is a definite written program and arrangement which is communicated to the employees and which is established and maintained by an employer—

(i) In the case of a pension plan, to provide for the livelihood of the employees or their beneficiaries after the retirement of such employees through the payment of benefits determined without regard to profits (see paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section);

(ii) In the case of a profit-sharing plan, to enable employees or their beneficiaries to participate in the profits of the employer's trade or business, or in the profits of an affiliated employer who is entitled to deduct his contributions to the plan under section 404(a)(3)(B), pursuant to a definite formula for allocating the contributions and for distributing the funds accumulated under the plan (see paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section); and

(iii) In the case of a stock bonus plan, to provide employees or their beneficiaries benefits similar to those of profit-sharing plans, except that such benefits are distributable in stock of the employer, and that the contributions by the employer are not necessarily dependent upon profits. If the employer's contributions are dependent upon profits, the plan may enable employees or their beneficiaries to participate not only in the profits of the employer, but also in the profits of an affiliated employer who is entitled to deduct his contributions to the plan under section 404(a)(3)(B) (see paragraph (b)(1)(iii) of this section).

(3) In order for a trust forming part of a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan to constitute a qualified trust under section 401(a), the following tests must be met:

(i) It must be created or organized in the United States, as defined in section 7701(a)(9), and it must be maintained at all times as a domestic trust in the United States;

(ii) It must be part of a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan established by an employer for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries (see paragraph (b)(2) through (5) of this section);

(iii) It must be formed or availed of for the purpose of distributing to the employees or their beneficiaries the corpus and income of the fund accumulated by the trust in accordance with the plan, and, in the case of a plan which covers (as defined in paragraph (a)(2) of § 1.401–10) any self-employed individual, the time and method of such distribution must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(9) with respect to each employee covered by the plan (see paragraph (e) of § 1.401–11);

(iv) It must be impossible under the trust instrument at any time before the satisfaction of all liabilities with respect to employees and their beneficiaries under the trust, for any part of the corpus or income to be used for,

or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of the employees or their beneficiaries (see § 1.401–2);

(v) It must be part of a plan which benefits prescribed percentages of the employees, or which benefits such employees as qualify under a classification set up by the employer and found by the Commissioner not to be discriminatory in favor of certain specified classes of employees (see § 1.401–3 and, in addition, see § 1.401–12 for special rules as to plans covering owner-employees);

(vi) It must be part of a plan under which contributions or benefits do not discriminate in favor of certain specified classes of employees (see § 1.401–4);

(vii) It must be part of a plan which provides the nonforfeitable rights described in section 401(a)(7) (see § 1.401–6);

(viii) If the trust forms part of a pension plan, the plan must provide that forfeitures must not be applied to increase the benefits any employee would receive under such plan (see § 1.401–7);

(ix) It must, if the plan benefits any self-employed individual who is an owner-employee, satisfy the additional requirements for qualification contained in section 401(a)(10) and (d).

(4) For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962, self-employed individuals may be included in qualified plans. See §§ 1.401–10 through 1.401–13.

(b) *General rules.* (1)(i) A pension plan within the meaning of section 401(a) is a plan established and maintained by an employer primarily to provide systematically for the payment of definitely determinable benefits to his employees over a period of years, usually for life, after retirement. Retirement benefits generally are measured by, and based on, such factors as years of service and compensation received by the employees. The determination of the amount of retirement benefits and the contributions to provide such benefits are not dependent upon profits. Benefits are not definitely determinable if funds arising from forfeitures on termination of service, or other reason, may be used to provide increased benefits for the remaining participants (see § 1.401–7, relating to the treatment of forfeitures under a qualified pension plan). A plan designed to provide benefits for employees or their beneficiaries to be paid upon retirement or over a period of years after retirement will, for the purposes of section 401(a), be considered a pension plan if the employer contributions under the plan can be determined actuarially on the basis of definitely determinable benefits, or, as in the case of money purchase pension plans, such contributions are fixed without being geared to profits. A pension plan may provide for the payment of a pension due to disability and may also provide for the payment of incidental death benefits through insurance or otherwise. However, a plan is not a pension plan if it provides for the payment of benefits not customarily included in a pension plan such as layoff benefits or benefits for sickness, accident, hospitalization, or medical expenses (except medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14).

(ii) A profit-sharing plan is a plan established and maintained by an employer to provide for the participation in his profits by his employees or their beneficiaries. The plan must provide a definite predetermined formula for allocating the contributions made to the plan among the participants and for distributing the funds accumulated under the plan after a fixed number of years, the attainment of a stated age, or upon the prior occurrence of some event such as layoff, illness, disability, retirement, death, or severance of employment. A formula for allocating the contributions among the participants is definite if, for example, it provides for an allocation in proportion to the basic compensation of each participant. A plan (whether or not it contains a definite predetermined formula for determining the profits to be shared with the employees) does not qualify under section 401(a) if the contributions to the plan are made at such times or in such amounts that the plan in operation discriminates in favor of officers, shareholders, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees. For the rules with respect to discrimination, see §§ 1.401–3 and 1.401–4. A profit-sharing plan within the meaning of section 401

is primarily a plan of deferred compensation, but the amounts allocated to the account of a participant may be used to provide for him or his family incidental life or accident or health insurance.

(iii) A stock bonus plan is a plan established and maintained by an employer to provide benefits similar to those of a profit-sharing plan, except that the contributions by the employer are not necessarily dependent upon profits and the benefits are distributable in stock of the employer company. For the purpose of allocating and distributing the stock of the employer which is to be shared among his employees or their beneficiaries, such a plan is subject to the same requirements as a profit-sharing plan.

(iv) As to inclusion of full-time life insurance salesmen within the class of persons considered to be employees, see section 7701(a)(20).

(2) The term ''plan'' implies a permanent as distinguished from a temporary program. Thus, although the employer may reserve the right to change or terminate the plan, and to discontinue contributions thereunder, the abandonment of the plan for any reason other than business necessity within a few years after it has taken effect will be evidence that the plan from its inception was not a bona fide program for the exclusive benefit of employees in general. Especially will this be true if, for example, a pension plan is abandoned soon after pensions have been fully funded for persons in favor of whom discrimination is prohibited under section 401(a). The permanency of the plan will be indicated by all of the surrounding facts and circumstances, including the likelihood of the employer's ability to continue contributions as provided under the plan. In the case of a profit-sharing plan, other than a profit-sharing plan which covers employees and owner-employees (see section 401(d)(2)(B)), it is not necessary that the employer contribute every year or that he contribute the same amount or contribute in accordance with the same ratio every year. However, merely making a single or occasional contribution out of profits for employees does not establish a plan of profit-sharing. To be a profit-sharing plan, there must be recurring and substantial contributions out of profits for the employees. In the event a plan is abandoned, the employer should promptly notify the district director, stating the circumstances which led to the discontinuance of the plan.

(3) If the plan is so designed as to amount to a subterfuge for the distribution of profits to shareholders, it will not qualify as a plan for the exclusive benefit of employees even though other employees who are not shareholders are also included under the plan. The plan must benefit the employees in general, although it need not provide benefits for all of the employees. Among the employees to be benefited may be persons who are officers and shareholders. However, a plan is not for the exclusive benefit of employees in general if, by any device whatever, it discriminates either in eligibility requirements, contributions, or benefits in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or the highly compensated employees. See section 401(a) (3), (4), and (5). Similarly, a stock bonus or profit-sharing plan is not a plan for the exclusive benefit of employees in general if the funds therein may be used to relieve the employer from contributing to a pension plan operating concurrently and covering the same employees. All of the surrounding and attendant circumstances and the details of the plan will be indicative of whether it is a bona fide stock bonus, pension, or profit-sharing plan for the exclusive benefit of employees in general. The law is concerned not only with the form of a plan but also with its effects in operation. For example, section 401(a)(5) specifies certain provisions which of themselves are not discriminatory. However, this does not mean that a plan containing these provisions may not be discriminatory in actual operation.

(4) A plan is for the exclusive benefit of employees or their beneficiaries even though it may cover former employees as well as present employees and employees who are temporarily on leave, as, for example, in the Armed Forces of the United States. A plan covering only former employees may

qualify under section 401(a) if it complies with the provisions of section 401(a)(3)(B), with respect to coverage, and section 401(a)(4), with respect to contributions and benefits, as applied to all of the former employees. The term ''beneficiaries'' of an employee within the meaning of section 401 includes the estate of the employee, dependents of the employee, persons who are the natural objects of the employee's bounty, and any persons designated by the employee to share in the benefits of the plan after the death of the employee.

(5)(i) No specific limitations are provided in section 401(a) with respect to investments which may be made by the trustees of a trust qualifying under section 401(a). Generally, the contributions may be used by the trustees to purchase any investments permitted by the trust agreement to the extent allowed by local law. However, such a trust will be subject to tax under section 511 with respect to any ''unrelated business taxable income'' (as defined in section 512) realized by it from its investments.

(ii) Where the trust funds are invested in stock or securities of, or loaned to, the employer or other person described in section 503(b), full disclosure must be made of the reasons for such arrangement and the conditions under which such investments are made in order that a determination may be made whether the trust serves any purpose other than constituting part of a plan for the exclusive benefit of employees. The trustee shall report any of such investments on the return which under section 6033 it is required to file and shall with respect to any such investment furnish the information required by such return. See § 1.6033–1.

(c) *Portions of years.* A qualified status must be maintained throughout the entire taxable year of the trust in order for the trust to obtain any exemption for such year. But see section 401(a)(6) and § 1.401–3.

(d) *Plan of several employers.* A trust forming part of a plan of several employers for their employees will be qualified if all the requirements are otherwise satisfied.

(e) *Determination of exemptions and returns.* (1) An employees' trust may request a determination letter as to its qualification under section 401 and exemption under section 501. For the procedure for obtaining such a determination letter see paragraph (l) of § 601.201 of this chapter (Statement of Procedural Rules).

(2) A trust which qualifies under section 401(a) and which is exempt under section 501(a) must file a return in accordance with section 6033 and the regulations thereunder. See §§ 1.6033–1 and 1.6033–2(a)(3). In case such a trust realizes any unrelated business taxable income, as defined in section 512, such trust is also required to file a return with respect to such income. See paragraph (e) of § 1.6012–2 and paragraph (a)(5) of § 1.6012–3 for requirements with respect to such returns. For information required to be furnished periodically by an employer with respect to the qualification of a plan, see §§ 1.404(a)–2, 1.404(a)–2A, and 1.6033–2(a)(2)(ii)*(i)*.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11670, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10118, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5071, Apr. 14, 1964; T.D. 7168, 37 FR 5024, Mar. 9, 1972; T.D. 7428, 41 FR 34619, Aug. 16, 1976]

§ 1.401–2 Impossibility of diversion under the trust instrument.

(a) *In general.* (1) Under section 401(a)(2) a trust is not qualified unless under the trust instrument it is impossible (in the taxable year and at any time thereafter before the satisfaction of all liabilities to employees or their beneficiaries covered by the trust) for any part of the trust corpus or income to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of such employees or their beneficiaries. This section does not apply to funds of the trust which are allocated to provide medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14. For the rules prohibiting diversion of such funds and the requirement of reversion to the employer after satisfaction of all liabilities under the medical benefits account, see paragraph (c) (4) and (5) of § 1.401–14. For rules permitting reversion to the employer of amounts held in a section 415 suspense acount, see § 1.401(a)–2(b).

(2) As used in section 401(a)(2), the phrase ''if under the trust instrument it is impossible'' means that the trust instrument must definitely and affirmatively make it impossible for the nonexempt diversion or use to occur, whether by operation or natural termination of the trust, by power of revocation or amendment, by the happening of a contingency, by collateral arrangement, or by any other means. Although it is not essential that the employer relinquish all power to modify or terminate the rights of certain employees covered by the trust, it must be impossible for the trust funds to be used or diverted for purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries.

(3) As used in section 401(a)(2), the phrase ''purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries'' includes all objects or aims not solely designed for the proper satisfaction of all liabilities to employees or their beneficiaries covered by the trust.

(b) *Meaning of ''liabilities''.* (1) The intent and purpose in section 401(a)(2) of the phrase ''prior to the satisfaction of all liabilities with respect to employees and their beneficiaries under the trust'' is to permit the employer to reserve the right to recover at the termination of the trust, and only at such termination, any balance remaining in the trust which is due to erroneous actuarial computations during the previous life of the trust. A balance due to an ''erroneous actuarial computation'' is the surplus arising because actual requirements differ from the expected requirements even though the latter were based upon previous actuarial valuations of liabilities or determinations of costs of providing pension benefits under the plan and were made by a person competent to make such determinations in accordance with reasonable assumptions as to mortality, interest, etc., and correct procedures relating to the method of funding. For example, a trust has accumulated assets of $1,000,000 at the time of liquidation, determined by acceptable actuarial procedures using reasonable assumptions as to interest, mortality, etc., as being necessary to provide the benefits in accordance with the provisions of the plan. Upon such liquidation it is found that $950,000 will satisfy all of the liabilities under the plan. The surplus of $50,000 arises, therefore, because of the difference between the amounts actuarially determined and the amounts actually required to satisfy the liabilities. This $50,000, therefore, is the amount which may be returned to the employer as the result of an erroneous actuarial computation. If, however, the surplus of $50,000 had been accumulated as a result of a change in the benefit provisions or in the eligibility requirements of the plan, the $50,000 could not revert to the employer because such surplus would not be the result of an erroneous actuarial computation.

(2) The term ''liabilities'' as used in section 401(a)(2) includes both fixed and contingent obligations to employees. For example, if 1,000 employees are covered by a trust forming part of a pension plan, 300 of whom have satisfied all the requirements for a monthly pension, while the remaining 700 employees have not yet completed the required period of service, contingent obligations to such 700 employees have nevertheless arisen which constitute ''liabilities'' within the meaning of that term. It must be impossible for the employer (or other non employee) to recover any amounts other than such amounts as remain in the trust because of ''erroneous actuarial computations'' after the satisfaction of all fixed and contingent obligations. Furthermore, the trust instrument must contain a definite affirmative provision to this effect, irrespective of whether the obligations to employees have their source in the trust instrument itself, in the plan of which the trust forms a part, or in some collateral instrument or arrangement forming a part of such plan, and regardless of whether such obligations are, technically speaking, liabilities of the employer, of the trust, or of some other person forming a part of the plan or connected with it.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11672, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5072, Apr. 14, 1964; T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401–3 Requirements as to coverage.

(a)(1) In order to insure that stock bonus, pension, and profit-sharing

plans are utilized for the welfare of employees in general, and to prevent the trust device from being used for the principal benefit of shareholders, officers, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly paid employees, or as a means of tax avoidance, a trust will not be qualified unless it is part of a plan which satisfies the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3). However, if the plan covers any individual who is an owner- employee, as defined in section 401(c)(3), the requirements of section 401(a)(3) and this section are not applicable to such plan, but the plan must satisfy the requirements of section 401(d) (see § 1.401–12).

(2) The percentage requirements in section 401(a)(3)(A) refer to a percentage of all the active employees, including employees temporarily on leave, such as those in the Armed Forces of the United States, if such employees are eligible under the plan.

(3) The application of section 401(a)(3)(A) may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. A corporation adopts a plan at a time when it has 1,000 employees. The plan provides that all full-time employees who have been employed for a period of two years and have reached the age of 30 shall be eligible to participate. The plan also requires participating employees to contribute 3 percent of their monthly pay. At the time the plan is made effective 100 of the 1,000 employees had not been employed for a period of two years. Fifty of the employees were seasonal employees whose customary employment did not exceed five months in any calendar year. Twenty-five of the employees were part-time employees whose customary employment did not exceed 20 hours in any one week. One hundred and fifty of the full-time employees who had been employed for two years or more had not yet reached age 30. The requirements of section 401(a)(3)(A) will be met if 540 employees are covered by the plan, as shown by the following computation:

(i) Total employees with respect to whom the percentage requirements are applicable (1,000 minus 175 (100 plus 50 plus 25))	825
(ii) Employees not eligible to participate because of age requirements	150
(iii) Total employees eligible to participate	675
(iv) Percentage of employees in item (i) eligible to participate	81+%
(v) Minimum number of participating employees to qualify the plan (80 percent of 675)	540

If only 70 percent, or 578, of the 825 employees satisfied the age and service requirements, then 462 (80 percent of 578) participating employees would satisfy the percentage requirements.

(b) If a plan fails to qualify under the percentage requirements of section 401(a)(3)(A), it may still qualify under section 401(a)(3)(B) provided always that (as required by section 401(a) (3) and (4)) the plan's eligibility conditions, benefits, and contributions do not discriminate in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or the highly compensated employees.

(c) Since, for the purpose of section 401, a profit-sharing plan is a plan which provides for distributing the funds accumulated under the plan after a fixed number of years, the attainment of a stated age, or upon the prior occurrence of some event such as illness, disability, retirement, death, layoff, or severance of employment, employees who receive the amounts allocated to their accounts before the expiration of such a period of time or the occurrence of such a contingency shall not be considered covered by a profit-sharing plan in determining whether the plan meets the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3) (A) and (B). Thus, in case a plan permits employees to receive immediately the amounts allocated to their accounts, or to have such amounts paid to a profit- sharing plan for them, the employees who receive the shares immediately shall not, for the purpose of section 401, be considered covered by a profit-sharing plan.

(d) Section 401(a)(5) sets out certain classifications that will not in themselves be considered discriminatory. However, those so designated are not intended to be exclusive. Thus, plans may qualify under section 401(a)(3)(B) even though coverage thereunder is limited to employees who have either reached a designated age or have been employed for a designated number of years, or who are employed in certain designated departments or are in other classifications, provided the effect of

covering only such employees does not discriminate in favor of officers, shareholders, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees. For example, if there are 1,000 employees, and the plan is written for only salaried employees, and consequently only 500 employees are covered, that fact alone will not justify the conclusion that the plan does not meet the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3)(B). Conversely, if a contributory plan is offered to all of the employees but the contributions required of the employee participants are so burdensome as to make the plan acceptable only to the highly paid employees, the classification will be considered discriminatory in favor of such highly paid employees.

(e)(1) Section 401(a)(5) contains a provision to the effect that a classification shall not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B) merely because all employees whose entire annual remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) (for purposes of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, chapter 21 of the Code) are excluded from the plan. A reference to section 3121(a)(1) for years after 1954 shall be deemed a reference to section 1426(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1939 for years before 1955. This provision, in conjunction with section 401(a)(3)(B), is intended to permit the qualification of plans which supplement the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits under the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. ch. 7). Thus, a classification which excludes all employees whose entire remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1), will not be considered discriminatory merely because of such exclusion. Similarly, a plan which includes all employees will not be considered discriminatory solely because the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is excluded from wages under section 3121(a)(1) differ from the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is not so excluded. However, in making his determination with respect to discrimination in classification under section 401(a)(3)(B), the Commissioner will consider whether the total benefits resulting to each employee under the plan and under the Social Security Act, or under the Social Security Act only, establish an integrated and correlated retirement system satisfying the tests of section 401(a). If, therefore, a classification of employees under a plan results in relatively or proportionately greater benefits for employees earning above any specified salary amount or rate than for those below any such salary amount or rate, it may be found to be discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B). If, however, the relative or proportionate differences in benefits which result from such classification are approximately offset by the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which are provided by the Social Security Act and which are not attributable to employee contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act, the plan will be considered to be properly integrated with the Social Security Act and will, therefore, not be considered discriminatory.

(2)(i) For purposes of determining whether a plan is properly integrated with the Social Security Act, the amount of old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which may be considered as attributable to employer contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act is computed on the basis of the following:

(A) The rate at which the maximum monthly old-age insurance benefit is provided under the Social Security Act is considered to be the average of *(1)* the rate at which the maximum benefit currently payable under the Act (i.e., in 1971) is provided to an employee retiring at age 65, and *(2)* the rate at which the maximum benefit ultimately payable under the Act (i.e., in 2010) is provided to an employee retiring at age 65. The resulting figure is 43 percent of the average monthly wage on which such benefit is computed.

(B) The total old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits with respect to an employee is considered to be 162 percent of the employee's old-age insurance benefits. The resulting figure is 70 percent of the average monthly wage on which it is computed.

(C) In view of the fact that social security benefits are funded through equal contributions by the employer and employee, 50 percent of such benefits is considered attributable to employer contributions. The resulting figure is 35 percent of the average monthly wage on which the benefit is computed.

Under these assumptions, the maximum old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits which may be attributed to employer contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act is an amount equal to 35 percent of the earnings on which they are computed. These computations take into account all amendments to the Society Security Act through the Social Security Amendments of 1971 (85 Stat. 6). It is recognized, however, that subsequent amendments to this Act may increase the percentages described in (A) or (B) of this subdivision (i), or both. If this occurs, the method used in this subparagraph for determining the integration formula may result in a figure under (C) of this subdivision (i) which is greater than 35 percent and a plan could be amended to adopt such greater figure in its benefit formula. In order to minimize future plan amendments of this nature, an employer may anticipate future changes in the Social Security Act by immediately utilizing such a higher figure, but not in excess of 37½ percent, in developing its benefit formula.

(ii) Under the rules provided in this subparagraph, a classification of employees under a noncontributory pension or annuity plan which limits coverage to employees whose compensation exceeds the applicable integration level under the plan will not be considered discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(3)(B), where:

(A) The integration level applicable to an employee is his covered compensation, or is *(1)* in the case of an active employee, a stated dollar amount uniformly applicable to all active employees which is not greater than the covered compensation of any active employee, and *(2)* in the case of a retired employee an amount which is not greater than his covered compensation. (For rules relating to determination of an employee's covered compensation, see subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph.)

(B) The rate at which normal annual retirement benefits are provided for any employee with respect to his average annual compensation in excess of the plan's integration level applicable to him does not exceed 37½ percent.

(C) Average annual compensation is defined to mean the average annual compensation over the highest 5 consecutive years.

(D) There are no benefits payable in case of death before retirement.

(E) The normal form of retirement benefits is a straight life annuity, and if there are optional forms, the benefit payments under each optional form are actuarially equivalent to benefit payments under the normal form.

(F) In the case of any employee who reaches normal retirement age before completion of 15 years of service with the employer, the rate at which normal annual retirement benefits are provided for him with respect to his average annual compensation in excess of the plan's integration level applicable to him does not exceed 2½ percent for each year of service.

(G) Normal retirement age is not lower than age 65.

(H) Benefits payable in case of retirement or any other severance of employment before normal retirement age cannot exceed the actuarial equivalent of the maximum normal retirement benefits, which might be provided in accordance with (A) through (G) of this subdivision (ii), multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the actual number of years of service of the employee at retirement or severance, and the denominator of which is the total number of years of service he would have had if he had remained in service until normal retirement age. A special disabled life mortality table shall not be used in determining the actuarial equivalent in the case of severance due to disability.

(iii) (A) If a plan was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits on July 5, 1968 (hereinafter referred to as an ''existing plan''), then, notwithstanding the fact that

such plan does not satisfy the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, it will continue to be considered properly integrated with such benefits until January 1, 1972. Such plan will be considered properly integrated after December 31, 1971, so long as the benefits provided under the plan for each employee equal the sum of—

(1) The benefits to which he would be entitled under a plan which, on July 5, 1968, would have been considered properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits, and under which benefits are provided at the same (or a lesser) rate with respect to the same portion of compensation with respect to which benefits are provided under the existing plan, multiplied by the percentage of his total service with the employer performed before a specified date not later than January 1, 1972; and

(2) The benefits to which he would be entitled under a plan satisfying the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, multiplied by the percentage of his total service with the employer performed on and after such specified date.

(B) A plan which, on July 5, 1968, was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits will not be considered not to be properly integrated with such benefits thereafter merely because such plan provides a minimum benefit for each employee (other than an employee who owns, directly or indirectly, stock possessing more than 10 percent of the total combined voting power or value of all classes of stock of the employer corporation) equal to the benefit to which he would be entitled under the plan as in effect on July 5, 1968, if he continued to earn annually until retirement the same amount of compensation as he earned in 1967.

(C) If a plan was properly integrated with old-age and survivors insurance benefits on May 17, 1971, notwithstanding the fact that such plan does not satisfy the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, it will continue to be considered properly integrated with such benefits until January 1, 1972.

(iv) For purposes of this subparagraph, an employee's covered compensation is the amount of compensation with respect to which old-age insurance benefits would be provided for him under the Social Security Act (as in effect at any uniformly applicable date occurring before the employee's separation from the service) if for each year until he attains age 65 his annual compensation is at least equal to the maximum amount of earnings subject to tax in each such year under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act. A plan may provide that an employee's covered compensation is the amount determined under the preceding sentence rounded to the nearest whole multiple of a stated dollar amount which does not exceed $600.

(v) In the case of an integrated plan providing benefits different from those described in subdivision (ii) or (iii) (whichever is applicable) of this subparagraph, or providing benefits related to years of service, or providing benefits purchasable by stated employer contributions, or under the terms of which the employees contribute, or providing a combination of any of the foregoing variations, the plan will be considered to be properly integrated only if, as determined by the Commissioner, the benefits provided thereunder by employer contributions cannot exceed in value the benefits described in subdivision (ii) or (iii) (whichever is applicable) of this subparagraph. Similar principles will govern in determining whether a plan is properly integrated if participation therein is limited to employees earning in excess of amounts other than those specified in subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph, or if it bases benefits or contributions on compensation in excess of such amounts, or if it provides for an offset of benefits otherwise payable under the plan on account of old-age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits. Similar principles will govern in determining whether a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan is properly integrated with the Social Security Act.

(3) A plan supplementing the Social Security Act and excluding all employees whose entire annual remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) will not, however, be deemed discriminatory merely because, for administrative convenience, it provides a

reasonable minimum benefit not to exceed $20 a month.

(4) Similar considerations, to the extent applicable in any case, will govern classifications under a plan supplementing the benefits provided by other Federal or State laws. See section 401(a)(5).

(5) If a plan provides contributions or benefits for a self-employed individual, the rules relating to the integration of such a plan with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act are set forth in paragraph (c) of § 1.401–11 and paragraph (h) of § 1.401–12.

(6) This paragraph (e) does not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989.

(f) An employer may designate several trusts or a trust or trusts and an annuity plan or plans as constituting one plan which is intended to qualify under section 401(a)(3), in which case all of such trusts and plans taken as a whole may meet the requirements of such section. The fact that such combination of trusts and plans fails to qualify as one plan does not prevent such of the trusts and plans as qualify from meeting the requirements of section 401(a).

(g) It is provided in section 401(a)(6) that a plan will satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(3), if on at least one day in each quarter of the taxable year of the plan it satisfies such requirements. This makes it possible for a new plan requiring contributions from employees to qualify if by the end of the quarter-year in which the plan is adopted it secures sufficient contributing participants to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(3). It also affords a period of time in which new participants may be secured to replace former participants, so as to meet the requirements of either subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 401(a)(3).

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11672, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10119, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 6982, 33 FR 16499, Nov. 13, 1968; T.D. 7134, 36 FR 13592, July 22, 1971; 36 FR 13990, July 29, 1971; T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47614, Sept. 19, 1991]

§ 1.401–4 Discrimination as to contributions or benefits (before 1994).

(a)(1)(i) In order to qualify under section 401(a), a trust must not only meet the coverage requirements of section 401(a)(3), but, as provided in section 401(a)(4), it must also be part of a plan under which there is no discrimination in contributions or benefits in favor of officers, shareholders, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees as against other employees whether within or without the plan.

(ii) Since, for the purpose of section 401, a profit-sharing plan is a plan which provides for distributing the funds accumulated under the plan after a fixed number of years, the attainment of a stated age, or upon the prior occurrence of some event such as illness, disability, retirement, death, layoff, or severance of employment, any amount allocated to an employee which is withdrawn before the expiration of such a period of time or the occurrence of such a contingency shall not be considered in determining whether the contributions under the plan discriminate in favor of officers, shareholders, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees. Thus, in case a plan permits employees to receive immediately the whole or any part of the amounts allocated to their accounts, or to have the whole or any part of such amounts paid to a profit-sharing plan for them, any amounts which are received immediately shall not, for the purpose of section 401, be considered contributed to a profit-sharing plan.

(iii) Funds in a stock bonus or profit-sharing plan arising from forfeitures on termination of service, or other reason, must not be allocated to the remaining participants in such a manner as will effect the prohibited discrimination. With respect to forfeitures in a pension plan, see § 1.401–7.

(2)(i) Section 401(a)(5) sets out certain provisions which will not in and of themselves be discriminatory within the meaning of section 401 a) (3) or (4). See § 1.401–3. Thus, a plan will not be considered discriminatory merely because the contributions or benefits bear a uniform relationship to total compensation or to the basic or regular

rate of compensation, or merely because the contributions or benefits based on that part of the annual compensation of employees which is subject to the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (chapter 21 of the Code) differ from the contributions or benefits based on any excess of such annual compensation over such part. With regard to the application of the rules of section 401(a)(5) in the case of a plan which benefits a self-employed individual, see paragraph (c) of § 1.401–11.

(ii) The exceptions specified in section 401(a)(5) are not an exclusive enumeration, but are merely a recital of provisions frequently encountered which will not of themselves constitute forbidden discrimination in contributions or benefits.

(iii) Variations in contributions or benefits may be provided so long as the plan, viewed as a whole for the benefit of employees in general, with all its attendant circumstances, does not discriminate in favor of employees within the enumerations with respect to which discrimination is prohibited. Thus, benefits in a stock bonus or profit-sharing plan which vary by reason of an allocation formula which takes into consideration years of service, or other factors, are not prohibited unless they discriminate in favor of such employees.

(b) A plan which excludes all employees whose entire remuneration constitutes wages under section 3121(a)(1) (relating to the Federal Insurance Contributions Act), or a plan under which the contributions or benefits based on that part of an employee's remuneration which is excluded from ''wages'' under such act differs from the contributions or benefits based on that part of the employee's remuneration which is not so excluded, or a plan under which the contributions or benefits differ because of any retirement benefit created under State or Federal law, will not be discriminatory because of such exclusion or difference, provided the total benefits resulting under the plan and under such law establish an integrated and correlated retirement system satisfying the tests of section 401(a).

(c)(1) Although a qualified plan may provide for termination at will by the employer or discontinuance of contributions thereunder, this will not of itself prevent a trust from being a qualified trust. However, a qualified pension plan must expressly incorporate provisions which comply with the restrictions contained in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph at the time the plan is established, unless (i) it is reasonably certain at the inception of the plan that such restrictions would not affect the amount of contributions which may be used for the benefit of any employee, or (ii) the Commissioner determines that such provisions are not necessary to prevent the prohibited discrimination that may occur in the event of any early termination of the plan. Although these provisions are the only provisions required to be incorporated in the plan to prevent the discrimination that may arise because of an early termination of the plan, the plan may in operation result in the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4), unless other provisions are later incorporated in the plan. Any pension plan containing a provision described in this paragraph shall not fail to satisfy section 411(a), (d)(2) and (d)(3) merely by reason of such a plan provision. Paragraph (c)(7) of this section sets forth special early termination rules applicable to certain qualified defined benefit plans for plan years affected by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (''ERISA''). Paragraph (c)(7) of this section does not contain all the rules required by the enactment of ERISA.

(2)(i) If employer contributions under a qualified pension plan may be used for the benefit of an employee who is among the 25 highest paid employees of the employer at the time the plan is established and whose anticipated annual pension under the plan exceeds $1,500, such plan must provide that upon the occurrence of the conditions described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, the employer contributions which are used for the benefit of any such employee are restricted in accordance with subdivision (iii) of this subparagraph.

(ii) The restrictions described in subdivision (iii) of this subparagraph become applicable if—

(A) The plan is terminated within 10 years after its establishment,

(B) The benefits of an employee described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph become payable within 10 years after the establishment of the plan, or

(C) The benefits of an employee described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph become payable after the plan has been in effect for 10 years, and the full current costs of the plan for the first 10 years have not been funded.

In the case of an employee described in (B) of this subdivision, the restrictions will remain applicable until the plan has been in effect for 10 years, but if at that time the full current costs have been funded the restrictions will no longer apply to the benefits payable to such an employee. In the case of an employee described in (B) or (C) of this subdivision, if at the end of the first 10 years the full current costs are not met, the restrictions will continue to apply until the full current costs are funded for the first time.

(iii) The restrictions required under subdivision (i) of this subparagraph must provide that the employer contributions which may be used for the benefit of an employee described in such subdivision shall not exceed the greater of $20,000, or 20 percent of the first $50,000 of the annual compensation of such employee multiplied by the number of years between the date of the establishment of the plan and—

(A) The date of the termination of the plan,

(B) In the case of an employee described in subdivision (ii)(B) of this subparagraph, the date the benefit of the employee becomes payable, if before the date of the termination of the plan, or

(C) In the case of an employee described in subdivision (ii)(C) of this subparagraph, the date of the failure to meet the full current costs of the plan. However, if the full current costs of the plan have not been met on the date described in (A) or (B) of this subdivision, whichever is applicable, then the date of the failure to meet such full current costs shall be substituted for the date referred to in (A) or (B) of this subdivision. For purposes of determining the contributions which may be used for the benefit of an employee when (b) of this subdivision applies, the number of years taken into account may be recomputed for each year if the full current costs of the plan are met for such year.

(iv) For purposes of this subparagraph, the employer contributions which, at a given time, may be used for the benefits of an employee include any unallocated funds which would be used for his benefits if the plan were then terminated or the employee were then to withdraw from the plan, as well as all contributions allocated up to that time exclusively for his benefits.

(v) The provisions of this subparagraph apply to a former or retired employee of the employer, as well as to an employee still in the employer's service.

(vi) The following terms are defined for purposes of this subparagraph—

(A) The term ''benefits'' includes any periodic income, any withdrawal values payable to a living employee, and the cost of any death benefits which may be payable after retirement on behalf of an employee, but does not include the cost of any death benefits with respect to an employee before retirement nor the amount of any death benefits actually payable after the death of an employee whether such death occurs before or after retirement.

(B) The term *full current costs* means the normal cost, as defined in § 1.404(a)–6, for all years since the effective date of the plan, plus interest on any unfunded liability during such period.

(C) The term *annual compensation* of an employee means either such employee's average regular annual compensation, or such average compensation over the last five years, or such employee's last annual compensation if such compensation is reasonably similar to his average regular annual compensation for the five preceding years.

(3) The amount of the employer contributions which can be used for the benefit of a restricted employee may be limited either by limiting the annual amount of the employer contributions for the designated employee during the period affected by the limitation, or by limiting the amount of funds under the plan which can be used for the benefit

of such employee, regardless of the amount of employer contributions.

(4) The restrictions contained in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph may be exceeded for the purpose of making current retirement income benefit payments to retired employees who would otherwise be subject to such restrictions, if—

(i) The employer contributions which may be used for any such employee in accordance with the restrictions contained in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph are applied either (A) to provide level amounts of annuity in the basic form of benefit provided for under the plan for such employee at retirement (or, if he has already retired, beginning immediately), or (B) to provide level amounts of annuity in an optional form of benefit provided under the plan if the level amount of annuity under such optional form of benefit is not greater than the level amount of annuity under the basic form of benefit provided under the plan;

(ii) The annuity thus provided is supplemented, to the extent necessary to provide the full retirement income benefits in the basic form called for under the plan, by current payments to such employee as such benefits come due; and

(iii) Such supplemental payments are made at any time only if the full current costs of the plan have then been met, or the aggregate of such supplemental payments for all such employees does not exceed the aggregate employer contributions already made under the plan in the year then current.

If disability income benefits are provided under the plan, the plan may contain like provisions with respect to the current payment of such benefits.

(5) If a plan has been changed so as to increase substantially the extent of possible discrimination as to contributions and as to benefits actually payable in event of the subsequent termination of the plan or the subsequent discontinuance of contributions thereunder, then the provisions of this paragraph shall be applied to the plan as so changed as if it were a new plan established on the date of such change. However, the provision in subparagraph (2)(iii) of this paragraph that the unrestricted amount of employer contributions on behalf of any employee is at least $20,000 is applicable to the aggregate amount contributed by the employer on behalf of such employee from the date of establishment of the original plan, and, for purposes of determining if the employee's anticipated annual pension exceeds $1,500, both the employer contributions on the employee's behalf prior to the date of the change in the plan and those expected to be made on his behalf subsequent to the date of the change (based on the employee's rate of compensation on the date of the change) are to be taken into account.

(6) This paragraph shall apply to taxable years of a qualified plan commencing after September 30, 1963. In the case of an early termination of a qualified pension plan during any such taxable year, the employer contributions which may be used for the benefit of any employee must conform to the requirements of this paragraph. However, any pension plan which is qualified on September 30, 1963, will not be disqualified merely because it does not expressly include the provisions prescribed in this paragraph.

(7)(i) A qualified defined benefit plan subject to section 412 (without regard to section 412(h)(2)) shall not be required to contain the restriction described in paragraph (c)(2)(ii)(*c*) of this section applicable to an employee in a plan whose full current costs for the first 10 years have not been funded.

(ii) A qualified defined benefit plan covered by section 4021(a) of ERISA (''qualified Title IV plan'') shall satisfy the restrictions in paragraph (c)(2) of this section only if the plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(7). A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(7) by providing that employer contributions which may be used for the benefit of an employee described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section who is a substantial owner, as defined in section 4022(b)(5) of ERISA, shall not exceed the greater of the dollar amount described in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section or a dollar amount which equals the present value of the benefit guaranteed for such employee under section 4022 of ERISA, or if the plan has not terminated, the present value of the benefit that would

be guaranteed if the plan terminated on the date the benefit commences, determined in accordance with regulations of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (''PBGC'').

(iii) A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(7) by providing that employer contributions which may be used for the benefit of all employees described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section (other than an employee who is a substantial owner as defined in section 4022(b)(5) of ERISA) shall not exceed the greater of the dollar amount described in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section or a dollar amount which equals the present value of the maximum benefit described in section 4022(b)(3)(B) of ERISA (determined on the date the plan terminates or on the date benefits commence, whichever is earlier and determined in accordance with regulations of PBGC) without regard to any other limitations in section 4022 of ERISA.

(iv) A plan provision satisfying this paragraph (c)(7) may be adopted by amendment or by incorporation at the time of establishment. Any allocation of assets attributable to employer contributions to an employee which exceeds the dollar limitation in this paragraph (c)(7) may be reallocated to prevent prohibited discrimination.

(v) The early termination rules in the preceding subparagraphs (1) through (6) apply to a qualified Title IV plan except where such rules are determined by the Commissioner to be inconsistent with the rules of this paragraph (c)(7), § 1.411(d)–2, and section 4044(b)(4) of ERISA. The early termination rules of this paragraph (c)(7) contain some of the rules under section 401(a)(4) and (a)(7), as in effect on September 2, 1974, and section 411(d) (2) and (3). Section 1.411(d)–2 also contains certain discrimination and vesting rules which are applicable to plan terminations.

(vi) Paragraph (c)(7) of this section applies to plan terminations occurring on or after March 12, 1984. For distributions not on account of plan terminations, paragraph (c)(7) applies to distributions in plan years beginning after December 31, 1983. However, a plan may elect to apply that paragraph to distributions not on account of plan termination on or after January 10, 1984.

(d)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, the provisions of this section do not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994. For rules applicable to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994, see §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(2) In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), the provisions of this section do not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996. For rules applicable to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996, see §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(Secs. 411 (d)(2) and (3) and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (68A Stat. 917, 88 Stat. 912; 26 U.S.C. 411(d)(2) and (3) and 7805))

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11674, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10119, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 7934, 49 FR 1183, Jan. 10, 1984; 49 FR 2104, Jan. 18, 1984; T.D. 8360, 56 FR 47536, Sept. 19, 1991; T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46778, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401–5 Period for which requirements of section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), and (6) are applicable with respect to plans put into effect before September 2, 1974.

A pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or annuity plan shall be considered as satisfying the requirements of section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), and (6) for the period beginning with the date on which it was put into effect and ending with the 15th day of the third month following the close of the taxable year of the employer in which the plan was put into effect, if all the provisions of the plan which are necessary to satisfy such requirements are in effect by the end of such period and have been made effective for all purposes with respect to the whole of such period. Thus, if an employer in 1954 adopts such a plan as of January 1, 1954, and makes a return on the basis of the calendar year, he will have until March 15, 1955, to amend his plan so as to make it satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), and (6) for the calendar year 1954 provided that by March 15, 1955, all provisions of such plan necessary to satisfy such requirements are in effect and have been made retroactive for all

purposes to January 1, 1954, the effective date of the plan. If an employer is on a fiscal year basis, for example, April 1 to March 31, and in 1954 adopts such a plan effective as of April 1, 1954, he will have until June 15, 1955, to amend his plan so as to make it satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), and (6) for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 1954, provided that by June 15, 1955, all provisions of such plan necessary to satisfy such requirements are in effect and have been made retroactive for all purposes to April 1, 1954, the effective date of the plan. It should be noted that under section 401(b) the period in which a plan may be amended to qualify under section 401(a) ends before the date on which taxpayers other than corporations are required to file income tax returns. See section 6072. This section shall not apply to any pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or annuity plan put into effect after September 1, 1974, and shall not apply with respect to any disqualifying provision to which § 1.401(b)–1 applies.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11674, Nov. 26, 1960; as amended by T.D. 7436, 41 FR 42653, Sept. 28, 1976]

§ 1.401–6 Termination of a qualified plan.

(a) *General rules.* (1) In order for a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus trust to satisfy the requirements of section 401, the plan of which such trust forms a part must expressly provide that, upon the termination of the plan or upon the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan, the rights of each employee to benefits accrued to the date of such termination or discontinuance, to the extent then funded, or the rights of each employee to the amounts credited to his account at such time, are nonforfeitable. As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee, see paragraph (a)(2) of § 1.402(b)–1.

(2)(i) A qualified plan must also provide for the allocation of any previously unallocated funds to the employees covered by the plan upon the termination of the plan or the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan. Such provision may be incorporated in the plan at its inception or by an amendment made prior to the termination of the plan or the discontinuance of contributions thereunder.

(ii) Any provision for the allocation of unallocated funds is acceptable if it specifies the method to be used and does not conflict with the provisions of section 401(a)(4) and the regulations thereunder. The allocation of unallocated funds may be in cash or in the form of other benefits provided under the plan. However, the allocation of the funds contributed by the employer among the employees need not necessarily benefit all the employees covered by the plan. For example, an allocation may be satisfactory if priority is given to benefits for employees over the age of 50 at the time of the termination of the plan, or those who then have at least 10 years of service, if there is no possibility of discrimination in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees.

(iii) Subdivisions (i) and (ii) of this subparagraph do not require the allocation of amounts to the account of any employee if such amounts are not required to be used to satisfy the liabilities with respect to employees and their beneficiaries under the plan (see section 401(a)(2)).

(b) *Termination defined.* (1) Whether a plan is terminated is generally a question to be determined with regard to all the facts and circumstances in a particular case. For example, a plan is terminated when, in connection with the winding up of the employer's trade or business, the employer begins to discharge his employees. However, a plan is not terminated, for example, merely because an employer consolidates or replaces that plan with a comparable plan. Similarly, a plan is not terminated merely because the employer sells or otherwise disposes of his trade or business if the acquiring employer continues the plan as a separate and distinct plan of its own, or consolidates or replaces that plan with a comparable plan. See paragraph (d)(4) of § 1.381(c)(11)–1 for the definition of comparable plan. In addition, the Commissioner may determine that other plans

are comparable for purposes of this section.

(2) For purposes of this section, the term *termination* includes both a partial termination and a complete termination of a plan. Whether or not a partial termination of a qualified plan occurs when a group of employees who have been covered by the plan are subsequently excluded from such coverage either by reason of an amendment to the plan, or by reason of being discharged by the employer, will be determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances. Similarly, whether or not a partial termination occurs when benefits or employer contributions are reduced, or the eligibility or vesting requirements under the plan are made less liberal, will be determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances. However, if a partial termination of a qualified plan occurs, the provisions of section 401(a)(7) and this section apply only to the part of the plan that is terminated.

(c) *Complete discontinuance defined.* (1) For purposes of this section, a complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan is contrasted with a suspension of contributions under the plan, which is merely a temporary cessation of contributions by the employer. A complete discontinuance of contributions may occur although some amounts are contributed by the employer under the plan if such amounts are not substantial enough to reflect the intent on the part of the employer to continue to maintain the plan. The determination of whether a complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan has occurred will be made with regard to all the facts and circumstances in the particular case, and without regard to the amount of any contributions made under the plan by employees.

(2) In the case of a pension plan, a suspension of contributions will not constitute a discontinuance if—

(i) The benefits to be paid or made available under the plan are not affected at any time by the suspension, and

(ii) The unfunded past service cost at any time (which includes the unfunded prior normal cost and unfunded interest on any unfunded cost) does not exceed the unfunded past service cost as of the date of establishment of the plan, plus any additional past service or supplemental costs added by amendment.

(3) In any case in which a suspension of a profit-sharing plan is considered a discontinuance, the discontinuance becomes effective not later than the last day of the taxable year of the employer following the last taxable year of such employer for which a substantial contribution was made under the profit-sharing plan.

(d) *Contributions or benefits which remain forfeitable.* The provisions of this section do not apply to amounts which are reallocated to prevent the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4) (see paragraph (c) of § 1.401–4).

(e) *Effective date.* This section shall apply to taxable years of a qualified plan commencing after September 30, 1963. In the case of the termination or complete discontinuance (as defined in this section) of any qualified plan during any such taxable year, the rights accorded to each employee covered under the plan must conform to the requirements of this section. However, a plan which is qualified on September 30, 1963, will not be disqualified merely because it does not expressly include the provisions prescribed by this section.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10120, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.401–7 Forfeitures under a qualified pension plan.

(a) *General rules.* In the case of a trust forming a part of a qualified pension plan, the plan must expressly provide that forfeitures arising from severance of employment, death, or for any other reason, must not be applied to increase the benefits any employee would otherwise receive under the plan at any time prior to the termination of the plan or the complete discontinuance of employer contributions thereunder. The amounts so forfeited must be used as soon as possible to reduce the employer's contributions under the plan. However, a qualified pension plan may anticipate the effect of forfeitures in determining the costs under the plan. Furthermore, a qualified plan will not be disqualified merely because a determination of the amount of forfeitures

under the plan is made only once during each taxable year of the employer.

(b) *Examples.* The rules of paragraph (a) of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). The B Company Pension Trust forms a part of a pension plan which is funded by individual level annual premium annuity contracts. The plan requires ten years of service prior to obtaining a vested right to benefits under the plan. One of the company's employees resigns his position after two years of service. The insurance company paid to the trustees the cash surrender value of the contract—$750. The B Company must reduce its next contribution to the pension trust by this amount.

Example (2). The C Corporation's trusteed pension plan has been in existence for 20 years. It is funded by individual contracts issued by an insurance company, and the premiums thereunder are paid annually. Under such plan, the annual premium accrued for the year 1966 is due and is paid on January 2, 1966, and on July 1 of the same year the plan is terminated due to the liquidation of the employer. Some forfeitures were incurred and collected by the trustee with respect to those participants whose employment terminated between January 2 and July 1. The plan provides that the amount of such forfeitures is to be applied to provide additional annuity benefits for the remaining employees covered by the plan. The pension plan of the C Corporation satisfies the provisions of section 401(a)(8). Although forfeitures are used to increase benefits in this case, this use of forfeitures is permissible since no further contributions will be made under the plan.

(c) *Effective date.* This section applies to taxable years of a qualified plan commencing after September 30, 1963. However, a plan which is qualified on September 30, 1963, will not be disqualified merely because it does not expressly include the provisions prescribed by this section.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10121, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.401–8 Custodial accounts prior to January 1, 1974.

(a) *Treatment of a custodial account as a qualified trust.* For taxable years of a plan beginning after December 31, 1962, a custodial account may be used, in lieu of a trust, under any pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan, described in section 401 if the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are met. A custodial account may be used under such a plan, whether the plan covers common-law employees, self-employed individuals who are treated as employees by reason of section 401(c), or both. The use of a custodial account as part of a plan does not preclude the use of a trust or another custodial account as part of the same plan. A plan under which a custodial account is used may be considered in connection with other plans of the employer in determining whether the requirements of section 401 are satisfied. For regulations relating to the period after December 31, 1973, see § 1.401(f)–11.

(b) *Rules applicable to custodial accounts.* (1) A custodial account shall be treated for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962, as a qualified trust under section 401 if such account meets the following requirements described in subdivisions (i) through (iii) of this subparagraph:

(i) The custodial account must satisfy all the requirements of section 401 that are applicable to qualified trusts. See subparagraph (2) of this paragraph.

(ii) The custodian of the custodial account must be a bank.

(iii) The custodial agreement provides that the investment of the funds in the account is to be made—

(A) Solely in stock of one or more regulated investment companies which is registered in the name of the custodian or its nominee and with respect to which an employee who is covered by the plan is the beneficial owner, or

(B) Solely in annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts, issued by an insurance company and held by the custodian until distributed pursuant to the terms of the plan. For purposes of the preceding sentence, a face-amount certificate described in section 401(g) and § 1.401–9 is treated as an annuity issued by an insurance company.

See subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this paragraph.

(2) As a result of the requirement described in subparagraph (1)(i) of this paragraph (relating to the requirements applicable to qualified trusts), the custodial account must, for example, be created pursuant to a written agreement which constitutes a valid contract under local law. In addition, the terms of the contract must make it impossible, prior to the satisfaction of

all liabilities with respect to the employees and their beneficiaries covered by the plan, for any part of the funds of the custodial account to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of the employees or their beneficiaries as provided for in the plan (see paragraph (a) of § 1.401–2).

(3) The requirement described in subparagraph (1)(iii) of this paragraph, relating to the investment of the funds of the plan, applies, for example, to the employer contributions under the plan, any employee contributions under the plan, and any earnings on such contributions. Such requirement also applies to capital gains realized upon the sale of stock described in (A) of such subdivision, to any capital gain dividends received in connection with such stock, and to any refunds described in section 852(b)(3)(D)(ii) (relating to undistributed capital gains of a regulated investment company) which is received in connection with such stock. However, since such requirement relates only to the investment of the funds of the plan, the custodian may deposit funds with a bank, in either a checking or savings account, while accumulating sufficient funds to make additional investments or while awaiting an appropriate time to make additional investments.

(4) The requirement in subparagraph (1)(iii)(A) of this paragraph that an employee covered by the plan be the beneficial owner of the stock does not mean that the employee who is the beneficial owner must have a nonforfeitable interest in the stock. Thus, a plan may provide for forfeitures of an employee's interest in such stock in the same manner as plans which use a trust. In the event of a forfeiture of an employee's beneficial ownership in the stock of a regulated investment company, the beneficial ownership of such stock must pass to another employee covered by the plan.

(c) *Effects of qualification.* (1) Any custodial account which satisfies the requirements of section 401(f) shall be treated as a qualified trust for all purposes of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Accordingly, such a custodial account shall be treated as a separate legal person which is exempt from the income tax by section 501(a). On the other hand, such a custodial account is required to file the returns described in sections 6033 and 6047 and to supply any other information which a qualified trust is required to furnish.

(2) In determining whether the funds of a custodial account are distributed or made available to an employee or his beneficiary, the rules which under section 402(a) are applicable to trusts will also apply to the custodial account as though it were a separate legal person and not an agent of the employee.

(d) *Effect of loss of qualification.* If a custodial account which has qualified under section 401 fails to qualify under such section for any taxable year, such custodial account will not thereafter be treated as a separate legal person, and the funds in such account shall be treated as made available within the meaning of section 402(a)(1) to the employees for whom they are held.

(e) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section—

(1) The term *bank* means a bank as defined in section 401(d)(1).

(2) The term *regulated investment company* means any domestic corporation which issues only redeemable stock and is a regulated investment company within the meaning of section 851(a) (but without regard to whether such corporation meets the limitations of section 851(b)).

(Secs. 401(f)(2), 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 939 and 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 401(f)(2), 7805))

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10121, Sept. 17, 1963, as amended by T.D. 7565, 43 FR 41204, Sept. 15, 1978. Redesignated and amended by T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401–9 Face-amount certificates—nontransferable annuity contracts.

(a) *Face-amount certificates treated as annuity contracts.* Section 401(g) provides that a face-amount certificate (as defined in section 2(a)(15) of the Investment Company Act of 1940 (15 U.S.C. sec. 80a–2)) which is not transferable within the meaning of paragraph (b)(3) of this section shall be treated as an annuity contract for purposes of sections 401 through 404 for any taxable year of a plan subject to such sections beginning after December 31, 1962. Accordingly, there may be established for any such taxable year a qualified plan

under which such face-amount certificates are purchased for the participating employees without the creation of a trust or custodial account. However, for such a plan to qualify, the plan must satisfy all the requirements applicable to a qualified annuity plan (see section 403(a) and the regulations thereunder).

(b) *Nontransferability of face-amount certificates and annuity contracts.* (1)(i) Section 401(g) provides that, in order for any face-amount certificate, or any other contract issued after December 31, 1962, to be subject to any provision under sections 401 through 404 which is applicable to annuity contracts, as compared to other forms of investment, such certificate or contract must be nontransferable at any time when it is held by any person other than the trustee of a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a). Thus, for example, in order for a group or individual retirement income contract to be treated as an annuity contract, if such contract is not held by the trustee of an exempt employees' trust, it must satisfy the requirements of this section. Furthermore, a face-amount certificate or an annuity contract will be subject to the tax treatment under section 403(b) only if it satisfies the requirements of section 401(g) and this section. Any certificate or contract in order to satisfy the provisions of this section must expressly contain the provisions that are necessary to make such certificate or contract not transferable within the meaning of this paragraph.

(ii) In the case of any group contract purchased by an employer under a plan to which sections 401 through 404 apply, the restriction on transferability required by section 401(g) and this section applies to the interest of the employee participants under such group contract but not to the interest of the employer under such contract.

(2) If a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) distributes any annuity, endowment, retirement income, or life insurance contract, then the rules relating to the taxability of the distributee of any such contract are set forth in paragraph (a)(2) of § 1.402(a)–1.

(3) A face-amount certificate or an annuity contract is transferable if the owner can transfer any portion of his interest in the certificate or contract to any person other than the issuer thereof. Accordingly, such a certificate or contract is transferable if the owner can sell, assign, discount, or pledge as collateral for a loan or as security for the performance of an obligation or for any other purpose his interest in the certificate or contract to any person other than the issuer thereof. On the other hand, for purposes of section 401(g), a face-amount certificate or annuity contract is not considered to be transferable merely because such certificate or contract, or the plan of which it is a part, contains a provision permitting the employee to designate a beneficiary to receive the proceeds of the certificate or contract in the event of his death, or contains a provision permitting the employee to elect to receive a joint and survivor annuity, or contains other similar provisions.

(4) A material modification in the terms of an annuity contract constitutes the issuance of a new contract regardless of the manner in which it is made.

(c) *Examples.* The rules of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). The P Employees' Annuity Plan is a nontrusteed plan which is funded by individual annuity contracts issued by the Y Insurance Company. Each annuity contract issued by such company after December 31, 1962, provides, on its face, that it is ''NOT TRANSFERABLE''. The terms of each such contract further provide that, ''This contract may not be sold, assigned, discounted, or pledged as collateral for a loan or as security for the performance of an obligation or for any other purpose, to any person other than this company.'' The annuity contracts of the P Employees' Annuity Plan satisfy the requirements of section 401(g) and this section.

Example (2). The R Company Pension Trust forms a part of a pension plan which is funded by individual level premium annuity contracts. Such contracts are purchased by the trustee of the R Company Pension Trust from the Y Insurance Company. The trustee of the R Company Pension Trust is the legal owner of each such contract at all times prior to the distribution of such contract to a qualifying annuitant. The trustee purchases such a contract on January 3, 1963, in the name of an employee who qualifies on

that date for coverage under the plan. At the time such contract is purchased, and while the contract is held by the trustee of the R Company Pension Trust, the contract does not contain any restrictions with respect to its transferability. The annuity contract purchased by the trustee of the R Company Pension Trust satisfies the requirements of section 401(g) and this section while it is held by the trustee.

Example (3). A is the trustee of the X Corporation's Employees' Pension Trust. The trust forms a part of a pension plan which is funded by individual level premium annuity contracts. The trustee is the legal owner of such contracts, but the employees covered under the plan obtain beneficial interests in such contracts after ten years of service with the X Corporation. On January 15, 1980, A distributes to D an annuity contract issued to A in D's name on June 25, 1959, and distributes to E an annuity contract issued to A in E's name on September 30, 1963. The contract issued to D need not be nontransferable, but the contract issued to E must be nontransferable in order to satisfy the requirements of section 401(g) and this section.

Example (4). The corpus of the Y Corporation's Employees' Pension Plan consists of individual insurance contracts in the names of the covered employees and an auxiliary fund which is used to convert such policies to annuity contracts at the time a beneficiary of such trust retires. F retires on June 15, 1963, and the trustee converts the individual insurance contract on F's life to a life annuity which is distributed to him. The life annuity issued on F's life must be nontransferable in order to satisfy the requirements of section 401(g) and this section.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10122, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.401–10 Definitions relating to plans covering self-employed individuals.

(a) *In general.* (1) Certain self-employed individuals may be covered by a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962. This section contains definitions relating to plans covering self-employed individuals. The provisions of §§ 1.401–1 through 1.401–9, relating to requirements which are applicable to all qualified plans, are also generally applicable to any plan covering a self-employed individual. However, in addition to such requirements, any plan covering a self-employed individual is subject to the rules contained in §§ 1.401–11 through 1.401–13. Section 1.401–11 contains general rules which are applicable to any plan covering a self-employed individual who is an employee within the meaning of paragraph (b) of this section. Section 1.401–12 contains special rules which are applicable to plans covering self-employed individuals when one or more of such individuals is an owner-employee within the meaning of paragraph (d) of this section. Section 1.401–13 contains rules relating to excess contributions by, or for, an owner-employee. The provisions of this section and of §§ 1.401–11 through 1.401–13 are applicable to taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962.

(2) A self-employed individual is covered under a qualified plan during the period beginning with the date a contribution is first made by, or for, him under the qualified plan and ending when there are no longer funds under the plan which can be used to provide him or his beneficiaries with benefits.

(b) *Treatment of a self-employed individual as an employee.* (1) For purposes of section 401, a self-employed individual who receives earned income from an employer during a taxable year of such employer beginning after December 31, 1962, shall be considered an employee of such employer for such taxable year. Moreover, such an individual will be considered an employee for a taxable year if he would otherwise be treated as an employee but for the fact that the employer did not have net profits for that taxable year. Accordingly, the employer may cover such an individual under a qualified plan during years of the plan beginning with or within a taxable year of the employer beginning after December 31, 1962.

(2) If a self-employed individual is engaged in more than one trade or business, each such trade or business shall be considered a separate employer for purposes of applying the provisions of sections 401 through 404 to such individual. Thus, if a qualified plan is established for one trade or business but not the others, the individual will be considered an employee only if he received earned income with respect to such trade or business and only the amount of such earned income derived from that trade or business shall be taken into account for purposes of the qualified plan.

(3)(i) The term *employee*, for purposes of section 401, does not include a self-

employed individual when the term ''common-law'' employee is used or when the context otherwise requires that the term ''employee'' does not include a self-employed individual. The term ''common- law'' employee also includes an individual who is treated as an employee for purposes of section 401 by reason of the provisions of section 7701(a)(20), relating to the treatment of certain full-time life insurance salesmen as employees. Furthermore, an individual who is a common-law employee is not a self-employed individual with respect to income attributable to such employment, even though such income constitutes net earnings from self-employment as defined in section 1402(a). Thus, for example, a minister who is a common-law employee is not a self-employed individual with respect to income attributable to such employment, even though such income constitutes net earnings from self-employment as defined in section 1402(a).

(ii) An individual may be treated as an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) of one employer even though such individual is also a common-law employee of another employer. For example, an attorney who is a common-law employee of a corporation and who, in the evenings maintains an office in which he practices law as a self-employed individual is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) with respect to the law practice. This example would not be altered by the fact that the corporation maintained a qualified plan under which the attorney is benefited as a common-law employee.

(4) For the purpose of determining whether an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) satisfies the requirements for eligibility under a qualified plan established by an employer, such an employer may take into account past services rendered by such an employee both as a self-employed individual and as a common-law employee if past services rendered by other employees, including common-law employees, are similarly taken into account. However, an employer cannot take into account only past services rendered by employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) if past services rendered to such employer by individuals who are, or were, common-law employees are not taken into account. Past service as described in this subparagraph may be taken into account for the purpose of determining whether an individual who is, or was, an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) satisfies the requirements for eligibility even if such service was rendered prior to January 1, 1963. On the other hand, past service cannot be taken into account for purposes of determining the contributions which may be made on such an individual's behalf under a qualified plan.

(c) *Definition of earned income*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of section 401 and the regulations thereunder, ''earned income'' means, in general, net earnings from self-employment (as defined in section 1402(a)) to the extent such net earnings constitute compensation for personal services actually rendered within the meaning of section 911(b).

(2) *Net earnings from self-employment.* (i) The computation of the net earnings from self-employment shall be made in accordance with the provisions of section 1402(a) and the regulations thereunder, with the modifications and exceptions described in subdivisions (ii) through (iv) of this subparagraph. Thus, an individual may have net earnings from self-employment, as defined in section 1402(a), even though such individual does not have self-employment income, as defined in section 1402(b), and, therefore, is not subject to the tax on self-employment income imposed by section 1401.

(ii) Items which are not included in gross income for purposes of chapter 1 of the Code and the deductions properly attributable to such items must be excluded from the computation of net earnings from self-employment even though the provisions of section 1402(a) specifically require the inclusion of such items. For example, if an individual is a resident of Puerto Rico, so much of his net earnings from self-employment as are excluded from gross income under section 933 must not be taken into account in computing his net earnings from self-employment which are earned income for purposes of section 401.

(iii) In computing net earnings from self-employment for the purpose of determining earned income, a self-employed individual may disregard only deductions for contributions made on his own behalf under a qualified plan. However, such computation must take into account the deduction allowed by section 404 or 405 for contributions under a qualified plan on behalf of the common-law employees of the trade or business.

(iv) For purposes of determining whether an individual has net earnings from self-employment and, thus, whether he is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), the exceptions in section 1402(c) (4) and (5) shall not apply. Thus, certain ministers, certain members of religious orders, doctors of medicine, and Christian Science practitioners are treated for purposes of section 401 as being engaged in a trade or business from which net earnings from self-employment are derived. In addition, the exceptions in section 1402(c)(2) shall not apply in the case of any individual who is treated as an employee under section 3121(d)(3) (A), (C), or (D). Therefore, such individuals are treated, for purposes of section 401, as being engaged in a trade or business from which net earnings from self-employment may be derived.

(3) *Compensation for personal services actually rendered.* (i) For purposes of section 401, the term ''earned income'' includes only that portion of an individual's net earnings from self-employment which constitutes earned income as defined in section 911(b) and the regulations thereunder. Thus, such term includes only professional fees and other amounts received as compensation for personal services actually rendered by the individual. There is excluded from ''earned income'' the amount of any item of income, and any deduction properly attributable to such item, if such amount is not received as compensation for personal services actually rendered. Therefore, an individual who renders no personal services has no ''earned income'' even though such an individual may have net earnings from self-employment from a trade or business.

(ii) If a self-employed individual is engaged in a trade or business in which capital is a material income-producing factor, then, under section 911(b), his earned income is only that portion of the net profits from the trade or business which constitutes a reasonable allowance as compensation for personal services actually rendered. However, such individual's earned income cannot exceed 30 percent of the net profits of such trade or business. The net profits of the trade or business is not necessarily the same as the net earnings from self-employment derived from such trade or business.

(4) *Minimum earned income when both personal services and capital are material income-producing factors.* (i) If a self-employed individual renders personal services on a full-time, or substantially full-time, basis to only one trade or business, and if with respect to such trade or business capital is a material income-producing factor, then the amount of such individual's earned income from the trade or business is considered to be not less than so much of his share in the net profits of such trade or business as does not exceed $2,500.

(ii) If a self-employed individual renders substantial personal services to more than one trade or business, and if with respect to all such trades or businesses such self-employed individual actually renders personal services on a full-time, or substantially full-time, basis, then the earned income of the self-employed individual from trades or businesses for which he renders substantial personal services and in which both personal services and capital are material income-producing factors is considered to be not less than—

(A) So much of such individual's share of the net profits from all trades or businesses in which he renders substantial personal services as does not exceed $2,500, reduced by.

(B) Such individual's share of the net profits of any trade or business in which only personal services is a material income-producing factor.

However, in no event shall the share of the net profits of any trade or business in which capital is a material income-producing factor be reduced below the amount which would, without regard to the provisions of this subdivision, be treated as the earned income derived

from such trade or business under section 911(b). In making the computation required by this subdivision, any trade or business with respect to which the individual renders substantial personal services shall be taken into account irrespective of whether a qualified plan has been established by such trade or business.

(iii) If the provisions of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph apply in determining the earned income of a self-employed individual, and such individual is engaged in two or more trades or businesses in which capital and personal services are material income-producing factors, then the total amount treated as the earned income shall be allocated to each such trade or business for which he performs substantial personal services in the same proportion as his share of net profits from each such trade or business bears to his share of the total net profits from all such trades or businesses. Thus, in such case, the amount of earned income attributable to any such trade or business is computed by multiplying the total earned income as determined under subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph by the individual's net profits from such trade or business and dividing that product by the individual's total net profits from all such trades or businesses.

(iv) For purposes of this subparagraph, the determination of whether an individual renders personal services on a full-time, or substantially full-time, basis is to be made with regard to the aggregate of the trades and businesses with respect to which the employee renders substantial personal services as a common-law employee or as a self-employed individual. However, for all other purposes in applying the rules of this subparagraph, a trade or business with respect to which an individual is a common-law employee shall be disregarded.

(d) *Definition of owner-employee.* For purposes of section 401 and the regulations thereunder, the term ''owner-employee'' means a proprietor of a proprietorship, or, in the case of a partnership, a partner who owns either more than 10 percent of the capital interest, or more than 10 percent of the profits interest, of the partnership. Thus, an individual who owns only 2 percent of the profits interest but 11 percent of the capital interest of a partnership is an owner-employee. A partner's interest in the profits and the capital of the partnership shall be determined by the partnership agreement. In the absence of any provision regarding the sharing of profits, the interest in profits of the partners will be determined in the same manner as their distributive shares of partnership taxable income. However, a guaranteed payment (as described in section 707(c)) is not considered a distributive share of partnership income for such purpose. See section 704(b), relating to the determination of the distributive share by the income or loss ratio, and the regulations thereunder. In the absence of a provision in the partnership agreement, a partner's capital interest in a partnership shall be determined on the basis of his interest in the assets of the partnership which would be distributable to such partner upon his withdrawal from the partnership, or upon liquidation of the partnership, whichever is the greater.

(e) *Definition of employer.* (1) For purposes of section 401, a sole proprietor is considered to be his own employer, and the partnership is considered to be the employer of each of the partners. Thus, an individual partner is not an employer who may establish a qualified plan with respect to his services to the partnership.

(2) Regardless of the provision of local law, a partnership is deemed, for purposes of section 401, to be continuing until such time as it is terminated within the meaning of section 708, relating to the continuation of a partnership.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10123, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.401–11 General rules relating to plans covering self-employed individuals.

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides certain rules which supplement, and modify, the rules of §§ 1.401–1 through 1.401–9 in the case of a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan which covers a self-employed individual who is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1). The provisions of this section apply to taxable years beginning after December 31,

1962. Except as otherwise provided, paragraphs (b) through (m) of this section apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962. Paragraph (n) of this section applies to plan years determined in accordance with paragraph (n)(1) of this section.

(b) *General rules.* (1) If the amount of employer contributions for common-law employees covered under a qualified plan is related to the earned income (as defined in section 401(c)(2)) of a self-employed individual, or group of self-employed individuals, such a plan is a profit-sharing plan (as described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of § 1.401–1) since earned income is dependent upon the profits of the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. Thus, for example, a plan, which provides that the employer will contribute 10 percent of the earned income of a self-employed individual but no more than $2,500, and that the employer contribution on behalf of common-law employees shall be the same percentage of their salaries as the contribution on behalf of the self-employed individual bears to his earned income, is a profit-sharing plan, since the amount of the employer's contribution for common-law employees covered under the plan is related to the earned income of a self-employed individual and thereby to the profits of the trade or business. On the other hand, for example, a plan which defines the compensation of any self-employed individual as his earned income and which provides that the employer will contribute 10 percent of the compensation of each employee covered under the plan is a pension plan since the contribution on behalf of common-law employees is fixed without regard to whether the self-employed individual has earned income or the amount thereof.

(2) The Self-Employed Individuals Tax Retirement Act of 1962 (76 Stat. 809) permits self-employed individuals to be treated as employees and therefore included in qualified plans, but it is clear that such law requires such self-employed individuals to provide benefits for their employees on a nondiscriminatory basis. Self-employed individuals will not be considered as providing contributions or benefits for an employee to the extent that the wages or salary of the employee covered under the plan are reduced at or about the time the plan is adopted.

(3) In addition to permitting self-employed individuals to participate in qualified plans, the Self-Employed Individuals Tax Retirement Act of 1962 extends to such individuals some of the tax benefits allowed common-law employee-participants in such plans. However, the tax benefits allowed a self-employed individual are restricted by the limits which are placed on the deductions allowed for contributions on such an individual's behalf. In view of these restrictions on the tax benefits extended to any self-employed individual, a self-employed individual participating in a qualified plan may not participate in any forfeitures. Therefore, in the case of a qualified plan which covers any self-employed individual, a separate account must be established for each self-employed individual to which no forfeitures can be allocated.

(c) *Requirements as to coverage.* (1) In general, section 401(a)(3) and the regulations thereunder prescribe the coverage requirements which a qualified plan must satisfy. However, if such a plan covers self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees, it must, in addition to satisfying such requirements, satisfy the requirements of this paragraph. If any owner-employee is covered under a qualified plan, the provisions of this paragraph do not apply, but the provisions of section 401(d), including section 401(d)(3), do apply (see § 1.401–12).

(2)(i) Section 401(a)(3)(B) provides that a plan may satisfy the coverage requirements for qualification if it covers such employees as qualify under a classification which is found not to discriminate in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, persons whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees. Section 401(a)(5) sets forth certain classifications that will not in themselves be considered discriminatory. Under such section, a classification which excludes all employees whose entire remuneration constitutes ''wages'' under section

3121(a)(1), will not be considered discriminatory merely because of such exclusion. Similarly, a plan which includes all employees will not be considered discriminatory solely because the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is excluded from ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) differ from the contributions or benefits based on that part of their remuneration which is not so excluded. However, in determining if a classification is discriminatory under section 401(a)(3)(B), consideration will be given to whether the total benefits resulting to each employee under the plan and under the Social Security Act, or under the Social Security Act only, establish an integrated and correlated retirement system satisfying the tests of section 401(a). A plan which covers self-employed individuals, none of whom is an owner-employee, may also be integrated with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act. In such a case, the portion of the earned income (as defined in section 401(c)(2)) of such an individual which does not exceed the maximum amount which may be treated as self-employment income under section 1402(b)(1), and which is derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, shall be treated as ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1) subject to the tax imposed by section 3111 (relating to the tax on employers) for purposes of applying the rules of paragraph (e)(2) of § 1.401–3, relating to the determination of whether a plan is properly integrated. However, if the plan covers an owner-employee, the rules relating to the integration of the plan with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act contained in paragraph (b) of § 1.401–12 apply.

(ii) Certain of the classifications enumerated in section 401(a)(5) do not apply to plans which provide contributions or benefits for any self-employed individual. Since self-employed individuals are not salaried or clerical employees, the provision in section 401(a)(5) permitting a plan, in certain cases to cover only this type of employee is inapplicable to plans which cover any self-employed individual.

(iii) The classifications enumerated in section 401(a)(5) are not exclusive, and it is not necessary that a qualified plan cover all employees or all full-time employees. Plans may qualify even though coverage is limited in accordance with a particular classification incorporated in the plan, provided the effect of covering only such employees as satisfy such eligibility requirement does not result in the prohibited discrimination.

(d) *Discrimination as to contributions or benefits*—(1) *In general.* In order for a plan to be qualified, there must be no discrimination in contributions or benefits in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, supervisors, or highly compensated, as against other employees whether within or without the plan. A self-employed individual, by reason of the contingent nature of his compensation, is considered to be a highly-compensated employee, and thus is a member of the group in whose favor discrimination is prohibited. In determining whether the prohibited discrimination exists, the total employer contribution on behalf of a self-employed individual shall be taken into account regardless of the fact that only a portion of such contribution is allowed as a deduction. For additional rules relating to discrimination as to contributions or benefits with regard to plans covering any owner-employee, see § 1.401–12.

(2) *Base for computing contributions or benefits.* (i) A plan which is otherwise qualified is not considered discriminatory merely because the contributions or benefits provided under the plan bear a uniform relationship to the total compensation, basic compensation, or regular rate of compensation of the employees, including self-employed individuals, covered under the plan.

(ii) In the case of a self-employed individual who is covered under a qualified plan, the total compensation of such individual is the earned income (as defined in section 401(c)(2)) which such individual derives from the employer's trade or business, or trades or businesses, with respect to which the qualified plan is established. Thus, for example, in the case of a partner, his total compensation includes both his

distributive share of partnership income, whether or not distributed, and guaranteed payments described in section 707(c) made to him by the partnership establishing the plan, to the extent that such income constitutes earned income as defined in section 401(c)(2).

(iii)(A) The basic or regular rate of compensation of any self-employed individual is that portion of his earned income which bears the same ratio to his total earned income derived from the trade or business, or trades or businesses, with respect to which the qualified plan is established as the aggregate basic or regular compensation of all common-law employees covered under the plan bears to the aggregate total compensation of such employees derived from such trade or business, or trades or businesses.

(B) If an employer establishes two or more plans which satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) separately, and only one such plan covers a self-employed individual, the determination of the basic or regular rate of compensation of such self-employed individual is made with regard to the compensation of common-law employees covered under the plan which provides contributions or benefits for such self-employed individual. On the other hand, if two or more plans must be considered together in order to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a), the computation of the basic or regular rate of compensation of a self-employed individual must be made with regard to the compensation of the common-law employees covered by so many of such plans as are required to be taken together in order to satisfy the qualification requirements of section 401(a).

(3) *Discriminatory contributions.* If a discriminatory contribution is made by, or for, a self-employed individual who is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) because of an erroneous assumption as to the earned income of such individual, the plan will not be considered discriminatory if adequate adjustment is made to remove such discrimination. In the case of any self-employed individual who is an owner-employee, the amount of any excess contribution to be returned and the manner in which it is to be repaid are determined by the provisions of section 401(d)(8) and (e). However, if any self-employed individual, including any owner-employee, has not made the full contribution permitted to be made on his behalf as an employee, then, if the plan expressly provides, so much of any excess contribution by such self-employed individual's employer as may, under the provisions of the plan, be treated as a contribution made by such individual as an employee can be so treated.

(e) *Distribution of entire interest.* (1) If a trust forms part of a plan which covers a self-employed individual, such trust shall constitute a qualified trust under section 401 only if the plan of which such trust is a part expressly provides that the entire interest of each employee, including any common-law employee, will be distributed in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (2) or (3) of this paragraph.

(2) Unless the provisions of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph apply, the entire interest of each employee (including contributions he has made on his own behalf, contributions made on his behalf by his employer, and interest thereon) must be actually distributed to such employee—

(i) In the case of an employee, other than an individual who is, or has been, an owner-employee under the plan, not later than the last day of the taxable year of such employee in which he attains the age of 70½, or not later than the last day of the taxable year in which such employee retires, whichever is later, and

(ii) In the case of an employee who is, or has been, an owner-employee under the plan, not later than the last day of the taxable year in which he attains the age of 70½.

(3) In lieu of distributing an employee's entire interest in a qualified plan as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, such interest may be distributed commencing no later than the last taxable year described in such subparagraph (2). In such case, the plan must expressly provide that the entire interest of such an employee shall be distributed to him and his beneficiaries, in a manner which satisfies the requirements of subparagraph (5) of

this paragraph, over any of the following periods (or any combination thereof)—

(i) The life of the employee, or

(ii) The lives of the employee and his spouse, or

(iii) A period certain not longer than the life expectancy of the employee, or

(iv) A period certain not longer than the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the employee and his spouse.

(4) For purposes of subparagraphs (3) and (5) of this paragraph, the determination of the life expectancy of the employee or the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the employee and his spouse is to be made either (i) only once, at the time the employee receives the first distribution of his entire interest under the plan, or (ii) periodically, in a consistent manner. Such life expectancy or joint life and last survivor expectancy cannot exceed the period computed by the use of the expected return multiples in § 1.72–9, or, in the case of payments under a contract issued by an insurance company, the period computed by use of the life expectancy tables of such company.

(5) If an employee's entire interest is to be distributed over a period described in subparagraph (3) of this paragraph, then the amount to be distributed each year must be at least an amount equal to the quotient obtained by dividing the entire interest of the employee under the plan at the time the distribution is made (expressed in either dollars or units) by the life expectancy of the employee, or joint life and last survivor expectancy of the employee and his spouse (whichever is applicable), determined in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (4) of this paragraph. However, no distribution need be made in any year, or a lesser amount may be distributed, if the aggregate amounts distributed by the end of that year are at least equal to the aggregate of the minimum amounts required by this subparagraph to have been distributed by the end of such year.

(6) If an employee's entire interest is distributed in the form of an annuity contract, then the requirements of section 401(a)(9) are satisfied if the distribution of such contract takes place before the end of the latest taxable year described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, and if the employee's interest will be paid over a period described in subparagraph (3) of this paragraph and at a rate which satisfies the requirements of subparagraph (5) of this paragraph.

(7) The requirements of section 401(a)(9) do not preclude contributions from being made on behalf of an owner-employee under a qualified plan subsequent to the taxable year in which the distribution of his entire interest is required to commence. Thus, if all other requirements for qualification are satisfied, a qualified plan may provide contributions for an owner-employee who has already attained age 70½. However, a distribution of benefits attributable to contributions made on behalf of an owner-employee in a taxable year beginning after the taxable year in which he attains the age of 70½ must satisfy the requirements of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph. Thus, if an owner-employee has already attained the age of 70½ at the time the first contribution is made on his behalf, the distribution of his entire interest must commence in the year in which such contribution is first made on his behalf.

(8) This paragraph shall not apply and an otherwise qualified trust will not be disqualified if the method of distribution under the plan is one which was designated by a common-law employee prior to October 10, 1962, and such method of distribution is not in accordance with the provisions of section 401(a)(9). Such exception applies regardless of whether the actual distribution of the entire interest of an employee making such a designation, or any portion of such interest, has commenced prior to October 10, 1962.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10124, Sept. 17, 1963, as amended by T.D. 6982, 33 FR 16500, Nov. 13, 1968]

§ 1.401–12 Requirements for qualification of trusts and plans benefiting owner-employees.

(a) *Introduction.* This section prescribes the additional requirements which must be met for qualification of a trust forming part of a pension or profit-sharing plan, or of an annuity plan, which covers any self-employed

individual who is an owner-employee as defined in section 401(c)(3). However, to the extent that the provisions of § 1.401–11 are not modified by the provisions of this section, such provisions are also applicable to a plan which covers an owner-employee. The provisions of this section apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962. Except as otherwise provided, paragraphs (b) through (m) of this section apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 1962. Paragraph (n) of this section applies to plan years determined in accordance with paragraph (n)(1) of the section.

(b) *General rules.* (1) The qualified plan and trust of an unincorporated trade or business does not have to satisfy the additional requirements for qualification merely because an owner-employee derives earned income (as defined in section 401(c)(2)) from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. Such additional requirements need be satisfied only if an owner-employee is actually covered under the plan of the employer. An owner-employee may only be covered under a plan of an employer if such owner-employee has so consented. However, the consent of the owner-employee may be either expressed or implied. Thus, for example, if contributions are, in fact, made on behalf of an owner-employee, such owner-employee is considered to have impliedly consented to being covered under the plan.

(2) A qualified plan covering an owner-employee must be a definite written program and arrangement setting forth all provisions essential for qualification at the time such plan is established. Therefore, for example, even though the owner-employee is the only employee covered under the plan at the time the plan is established, the plan must incorporate all the provisions relating to the eligibility and benefits of future employees.

(c) *Bank trustee.* (1)(i) If a trust created after October 9, 1962, is to form a part of a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan covering an owner-employee, or if a trust created before October 10, 1962, but not exempt from tax on October 9, 1962, is to form part of such a plan, the trustee of such trust must be a bank as defined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, unless an exception contained in paragraph (c)(4) of this section applies, or paragraph (n) of this section applies.

(ii) The provisions of this paragraph do not apply to an employees' trust created prior to October 10, 1962, if such trust was exempt from tax on October 9, 1962, even though the plan of which such trust forms a part is amended after December 31, 1962, to cover any owner-employee. Although the trustee of a trust described in the preceding sentence need not be a bank, all other requirements for the qualification of such a trust must be satisfied at the time an owner-employee is first covered under such plan.

(2) The term *bank* as used in this paragraph means—

(i) A bank as defined in section 581;

(ii) A corporation which, under the laws of the State of its incorporation or under the laws of the District of Columbia, is subject to both the supervision of, and examination by, the authority in such jurisdiction in charge of the administration of the banking laws;

(iii) In the case of a trust created or organized outside of the United States, that is, outside the States and the District of Columbia, a bank or trust company, wherever incorporated, exercising fiduciary powers and subject to both supervision and examination by governmental authority;

(iv) Beginning on January 1, 1974, an insured credit union (within the meaning of section 101 (6) of the Federal Credit Union Act, 12 U.S.C. 1752 (6)).

(3) Although a bank is required to be the trustee of a qualified trust, another person, including the employer, may be granted the power in the trust instrument to control the investment of the trust funds either by directing investments, including reinvestments, disposals, and exchanges, or by disapproving proposed investments, including reinvestments, disposals, or exchanges.

(4)(i) This paragraph does not apply to a trust created or organized outside the States and the District of Columbia before October 10, 1962, if, on October 9, 1962, such trust is described in section 402(c) as an organization treated as if it was a trust exempt from tax under section 501(a).

(ii) In addition, the requirement that the trustee must be a bank does not apply to a qualified trust forming a part of a pension or profit-sharing plan if—

(A) The investments of all the funds in such trust are in annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts, issued by a company which is a life insurance company as defined in section 801(a) during the taxable year immediately preceding the year that such contracts are originally purchased;

(B) All the proceeds which are, or may become, payable under the contract are payable directly to the employee or his beneficiary;

(C) The plan contains a provision to the effect that the employer is to substitute a bank as a trustee or custodian of the contracts if the employer is notified by the district director that such substitution is required because the trustee is not keeping such records, or making such returns, or rendering such statements, as are required by forms or regulations.

However, a qualified trust may only purchase insurance protection to the extent permitted under a qualified plan (see paragraph (b)(1) (i) and (ii) of § 1.401–1).

(5) An employer may designate several trusts (or custodial accounts) or a trust or trusts and an annuity plan or plans as constituting parts of a single plan which is intended to satisfy the requirements for qualification. However, each trust (or custodial account) so designated which is part of a plan covering an owner-employee must satisfy the requirements of this paragraph. Thus, for example, if all other requirements for qualification are satisfied by the plan, a qualified profit-sharing plan may provide that a portion of the contributions under the plan will be paid to a custodial account, the custodian of which is a bank, for investment in stock of a regulated investment company, and the remainder of such contributions will be paid to a trust, the trustee of which is not a bank, for investment in annuity contracts.

(d) *Profit-sharing plan.* (1) A profit-sharing plan, as defined in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of § 1.401–1, which covers any owner-employee must contain a definite formula for determining the contributions to be made by the employer on behalf of employees, other than owner-employees. A formula to be definite must specify the portion of profits to be contributed to the trust and must also define profits for plan purposes. A definite formula may contain a variable factor, if the value of such factor may not vary at the discretion of the employer. For example, the percentage of profits to be contributed each year may differ depending on the amount of profits. On the other hand, a formula which, for example, specifies that profits for plan purposes are not to exceed the cash on hand at the time the employer contribution is made is not a definite formula. The requirement that the plan formula be definite is satisfied if such formula limits the amount to be contributed on behalf of all employees covered under the plan to the amount which permits self-employed individuals to obtain the maximum deduction under section 404(a). However, even though the plan formula is definite, the plan must satisfy all the other requirements for qualification, including the requirement that the contributions under the plan not discriminate in favor of any self-employed individual, and the requirement that the plan be for the exclusive benefit of the employees in general.

(2) A definite contribution formula constitutes an integral part of a qualified profit-sharing plan and may not be amended except for a valid business reason.

(3) The requirement that a profit-sharing plan contain a definite formula for determining the amount of contributions to be made on behalf of employees does not apply to contributions which are made on behalf of owner-employees. However, such contributions are subject to the requirement that they be nondiscriminatory with respect to other employees and must not exceed the limitations on allowable and deductible contributions which may be made by owner-employees.

(e) *Requirements as to coverage*—(1) *Coverage of all employees.* The coverage requirements contained in section 401(a)(3) do not apply to a plan which covers any owner-employee. However, such a plan must satisfy the coverage

requirements of section 401(d), including section 401(d)(3). Accordingly, a plan which covers an owner-employee must benefit each employee of the trade or business (other than any owner-employee who does not consent to be covered under the plan) whose customary period of employment has been for more than 20 hours a week for more than five months during each of three consecutive periods of twelve calendar months. Therefore, a plan may not provide, for example, that an employee, other than an owner-employee, is ineligible to participate because he does not consent to be a participant or because he does not consent to make reasonable contributions under the plan.

(2) *Period of service.* (i) In determining whether an employee renders service to the same employer, and, therefore, must be covered under the plan of such employer, a partnership is considered to be one employer during the entire period prior to the time it is terminated within the meaning of section 708 (see paragraph (e)(2) of § 1.401–10).

(ii) In the case of a common-law employee who becomes an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) with respect to the same trade or business, his period of employment is the aggregate of his service as a common-law employee and an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1).

(iii) In determining whether any employee, including any owner-employee, has three years of service, past service of any such employee may be taken into account as provided in paragraph (b) of § 1.401–10. Thus, if an employer takes into account past service for any owner-employee, he must take into account the past service of all his other employees to the same extent. However, a plan may provide for coverage after a period of service which is shorter than three years, but in no case may the plan require a waiting period for employees which is longer than that required for the owner-employees.

(f) *Discrimination in contributions or benefits.* (1) Variations in contributions or benefits may be provided under the plan so long as the plan does not discriminate, either as to contributions or benefits, in favor of officers, employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees, or highly compensated employees, as against other employees (see § 1.401–4). For the purpose of determining whether the provisions of a plan which provide contributions or benefits for an owner-employee result in the prohibited discrimination, an owner-employee, like other self-employed individuals, is considered a highly compensated employee (see paragraph (d) of § 1.401–11). Whether or not a plan is discriminatory is determined by the actual operation of the plan as well as by its formal provisions.

(2) The provisions of section 401(a)(5), relating to certain plan provisions which will not in and of themselves be considered discriminatory, are not applicable to any plan which covers any owner-employee. Such a plan must, instead, satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(10) and section 401(d)(6). Accordingly, a plan is not discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(4) merely because the contributions or benefits provided for the employees covered under the plan bear a uniform relationship to the total compensation, or to the basic or regular rate of compensation, of such employees. The total compensation or the basic or regular rate of compensation of an owner-employee is computed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (d)(2) of § 1.401–11.

(3) Even though the contributions under the plan do not bear a uniform relationship to the total compensation, or the basic or regular rate of compensation, of the employees covered thereunder and the plan would otherwise be considered discriminatory within the meaning of section 401(a)(4), the plan shall not be considered discriminatory if such variation is due to employer contributions on behalf of any owner-employee which are required, under the plan, to be applied to pay premiums or other consideration on one or more level premium contracts described in section 401(e)(3)(A). In a taxable year to which the foregoing exception applies and, therefore, one in which the contributions under the plan would otherwise be discriminatory, the employer contributions to

pay such premiums or other consideration must be the only employer contributions made for the owner-employee, and the contributions for such taxable year under such plan must not be in excess of the amount permitted to be paid toward the purchase of such a contract under the provisions of section 401(e)(3). Furthermore, the exception described in this subparagraph only applies to contributions made under a plan which otherwise satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4) and the regulations thereunder. Thus, if a plan provides for the purchase, in accordance with section 401(e)(3), of a level premium contract for an owner-employee, then such plan must provide either that the benefits for all employees are nondiscriminatory or, in the case of a money-purchase type of plan, that the contributions for all employees are based on compensation determined in a non-discriminatory manner. For example, since the contributions on behalf of the owner-employee are based on his earned income during the period preceding the purchase of the contract, the contributions for other employees must be based on their compensation during the same period if this will result in larger contributions on their behalf.

(4) In the case of a plan which covers any owner-employee, the contributions or benefits provided under the plan cannot vary with respect to years of service except as provided in subparagraph (5) of this paragraph.

(5) The provisions of section 401(d)(3) do not preclude the coverage of employees with less than three years of service if such coverage is provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. However, a plan will not be disqualified merely because the contributions or benefits for employees who have less than three years of service are not as favorable as the contributions or benefits for employees having more than three years of service.

(g) *Nonforfeitable rights.* (1)(i) Except as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, if an owner-employee is covered under the plan of his employer, each employee's rights to the contributions, or to the benefits derived from the contributions, of such employer must be nonforfeitable at the time such contributions are paid to, or under, the plan. The employees who must obtain such nonforfeitable rights include the self-employed individuals who are covered under the plan. As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee, see paragraph (a)(2) of § 1.402(b)–1.

(ii) Under section 401(d)(2), it is necessary that each employee obtain nonforfeitable rights to the employer contributions under the plan on his behalf from the time such contributions are paid. Thus, each employee must have a nonforfeitable interest to the portion of the funds under the plan which is allocable to the employer contributions made under the plan on his behalf.

(2) The provisions of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph do not apply to the extent that employer contributions on behalf of any employee must remain forfeitable in order to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of § 1.401–4. However, employer contributions on behalf of employees whose rights are required to remain forfeitable to satisfy such requirements must be nonforfeitable except for such contingency.

(h) *Integration with social security.* (1) If a qualified plan covers any owner-employee, then the rules relating to the integration of such plan with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act are provided in this paragraph. Accordingly, the provisions of paragraph (e) of § 1.401–3 and paragraph (c) of § 1.401–11 do not apply to such a plan. In the case of a plan which provides contributions or benefits for any owner-employee, integration of the plan with the Social Security Act for any taxable year of the employer can take place only if not more than one-third of the employer contributions under the plan which are deductible under section 404 for that year are made on behalf of the owner-employees. If such requirement is satisfied, then the plan may be integrated with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act in accordance with the rules of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph.

(2)(i) For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, in determining

the total amount of employer contributions which are deductible under section 404, the provisions of section 404(a), including the provisions of section 404(a)(9) (relating to plans benefiting self-employed individuals), and section 404(e) (relating to the special limitations for self-employed individuals) are taken into account, but the provisions of section 404(a)(10) (relating to the special limitation on the amount allowed as a deduction for self-employed individuals) are not taken into account.

(ii) The amount of deductible employer contributions which are made on behalf of all owner-employees for the year is compared with the amount of deductible employer contributions for the year made on behalf of all employees covered under the plan (including self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees and owner-employees) for the purpose of determining whether the deductible contributions by the employer on behalf of owner-employees are not more than one-third of the total deductible contributions.

(3) If a plan covering an owner-employee satisfies the requirement of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, and if the employer wishes to integrate such plan with the contributions or benefits under the Social Security Act, then—

(i) The employer contributions under the plan on behalf of any owner-employee shall be reduced by an amount determined by multiplying the earned income of such owner-employee which is derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established and which does not exceed the maximum amount which may be treated as self-employment income under section 1402(b)(1), by the rate of tax imposed under section 1401(a); and

(ii) The employer contributions under the plan on behalf of any employee other than an owner-employee may be reduced by an amount not in excess of the amount determined by multiplying the employee's wages under section 3121(a)(1) by the rate of tax imposed under section 3111(a). For purposes of this subdivision, the earned income of a self-employed individual which is derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established and which is treated as self-employment income under section 1402(b)(1), shall be treated as ''wages'' under section 3121(a)(1).

(4) A money purchase pension plan or a profit-sharing plan may provide that such plan will be integrated with the Social Security Act only for such taxable years of the employer in which the requirements for integration are satisfied. However, a qualified plan cannot provide that employer contributions are only to be made for taxable years in which the integration requirements are satisfied.

(i) *Limit on contributions on behalf of an owner-employee.* (1) Section 401(d)(5) requires that a plan which covers any owner-employee must contain provisions which restrict the employer contributions that may be made on behalf of any owner-employee for each taxable year to an amount no greater than that which is deductible under section 404. In computing the amount deductible under section 404 for purposes of section 401(d)(5) and this paragraph, the limitations contained in section 404(a)(9) and (e), relating to special limitations for self-employed individuals, are taken into account, but such amount is determined without regard to section 404(a)(10), relating to the special limitation on the amount allowed as a deduction for self-employed individuals. Accordingly, a qualified plan which covers any owner-employee cannot permit employer contributions to be made on behalf of such owner-employee in excess of 10 percent of the earned income which is derived by such owner-employee from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, or permit the employer to contribute more than $2,500 on behalf of any such owner-employee for any taxable year.

(2)(i) In determining whether the plan permits contributions to be made in excess of the limitations of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, employer contributions under the plan which are allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance are not to be taken into account. To determine the amount of employer contributions under the plan which are allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance, see paragraph (f) of § 1.404(e)–1 and paragraph (b) of § 1.72–16.

However, contributions for such insurance can be made only to the extent otherwise permitted under sections 401 through 404 and the regulations thereunder.

(ii) A further exception to the limit on the amount of contributions which an employer may make under the plan on behalf of an owner-employee is made in the case of contributions which are required, under the plan, to be applied to pay premiums or other consideration for one or more annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts described in section 401(e)(3) (see section 401(e)(3) and the regulations thereunder).

(j) *Excess contributions.* The provisions of section 401(e) define the term ''excess contribution'' and indicate the consequences of making such a contribution (see §1.401–13). However, section 401(d)(8) provides that a qualified plan which provides contributions or benefits for any owner-employee must contain certain provisions which complement the rules contained in section 401(e). Under section 401(d)(8), a qualified plan must provide that—

(1) The net amount of any excess contribution (determined in accordance with the provisions of §1.401–13) must be returned to the owner-employee on whose behalf it is made, together with the net income earned on such excess contribution;

(2) For each taxable year for which the trust is considered to be a nonqualified trust with respect to an owner-employee under section 401(e)(2) because the net amount of an excess contribution and the earnings thereon have not been returned to such owner-employee, the income of the trust for that taxable year attributable to the interest of such owner-employee is to be paid to him.

(3) If an excess contribution is determined to be willfully made (within the meaning of section 401(e)(2)(E)), the entire interest of the owner-employee on whose behalf such contribution was made is required to be distributed to such owner-employee. Furthermore, the plan must require the distribution of an owner-employee's entire interest under the plan if a willful excess contribution is determined to have been made under any other plan in which the owner-employee is covered as an owner-employee.

(k) *Contributions of property under a qualified plan.* (1) The contribution of property, other than money, prior to January 1, 1975, by the person who is the employer (within the meaning of section 401(c)(4)) to a qualified trust forming a part of a plan which covers employees some or all of whom are owner-employees who control (within the meaning of section 401(d)(9)(B) and the regulations thereunder) the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established is a prohibited transaction between such trust and the employer-grantor of such trust (see section 503(g) prior to its repeal by sec. 2003(b)(5) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 978)).

(2) A contribution of property, other than money, prior to January 1, 1975, to a qualified trust by an owner-employee who controls, or a member of a group of owner-employees who together control, the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, or a contribution of property, other than money, to a qualified trust by a member of such an owner-employee's family (as defined in section 267(c)(4)), is a prohibited transaction. (See section 503(g) prior to its repeal by section 2003(b)(5) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 978)).

(3) See section 4975 and the regulations thereunder with respect to rules relating to the contribution of property, other than money, made after December 31, 1974.

(l) *Controlled trades or businesses*— (1) *Plans covering an owner-employee who controls another trade or business.* (i) A plan must not cover any owner-employee, or group of two or more owner-employees, if such owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, control (within the meaning of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph) any other trade or business, unless the employees of such other trade or business controlled by such owner-employee, or such group of owner-employees, are included in a plan which satisfies the requirements of section 401(a), including the qualification requirements of section 401(d). The employees who must be covered

under the plan of the trade or business which is controlled include the self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees and the owner-employees who consent to be covered by such plan. Accordingly, the employer must determine whether any owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, who may participate in the plan which is established by such employer controls any other trade or business, and whether the requirements of this subparagraph are satisfied with respect to the plan established in such other trade or business. The plan of an employer may exclude an owner-employee who controls another trade or business from coverage under the plan even though such owner-employee consents to be covered, if a plan which satisfies the requirements of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph has not been established in the trade or business which such owner-employee controls.

(ii) The qualified plan which the owner-employee, or owner-employees, are required to provide for the employees of the trade or business which they control must provide contributions and benefits which are not less favorable than the contributions and benefits provided for the owner-employee, or owner-employees, under the plan of any trade or business which they do not control. Thus, for example, if the contributions or benefits for the owner-employee under the plan of the trade or business which he does not control are computed on the basis of his total (as compared to basic or regular rate) of compensation, then the contributions or benefits for employees covered under the plan of the trade or business which the owner controls must be computed on the basis of their total compensation. However, the requirements of this subdivision cannot be satisfied if the benefits and contributions provided under the plan for the employees of the trade or business which is controlled are not comparable to those provided under the plan covering the owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, in the trade or business which they do not control. Thus, for example, if the owner-employee is covered by a pension plan in the trade or business which he does not control, he may not satisfy the requirements of this subdivision by establishing a profit-sharing plan in the trade or business which he does control.

(iii) If an individual is covered as an owner-employee under the plans of two or more trades or businesses which he does not control and such individual controls a trade or business, then the contributions or benefits of the employees under the plan of the trade or business which he does control must be as favorable as those provided for him under the most favorable plan of the trade or business which he does not control.

(2) *Owner-employees who control more than one trade or business.* If the plan provides contributions or benefits for an owner-employee who controls, or group of owner-employees who together control, the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, and such owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, also control as owner-employees one or more other trades or businesses, plans must be established with respect to such controlled trades or businesses so that when taken together they form a single plan which satisfies the requirements of section 401 (a) and (d) with respect to the employees of all the controlled trades or businesses.

(3) *Control defined.* (i) For purposes of this paragraph, an owner-employee, or a group of two or more owner-employees, shall be considered to control a trade or business if such owner-employee, or such group of two or more owner-employees together—

(A) Own the entire interest in an unincorporated trade or business, or

(B) In the case of a partnership, own more than 50 percent of either the capital interest or the profits interest in such partnership.

In determining whether an owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, control a trade or business within the meaning of the preceding sentence, it is immaterial whether or not such individuals could be covered under a plan established with respect to the trade or business. For example, if an individual who is an owner-employee has a 60-percent capital interest in another trade or business, such individual controls such trade or business and the provisions of this paragraph apply even

though the individual derives no earned income, as defined in section 401(c)(2), from the controlled trade or business. For purposes of determining the ownership interest of an owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, an owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, is treated as owning any interest in a partnership which is owned, directly or indirectly, by a partnership controlled by such owner-employee, or group of owner-employees.

(ii) The provisions of subparagraphs (1) and (2) of this paragraph apply only if the owner-employee who controls, or the group of owner-employees who control, a trade or business, or trades or businesses, within the meaning of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph is the same owner-employee, or group of owner-employees, covered under the plan intended to satisfy the requirements for qualification. Thus, for example, if A is a 50-percent partner in both the AB and AC partnership, and if the AB partnership wishes to establish a plan covering A and B, the provisions of subparagraphs (1) and (2) of this paragraph do not apply, since A does not control either partnership, and since B has no interest in the AC partnership.

(m) *Distribution of benefits.* (1)(i) Section 401(d)(4)(B) requires that a qualified plan which provides contributions or benefits for any owner-employee must not provide for the payment of benefits to such owner-employee at any time before he has attained age 59½. An exception to the foregoing rule permits a qualified plan to provide for the distribution of benefits to an owner-employee prior to the time he attains age 59½ if he is disabled. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1966, see section 72(m)(7) and paragraph (f) of § 1.72–17 for the meaning of disabled. For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1967, see section 213(g)(3) for the meaning of disabled. In general, both sections 72(m)(7) and 213(g)(3) provide that an individual is considered disabled if he is unable to engage in any substantial gainful activity because of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or to be of long-continued and indefinite duration. In addition, section 401(d)(4)(B) does not preclude the distribution of benefits to the estate or other beneficiary of a deceased owner-employee prior to the time the owner-employee would have attained age 59½ if he had lived.

(ii) A qualified plan must provide that if, despite the restrictions in the plan to the contrary, an amount is prematurely distributed, or made available, to a participant in such plan who is, or has been, an owner-employee, then no contribution shall be made under the plan by, or for, such individual during any of the 5 taxable years of the plan beginning after the distribution is made.

(2)(i) The provisions of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph preclude an owner-employee who is a participant in a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan of his employer from withdrawing any part of the funds accumulated on his behalf except as provided in such subparagraph (1). However, the distribution of an owner-employee's interest, or any portion of such interest, after he attains age 59½ is determined by the provisions of the plan. Thus, for example, if a qualified pension plan provides that the normal retirement age under the plan is age 65, an owner-employee would not be entitled to a distribution of an amount under the plan merely because he attained age 59½.

(ii) The provisions of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph do not preclude the establishment of a profit-sharing plan which provides for the distribution of all, or part, of participants' accounts after a fixed number of years. However, such a plan must not permit a distribution of any amount to any owner-employee prior to the time the owner-employee has attained age 59½ or becomes disabled within the meaning of section 72(m)(7) or section 213(g)(3), whichever is applicable. On the other hand, if a distribution would have been made under the plan to an owner-employee but for the fact that he had not attained age 59½, then the amount of such distribution (including any increment earned on such amount) must be distributed to such owner-employee at such time as he attains age 59½.

(3) A qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan which covers an owner-employee must provide that the distribution of an owner-employee's entire interest under the plan must begin prior to the end of the taxable year in which he attains the age of 70½, and such distribution must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(9) and paragraph (e) of § 1.401–11. Furthermore, section 401(d)(7) provides that, if an owner-employee dies prior to the time his entire interest has been distributed to him, such owner-employee's entire remaining interest under the plan must, in general, either be distributed to his beneficiary, or beneficiaries, within 5 years, or be used within that period to purchase an immediate annuity for his beneficiary, or beneficiaries. However, a distribution within 5 years of the death of the owner-employee is not required if the distribution of his interest has commenced and such distribution is for a term certain over a period not extending beyond the joint life and survivor expectancy of the owner-employee and his spouse. Thus, for example, an annuity for the joint life and survivor expectancy of an owner-employee and his spouse which guarantees payments for 10 years is a distribution which is payable over a period which does not exceed the joint life and survivor expectancy of the owner-employee and his spouse if such expectancy is at least 10 years at the time the distribution first commences.

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§ 1.401–13 Excess contributions on behalf of owner-employees.

(a) *Introduction.* (1) The provisions of this section prescribe the rules relating to the treatment of excess contributions made under a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan on behalf of a self-employed individual who is an owner-employee (as defined in paragraph (d) of § 1.401–10). Paragraph (b) of this section defines the term ''excess contribution''. Paragraph (c) of this section describes an exception to the definition of an excess contribution in the case of contributions which are applied to pay premiums on certain annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts. Paragraph (d) of this section describes the effect of making an excess contribution which is not determined to have been willfully made, and paragraph (e) of this section describes the effect of making an excess contribution which is determined to have been willfully made.

(2) Under section 401(c)(1), certain self-employed individuals are treated as employees for purposes of section 401. In addition, under section 401(c)(4), a proprietor is treated as his own employer, and the partnership is treated as the employer of the partners. Under section 404, certain contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual are treated as deductible and taken into consideration in determining the amount allowed as a deduction under section 404(a). Such contributions are treated under section 401 and the regulations thereunder as employer contributions on behalf of the self-employed individual. However, in some cases, additional contributions may be made on behalf of a self-employed individual. Such contributions are not taken into consideration in determining the amount deductible under section 404 and are not taken into consideration in computing the amount allowed as a deduction under section 404(a). For purposes of section 401 and the regulations thereunder, such contributions are treated as employee contributions by the self-employed individual. If a self-employed individual is an owner-employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(3) and paragraph (d) of § 1.401–10, then this section prescribes the rules applicable if contributions are made in excess of those permitted to be made under section 401.

(b) *Excess contributions defined.* (1)(i) Except as provided in paragraph (c) relating to contributions which are applied to pay premiums on certain annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts, an excess contribution is any amount described in subparagraphs (2) through (4) of this paragraph.

(ii) For purposes of determining if the amount of any contribution made under the plan on behalf of an owner-

employee is an excess contribution, the amount of any contribution made under the plan which is allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance is not taken into account. The amount of any contribution which is allocable to the cost of insurance protection is determined in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (f) of § 1.404 (e)–1 and paragraph (b) of § 1.72–16.

(2)(i) In the case of a taxable year of the plan for which employer contributions are made on behalf of only owner-employees, an excess contribution is the amount of any contribution for such taxable year on behalf of such owner-employee which is not deductible under section 404 (determined without regard to section 404(a)(10)). This rule applies irrespective of whether the plan provides for contributions on behalf of common-law employees, or self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees, when such employees or individuals become eligible for coverage under the plan, and irrespective of whether contributions are in fact made for such employees or such individuals for other taxable years of the plan.

(ii) In the case of a taxable year of the plan for which employer contributions are made on behalf of both owner-employees and either common-law employees or self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees, an excess contribution is the amount of any employer contribution on behalf of any owner-employee for such taxable year which exceeds the amount deductible under section 404 (determined without regard to section 404(a)(10)) unless such amount may be treated as an employee contribution under the plan in accordance with the rules of paragraph (d)(3) of § 1.401–11 and is a permissible employee contribution under subparagraph (3) of this paragraph.

(3)(i) In the case of a taxable year of the plan for which employer contributions are made on behalf of both an owner-employee and either common-law employees or self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees, employee contributions on behalf of an owner-employee may be made for such taxable year of the plan. How-ever, the amount of such contributions, if any, which is described in subdivisions (ii), (iii), or (iv) of this subparagraph is an excess contribution.

(ii) An excess contribution is the amount of any employee contribution made on behalf of any owner-employee during a taxable year of the plan at a rate in excess of the rate of contributions which may be made as employee contributions by common-law employees, or by self-employed individuals who are not owner-employees, during such taxable year of the plan.

(iii) An excess contribution is the amount of any employee contribution made on behalf of an owner-employee which exceeds the lesser of $2,500 or 10 percent of the earned income (as defined in paragraph (c) of § 1.401–10) of such owner-employee for his taxable year in which such contributions are made.

(iv) In the case of a taxable year of an owner-employee in which contributions are made on behalf of such owner-employee under more than one plan, an excess contribution is the amount of any employee contribution made on behalf of such owner-employee under all such plans during such taxable year which exceeds $2,500. If such an excess contribution is made, the amount of the excess contribution made on behalf of the owner-employee with respect to any one of such plans is the amount by which the employee contribution on his behalf under such plan for the year exceeds an amount which bears the same ratio to $2,500 as the earned income of the owner-employee derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established bears to his earned income derived from the trades or businesses with respect to which all such plans are established.

(4) An excess contribution is the amount of any contribution on behalf of an owner-employee for any taxable year of the plan with respect to which the plan is treated, under section 401(e)(2), as not meeting the requirements of section 401(d) with respect to such owner-employee.

(c) *Contributions for premiums on certain annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts.* (1) The term ''excess contribution'' does not include the amount of any employer contributions on behalf of an owner-employee which,

under the provisions of the plan, is expressly required to be applied (either directly or through a trustee) to pay the premiums or other consideration for one or more annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts, if—

(i) The employer contributions so applied meet the requirements of subparagraphs (2) through (4) of this paragraph, and

(ii) The total employer contributions required to be applied annually to pay premiums on behalf of any owner-employee for contracts described in this paragraph do not exceed $2,500. For purposes of computing such $2,500 limit, the total employer contributions includes amounts which are allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance.

(2)(i) The employer contributions must be paid under a plan which satisfies all the requirements for qualification. Accordingly, for example, contributions can be paid under the plan for life insurance protection only to the extent otherwise permitted under sections 401 through 404 and the regulations thereunder. However, certain of the requirements for qualification are modified with respect to a plan described in this paragraph (see section 401(a)(10)(A)(ii) and (d)(5)).

(ii) A plan described in this paragraph is not disqualified merely because a contribution is made on behalf of an owner-employee by his employer during a taxable year of the employer for which the owner-employee has no earned income. On the other hand, a plan will fail to qualify if a contribution is made on behalf of an owner-employee which results in the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4) as modified by section 401(a)(10)(A)(ii) (see paragraph (f)(3) of § 1.401–12).

(3) The employer contributions must be applied to pay premiums or other consideration for a contract issued on the life of the owner-employee. For purposes of this subparagraph, a contract is not issued on the life of an owner-employee unless all the proceeds which are, or may become, payable under the contract are payable directly, or through a trustee of a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), to the owner-employee or to the beneficiary named in the contract or under the plan. Accordingly, for example, a nontransferable face-amount certificate (as defined in section 401(g) and the regulations thereunder) is considered an annuity on the life of the owner-employee if the proceeds of such contract are payable only to the owner-employee or his beneficiary.

(4)(i) For any taxable year of the employer, the amount of contributions by the employer on behalf of the owner-employee which is applied to pay premiums under the contracts described in this paragraph must not exceed the average of the amounts deductible under section 404 (determined without regard to section 404(a)(10)) by such employer on behalf of such owner-employee for the most recent three taxable years of the employer (ending prior to the date the latest contract was entered into or modified to provide additional benefits), in which the owner-employee derived earned income from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. However, if such owner-employee has not derived earned income for at least three taxable years preceding such date, then, in determining the ''average of the amounts deductible'', only so many of such taxable years as such owner-employee was engaged in such trade or business and derived earned income therefrom are taken into account.

(ii) For the purpose of making the computation described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the taxable years taken into account include those years in which the individual derived earned income from the trade or business but was not an owner-employee with respect to such trade or business. Furthermore, taxable years of the employer preceding the taxable year in which a qualified plan is established are taken into account. If such taxable years began prior to January 1, 1963, the amount deductible is determined as if section 404 included section 404(a) (8), (9), (10), and (e).

(5) The amount of any employer contribution which is not deductible but which is not treated as an excess contribution because of the provisions of this paragraph shall be taken into account as an employee contribution made on behalf of the owner-employee

during the owner-employee's taxable year with, or within which, the taxable year of the person treated as his employer under section 401(c)(4) ends. However, such contribution is only treated as an employee contribution made on behalf of the owner-employee for the purpose of determining whether any other employee contribution made on behalf of the owner-employee during such period is an excess contribution described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(d) *Effect of an excess contribution which is not willfully made.* (1) If an excess contribution (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section) is made on behalf of an owner-employee, and if such contribution is not willfully made, then the provisions of this paragraph describe the effect of such an excess contribution. However, if the excess contribution made on behalf of an owner-employee is determined to have been willfully made, then the provisions of paragraph (e) of this section are applicable to such contribution.

(2)(i) This paragraph does not apply to an excess contribution if the net amount of such excess contribution (as defined in subparagraph (4) of this paragraph) and the net income attributable to such amount are repaid to the owner-employee on whose behalf the excess contribution was made at any time before the end of six months beginning on the day on which the district director sends notice (by certified or registered mail) of the amount of the excess contribution to the trust, insurance company, or other person to whom such excess contribution was paid. The net income attributable to the net amount of the excess contribution is the aggregate of the amounts of net income attributable to the net amount of the excess contribution for each year of the plan beginning with the taxable year of the plan within which the excess contribution is made and ending with the close of the taxable year of the plan immediately preceding the taxable year of the plan in which the net amount of the excess contribution is repaid. The amount of net income attributable to the net amount of the excess contribution for each year is the amount of net income earned under the plan during the year which is allocated in a reasonable manner to the net amount of the excess contribution. For example, the amount of net income earned under the plan for the year which is attributable to the net amount of an excess contribution can be computed as the amount which bears the same ratio to the amount of the ''net income attributable to the interest of the owner-employee under the plan'' for such taxable year (determined in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph (5)(ii) of this paragraph) as the net amount of the excess contribution bears to the aggregate amount standing to the account of the owner-employee at the end of that year (including the net amount of any excess contribution).

(ii) The notice described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph shall not be mailed prior to the time that the amount of the tax under chapter 1 of the Code of the owner-employee to whom the excess contribution is to be repaid has been finally determined for his taxable year in which such excess contribution was made. For purposes of this subdivision, a final determination of the amount of tax liability of the owner-employee includes—

(A)1 A decision by the Tax Court of the United States, or a judgment, decree, or other order by any court of competent jurisdiction, which has become final;

(B) A closing agreement authorized by section 7121; or

(C) The expiration of the period of limitation on suits by the taxpayer for refund, unless suit is instituted prior to the expiration of such period.

(iii) For purposes of this subparagraph, an amount is treated as repaid to an owner-employee if an adequate adjustment is made to the account of the owner-employee. An adequate adjustment is made to the account of an owner-employee, for example, if the amount of the excess contribution (without any reduction for any loading or other administrative charge) and the net income attributable to such amount is taken into account as a contribution under the plan for the current year. In such a case, the gross income of the owner-employee for his taxable year in which such adjustment is made includes the amount of the net

income attributable to the excess contribution.

(iv) If the net amount of the excess contribution and the net income attributable thereto is repaid, within the period described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, to the owner-employee on whose behalf such contribution was made, then the net income attributable to the excess contribution is, pursuant to section 61(a), includible in the gross income of the owner-employee for his taxable year in which such amount is distributed, or made available, to him. However, such amount is not a distribution to which section 402 or 403 and section 72 apply (see subparagraph (6) of this paragraph).

(3)(i) If the net amount of any excess contribution (as defined in subparagraph (4) of this paragraph) and the net income attributable to that excess contribution are not repaid to the owner-employee on whose behalf the excess contribution was made before the end of the six-month period described in subparagraph (2)(i) of this paragraph, the plan under which the excess contribution has been made is considered, for purposes of section 404, as not satisfying the requirements for qualification with respect to such owner-employee for all taxable years of the plan described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph. However, such disqualification only applies to the interest of the owner-employee on whose behalf an excess contribution has been made and does not disqualify the plan with respect to the other participants thereunder.

(ii) The taxable years referred to in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph include the taxable year of the plan within which the excess contribution is made and each succeeding taxable year of the plan until the beginning of the taxable year of the plan in which the trust, insurance company, or other person to whom such excess contribution was paid repays to such owner-employee—

(A) The net amount of the excess contribution, and

(B) The amount of income attributable to his interest under the plan which is includible in his gross income for any taxable year by reason of the provisions of subparagraph (5) of this paragraph.

(4) For purposes of this paragraph, the net amount of an excess contribution is the amount of such excess contribution, as defined in paragraph (b) of this section, reduced by the amount of any loading charge or other administrative charge ratably allocable to such excess contribution.

(5)(i) If a plan is considered as not meeting the requirements for qualification with respect to an owner-employee by reason of the provisions of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph for any taxable year of the plan, such owner-employee's gross income for any of his taxable years with or within which such taxable year of the plan ends shall, for purposes of chapter 1 of the Code, include the portion of the net income earned under the plan for such taxable year of the plan which is attributable to the interest of the owner-employee under the plan.

(ii) For purposes of this subparagraph, the term ''net income'' means the net income earned under the plan determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles consistently applied, and the ''net income attributable to the interest of the owner-employee under the plan'' is the amount which bears the same ratio to the aggregate amount of net income earned under the plan for the taxable year of the plan as the amount standing to the account of the owner-employee at the end of that year (including the amount of any excess contribution which is credited to his account) bears to the aggregate amount of all funds under the plan for all employees at the end of that year (including the aggregate amount of excess contributions credited to the accounts of all owner-employees for that year).

(iii) The provisions of this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. A is an owner-employee covered under the X Employees' Pension Trust who files his return on the basis of a calendar year. An excess contribution was made on behalf of A during the plan year beginning on January 1, 1966. The net amount of the excess contribution and the net income attributable thereto was not repaid to A before the

end of the six-month period described in subparagraph (2)(i) of this paragraph. Accordingly, the net income earned under the plan during 1966 which is attributable to A's interest is to be included in his gross income for 1966. Assume that the trust which forms a part of the pension plan of the X Company also files its returns on a calendar year basis, and that during 1966 the trust had a gross income of $4,000 (including a long-term capital gain of $2,500) and expenses of $500. Assume, further, that the amount standing to A's account on December 31, 1966 (including the amount of the excess contribution), was $20,000, and that on that date the amount funded under the plan for all employees (including A) is $140,000. Then the net income of the trust for 1966 is $3,500 ($4,000−$500). The net income attributable to the interest of A under the plan is $500 (the amount which bears the same ratio to $3,500 as $20,000 bears to $140,000). Accordingly, $500 is included in A's gross income in accordance with the provisions of section 401(e)(2)(B) as the ''net income attributable to the interest of the owner-employee under the plan''.

(6) The provisions of section 402 or 403 and section 72 do not apply to any amount distributed, or made available, to an owner-employee which is described in this paragraph. Accordingly, for example, the provisions of section 72(m)(5)(A)(i), relating to amounts subject to the penalty tax imposed by section 72(m), do not apply to the amount of the net income attributable to the interest of an owner-employee (as defined in subparagraph (5)(ii) of this paragraph) which is includible in his gross income. Furthermore, in such a case, the provisions of section 401(d)(5)(C) do not apply to such amount.

(7) Certain adjustments will be required with respect to the interest of an owner-employee after any amount previously allocated to his account has been returned to him pursuant to the provisions of this paragraph. For example, if the determination of whether life insurance benefits provided under the plan are incidental is made, in part, with regard to the contributions allocated to the accounts of the participants covered under the plan, an adjustment may have to be made with respect to the life insurance purchased under the plan for any owner-employee after any amount previously allocated to his account has been repaid to him. Furthermore, if, for example, an owner-employee has received annuity payments which were taxable under the exclusion ratio rule of section 72, and if such exclusion ratio took into account any amount credited to the account of the owner-employee which is subsequently repaid to him, then such exclusion ratio must be recomputed after the adjustment in such owner-employee's account has taken place.

(8) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in any case in which the plan is treated as not satisfying the requirements for qualification with respect to any owner-employee by reason of the provisions of section 401(e), the period for assessing, with respect to such owner-employee, any deficiency arising by reason of—

(i) The disallowance of any deduction under section 404 by reason of the provisions of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph, or

(ii) The inclusion of amounts in the gross income of the owner-employee by reason of the provisions of subparagraph (5) of this paragraph,

shall not expire prior to 18 months after the day the district director mails the notice with respect to the excess contribution (described in subparagraph (2)(i) of this paragraph) which gives rise to such disallowance or inclusion. Thus, for example, notwithstanding the provisions of section 6212(c) (relating to the restriction on the determination of additional deficiencies), if, after a final determination by the Tax Court of the income tax liability of an owner-employee for a taxable year in which an excess contribution was made, the amount of such excess contribution and the net income attributable thereto is not paid to the owner-employee before the end of the six-month period described in subparagraph (2)(i) of this paragraph, an additional deficiency assessment may be made for such taxable year with respect to such excess contribution.

(e) *Effect of an excess contribution which is determined to have been willfully made.* If an excess contribution (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section) on behalf of an owner-employee is determined to have been willful ly made, then—

(1) Only the provisions of this paragraph apply to such contribution;

(2) There shall be distributed to the owner-employee on whose behalf such contribution was willfully made his entire interest in all plans in which he is a participant as an owner-employee;

(3) The amount distributed under each such plan is an amount to which section 72 does apply (see section 72(m)(5)(A)(iii)); and

(4) For purposes of section 404, no plan in which such individual is covered as an owner-employee shall be considered as meeting the requirements for qualification with respect to such owner-employee for any taxable year of the plan beginning with or within the calendar year in which it is determined that the excess contribution has been willfully made and with or within the five calendar years following such year.

(f) *Years to which this section applies.* This section applies to contributions made in taxable years of employers beginning before January 1, 1976. Thus, for example, in the case of willful contributions made in taxable years of employers beginning before January 1, 1976, paragraphs (e) (1), (2), and (3) of this section apply to such taxable years beginning on or after such date. However, in such a case, because the application of paragraph (e)(4) of this section affects contributions made in taxable years of employers beginning on or after January 1, 1976, paragraph (e)(4) of this section does not apply to such taxable years; see paragraph (c) of § 1.401(e)–4 (relating to transitional rules for excess contributions).

[T.D. 6676, 28 FR 10139, Sept. 17, 1963; as amended by T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47053, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.401–14 Inclusion of medical benefits for retired employees in qualified pension or annuity plans.

(a) *Introduction.* Under section 401(h) a qualified pension or annuity plan may make provision for the payment of sickness, accident, hospitalization, and medical expenses for retired employees, their spouses, and their dependents. The term ''medical benefits described in section 401(h)'' is used in this section to describe such payments.

(b) *In general*—(1) *Coverage.* Under section 401(h), a qualified pension or annuity plan may provide for the payment of medical benefits described in section 401(h) only for retired employees, their spouses, or their dependents. To be ''retired'' for purposes of eligibility to receive medical benefits described in section 401(h), an employee must be eligible to receive retirement benefits provided under the pension plan, or else be retired by an employer providing such medical benefits by reason of permanent disability. For purposes of the preceding sentence, an employee is not considered to be eligible to receive retirement benefits provided under the plan if he is still employed by the employer and a separation from employment is a condition to receiving the retirement benefits.

(2) *Discrimination.* A plan which provides medical benefits described in section 401(h) must not discriminate in favor of officers, shareholders, supervisory employees, or highly compensated employees with respect to coverage and with respect to the contributions or benefits under the plan. The determination of whether such a plan so discriminates is made with reference to the retirement portion of the plan as well as the portion providing the medical benefits described in section 401(h). Thus, for example, a plan will not be qualified under section 401 if it discriminates in favor of employees who are officers or shareholders with respect to either portion of the plan.

(3) *Funding medical benefits.* Contributions to provide the medical benefits described in section 401(h) may be made either on a contributory or noncontributory basis, without regard to whether the contributions to fund the retirement benefits are made on a similar basis. Thus, for example, the contributions to fund the medical benefits described in section 401(h) may be provided for entirely out of employer contributions even though the retirement benefits under the plan are determined on the basis of both employer and employee contributions.

(4) *Definitions.* For purposes of section 401(h) and this section:

(i) The term *dependent* shall have the same meaning as that assigned to it by section 152, and

(ii) The term *medical expense* means expenses for medical care as defined in section 213(e)(1).

(c) *Requirements.* The requirements which must be met for a qualified pension or annuity plan to provide medical benefits described in section 401(h) are set forth in subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

(1) *Benefits.* (i) The plan must specify the medical benefits described in section 401(h) which will be available and must contain provisions for determining the amount which will be paid. Such benefits, when added to any life insurance protection provided for under the plan, must be subordinate to the retirement benefits provided by such plan. For purposes of this section, life insurance protection includes any benefit paid under the plan on behalf of an employee-participant as a result of the employee-participant's death to the extent such payment exceeds the amount of the reserve to provide the retirement benefits for the employee-participant existing at his death. The medical benefits described in section 401(h) are considered subordinate to the retirement benefits if at all times the aggregate of contributions (made after the date on which the plan first includes such medical benefits) to provide such medical benefits and any life insurance protection does not exceed 25 percent of the aggregate contributions (made after such date) other than contributions to fund past service credits.

(ii) The meaning of the term *subordinate* may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. The X Corporation amends its qualified pension plan to provide medical benefits described in section 401(h) effective for the taxable year 1964. The total contributions under the plan (excluding those for past service credits) for the taxable year 1964 are $125,000, allocated as follows: $100,000 for retirement benefits, $10,000 for life insurance protection, and $15,000 for medical benefits described in section 401(h). The medical benefits described in section 401(h) are considered subordinate to the retirement benefits since the portion of the contributions allocated to the medical benefits described in section 401(h) ($15,000) and to life insurance protection after such medical benefits were included in the plan ($10,000), or $25,000, does not exceed 25 percent of $125,000. For the taxable year 1965, the X Corporation contributes $140,000 (exclusive of contributions for past service credits) allocated as follows: $100,000 for retirement benefits, $10,000 for life insurance protection, and $30,000 for medical benefits described in section 401(h). The medical benefits described in section 401(h) are considered subordinate to the retirement benefits since the aggregate contributions allocated to the medical benefits described in section 401(h) ($45,000) and to life insurance protection after such medical benefits were included in the plan ($20,000) or $65,000 does not exceed 25 percent of $265,000, the aggregate of the contributions made in 1964 and 1965.

(2) *Separate accounts.* Where medical benefits described in section 401(h) are provided for under a qualified pension or annuity plan, a separate account must be maintained with respect to contributions to fund such benefits. The separation required by this section is for recordkeeping purposes only. Consequently, the funds in the medical benefits account need not be separately invested. They may be invested with funds set aside for retirement purposes without identification of which investment properties are allocable to each account. However, where the investment properties are not allocated to each account, the earnings on such properties must be allocated to each account in a reasonable manner.

(3) *Reasonable and ascertainable.* Section 401(h) further requires that amounts contributed to fund medical benefits therein described must be reasonable and ascertainable. For the rules relating to the deduction of such contributions, see paragraph (f) of § 1.404(a)–3. The employer must, at the time he makes a contribution, designate that portion of such contribution allocable to the funding of medical benefits.

(4) *Impossibility of diversion prior to satisfaction of all liabilities.* Section 401(h) further requires that it must be impossible, at any time prior to the satisfaction of all liabilities under the plan to provide for the payment of medical benefits described in section 401(h), for any part of the corpus or income of the medical benefits account to be (within the taxable year or thereafter) used for, or diverted to, any purpose other than the providing of such benefits. Consequently, a plan which, for example, under its terms, permits funds in the medical benefits account

to be used for any retirement benefit provided under the plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(h) and will not qualify under section 401(a). However, the payment of any necessary or appropriate expenses attributable to the administration of the medical benefits account does not affect the qualification of the plan.

(5) *Reversion upon satisfaction of all liabilities.* The plan must provide that any amounts which are contributed to fund medical benefits described in section 401(h) and which remain in the medical benefits account upon the satisfaction of all liabilities arising out of the operation of the medical benefits portion of the plan are to be returned to the employer.

(6) *Forfeitures.* The plan must expressly provide that in the event an individual's interest in the medical benefits account is forfeited prior to termination of the plan an amount equal to the amount of the forfeiture must be applied as soon as possible to reduce employer contributions to fund the medical benefits described in section 401(h).

(d) *Effective date.* This section applies to taxable years of a qualified pension or annuity plan beginning after October 23, 1962.

[T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5072, Apr. 14, 1964]

§ 1.401(a)–1 Post-ERISA qualified plans and qualified trusts; In general.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *In general.* This section and the following regulation sections under section 401 reflect the provisions of section 401 after amendment by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93–406) (''ERISA'').

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Requirements for pension plans*—(1) *Definitely determinable benefits.* (i) In order for a pension plan to be a qualified plan under section 401(a), the plan must be established and maintained by an employer primarily to provide systematically for the payment of definitely determinable benefits to its employees over a period of years, usually for life, after retirement.

(ii) Section 1.401–1(b)(1)(i), a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules applicable to this requirement, and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(iii) The use of the type of plan provision described in § 1.415–1(d)(1) which automatically freezes or reduces the rate of benefit accrual or the annual addition to insure that the limitations of section 415 will not be exceeded, will not be considered to violate the requirements of this subparagraph provided that the operation of such provision precludes discretion by the employer.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401(a)–2 Impossibility of diversion under qualified plan or trust.

(a) *General rule.* Section 401(a)(2) requires that in order for a trust to be qualified, it must be impossible under the trust instrument (in the taxable year and at any time thereafter before the satisfaction of all liabilities to employees or their beneficiaries covered by the trust) for any part of the trust corpus or income to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of those employees or their beneficiaries. Section 1.401–2, a pre-ERISA regulation, provides rules under section 401(a)(2) and that regulation is applicable except as otherwise provided.

(b) *Section 415 suspense account.* Paragraph (a) of this section does not apply to amounts properly allocated to a suspense account pursuant to § 1.415–6(b)(6). The plan, or the trust forming part of the plan, may provide for the reversion to the employer, upon termination of the plan, of amounts held in the suspense account.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1696, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401(a)–4 Optional forms of benefit (before 1994).

Q–1: How does section 401(a)(4) apply to optional forms of benefits?

A–1: (a) *In general.*—(1) *Scope.* The nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) apply to the amount of contributions or benefits, optional forms of benefit, and other benefits, rights and features (e.g., actuarial assumptions, methods of benefit calculation, loans, social security supplements, and disability benefits) under a

plan. This section addresses the application of section 401(a)(4) only to optional forms of benefit under a plan. Generally, the determination of whether an optional form is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) is made by reference to the availability of such optional form, and not by reference to the utilization or actual receipt of such optional form. See Q&A–2 of this section. Even though an optional form of benefit under a plan may be nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) and this § 1.401(a)–4 because the availability of such optional form does not impermissibly favor employees in the highly compensated group, such plan may fail to satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits or with respect to other benefits, rights and features if, for example, the method of calculation or the amount or value of benefits payable under such optional form impermissibly favors the highly compensated group. See § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–1 for the definition of ''optional form of benefit.''

(2) *Nondiscrimination requirements.* Each optional form of benefit provided under a plan is subject to the nondiscrimination requirement of section 401(a)(4) and thus the availability of each optional form of benefit must not discriminate in favor of the employees described in section 401(a)(4) in whose favor discrimination is prohibited (the ''highly compensated group''). See paragraph (b) of this Q&A–1 for a description of the employees included in such group. This is true without regard to whether a particular optional form of benefit is the actuarial equivalent of any other optional form of benefit under the plan. Thus, for example, a plan may not condition, or otherwise limit, the availability of a single sum distribution of an employee's benefit in a manner that impermissibly favors the highly compensated group.

(b) *Highly compensated group.* For plan years commencing prior to the applicable effective date for the amendment made to section 401(a)(4) by section 1114 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA '86), the highly compensated group consists of those employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated. For plan years beginning on or after the applicable effective date of the amendments to section 401(a)(4) made by TRA '86, the highly compensated group consists of those employees who are highly compensated within the meaning of section 414(q). The amendment to section 401(a)(4) made by section 1114 of TRA '86 is generally effective for plan years commencing after December 31, 1988. See section 1114(a) of TRA '86.

Q–2: How is it determined whether an optional form of benefit satisfies the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4)?

A–2: (a) *Nondiscrimination requirement.*—(1) *In general.* An optional form of benefit under a plan is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4) only if the requirements of paragraphs (a)(2) and (a)(3) of this Q&A–2 are satisfied with respect to such optional form. The determination of whether an optional form of benefit satisfies these requirements is made by reference to the availability of the optional form, and not by reference to the utilization or actual receipt of such optional form. Thus, an optional form of benefit that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (a)(2) and (a)(3) of this Q&A–2 is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(2) even though the highly compensated group disproportionately utilizes such optional form. However, the composition of the group of employees who actually receive benefits in an optional form may be relevant in determining whether such optional form satisfies the requirement of paragraph (a)(3) of this Q&A–2 with respect to effective availability.

(2) *Current availability*—(i) *Plan years prior to TRA '86 effective date.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this Q&A–2, for plan years prior to the effective date of the amendments made to section 401(b) by section 1112(a) of TRA '86, the requirement of this paragraph (a)(2) is satisfied only if the group of employees to whom the optional form is currently available satisfies either the seventy percent test of section 410(b)(1)(A) or the nondiscriminatory classification test of section 410(b)(1)(B).

(ii) *Plan years commencing on or after TRA '86 effective date.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this

Q&A–2, for plan years commencing on or after the effective date on which the amendments made to section 410(b) by section 1112(a) of TRA '86 first apply to a plan, the requirement of this paragraph (a)(2) is satisfied only if the group of employees to whom the optional form is currently available satisfies either the percentage test set forth in section 410(b)(1)(A), the ratio test set forth in section 410(b)(1)(B), or the nondiscriminatory classification test set forth in section 410(b)(2)(A)(i). The employer need not satisfy the average benefit percentage test in section 410(b)(2)(A)(ii) in order for the optional form to be currently available to a nondiscriminatory group of employees.

(iii) *Special rule for certain governmental or church plans.* Plans described in section 410(c) will be treated as satisfying the current availability test of this paragraph (a)(2) if the group of employees with respect to whom the optional form is currently available satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974.

(iv) *Effective data for TRA '86 amendments to section 410(b).* The amendments to section 410(b) made by section 1112(a) of TRA '86 are generally effective for plan years commencing after December 31, 1988. See section 1112(e)(1) of TRA '86.

(v) *Elimination of optional forms*—(A) *In general.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (a)(2)(i) and (a)(2)(ii) of this Q&A–2, in the case of an optional form of benefit that has been eliminated under a plan with respect to specified employees for benefits accrued after the later of the eliminating amendment's adoption date or effective date, the determination of whether such optional form satisfies this paragraph (a)(2) with respect to such employees is to be made immediately prior to the elimination. Accordingly, if, as of the later of the adoption date or effective date of an amendment eliminating an optional form with respect to future benefit accruals, the current availability of such optional form immediately prior to such amendment satisfies this paragraph (a)(2), then the optional form will be treated as satisfying this paragraph (a)(2) for all subsequent years.

(B) *Example.* A profit-sharing plan that provides for a single sum distribution available to all employees on termination of employment is amended January 1, 1990, to eliminate such single sum optional form of benefit with respect to benefits accrued after January 1, 1991. As of January 1, 1991, the single sum optional form of benefit is available to a group of employees that satisfies the percentage test of section 410(b)(1)(A). As of January 1, 1995, all nonhighly compensated employees who were entitled to the single sum optional form of benefit have terminated from employment with the employer and taken a distribution of their benefits. The only remaining employees who have a right to take a portion of their benefits in the form of a single sum distribution on termination of employment are highly compensated employees. Because the availability of the single sum optional form of benefit satisfied the current availability test as of January 1, 1991, the availability of such optional form of benefit is deemed to continue to satisfy the current availability test of this paragraph (a)(2).

(3) *Effective availability*—(i) *In general.* The requirement of this paragraph (a)(3) is satisfied only if, based on the facts and circumstances, the group of employees to whom the optional form is effectively available does not substantially favor the highly compensated group. This is the case even if the optional form is, or has been, currently available to a group of employees that satisfies the applicable requirements in paragraph (a)(2) (i) or (ii) of this Q&A–2.

(ii) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this Q&A–2 can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Employer X maintains a defined benefit plan that covers both of the 2 highly compensated employees of the employer and 8 of the twelve nonhighly compensated employees of the employer. Plan X provides for a normal retirement benefit payable as an annuity and based on a normal retirement age of 65, and an early retirement benefit payable upon termination in the form of an annuity to employees who terminate from service with the employer on or after age 55 with 30 or more years of service. Each of the 2 employees of employer X who are in the highly compensated group currently meet the age and service requirement, or will have 30 years of service by the time they reach age 55. All but 2 of the 8 nonhighly compensated employees of employer X who are covered by the plan were hired on or after age 35 and thus, cannot qualify for the early retirement benefit provision. Even though the group of employees to whom the early

retirement benefit is currently available does not impermissibly favor the highly compensated group by reason of disregarding age and service, these facts and circumstances indicate that the effective availability of the early retirement benefit in plan X substantially favors the highly compensated group.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1* except that the early retirement benefit is added by a plan amendment first adopted, announced and effective December 1, 1991, and is available only to employees who terminate from employment with the employer prior to December 15, 1991. Further assume that all employees were hired prior to attaining age 25, and that the group of employees who have, or will have attained age 55 with 30 years of service, by December 15, 1991, satisfies the ratio test of section 410(b)(1)(B). Finally, assume that the only employees who terminate from employment with the employer during the two week period in which the early retirement benefit is available are employees in the highly compensated group. These facts and circumstances indicate that the effective availability of the early retirement benefit substantially favors the highly compensated group. This is the case even though the limitation of the early retirement benefit to a specified period satisfies section 411(d)(6).

Example 3. Employer Y amends plan Y on June 30, 1990, to provide for a single sum distribution for employees who terminate from employment with the employer after June 30, 1990, and prior to January 1, 1991. The availability of this single sum distribution is conditioned on the employee having a particular disability at the time of termination of employment. The only employee of the employer who meets this disability requirement at the time of the amendment and thereafter through December 31, 1990, is a highly compensated employee. Generally, a disability condition with respect to the availability of a single sum distribution may be disregarded in determining whether the current availability of such optional form of benefit is discriminatory. However, these facts and circumstances indicate that the effective availability of the optional form of benefit substantially favors the highly compensated group.

Example 4. Employer Z maintains a money purchase pension plan that covers all employees of the employer. The plan provides for distribution in the form of a joint and survivor annuity, a life annuity, or equal installments over 10 years. During the 1992 calendar year the employer winds up his business. In December of 1992, only two employees remain in the employment of the employer, both of whom are highly compensated. Employer Z then amends the plan to provide for a single sum distribution to employees who terminate from employment on or after the date of the amendment. Both highly compensated employees terminate from employment on December 31, 1992, taking a single sum distribution of their benefits. These facts and circumstances indicate that the effective availability of the single sum optional form of benefit substantially favors the highly compensated group.

(b) *Application of tests*—(1) *Current availability*—(i) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (b), in determining whether an optional form of benefit that is subject to specified eligibility conditions is currently available to an employee for purposes of paragraph (a) of this Q&A–2, the determination of current availability generally is to be based on the current facts and circumstances with respect to the employee (e.g., the employee's current compensation or the employee's current net worth). Thus, for example, the fact that an employee may, in the future, satisfy an eligibility condition generally does not cause an optional form of benefit to be treated as currently available to such employee.

(ii) *Exceptions for age, service, employment termination and certain other conditions*—(A) *Age and service conditions.* For purposes of applying paragraph (a)(2) of this Q&A–2, except as provided in paragraph (b)(1)(ii)(B) of this Q&A–2, an age condition, a service condition, or both are to be disregarded. For example, an employer that maintains a plan that provides for an early retirement benefit payable as an annuity for employees in division A, subject to a requirement that the employee has attained his or her 55th birthday and has at least twenty years of service with the employer, is to disregard the age and service conditions in determining the group of employees to whom the early retirement annuity benefit is currently available. Thus, the early retirement annuity benefit is treated as currently available to all employees of division A, without regard to their ages or years of service and without regard to whether they could potentially meet the age and service conditions prior to attaining the plan's normal retirement age.

(B) *Exception for certain age and service conditions.* Age and service conditions that must be satisfied within a specified period of time may not be disregarded pursuant to paragraph

(b)(1)(ii)(A) of this Q&A–2. However, in determining the current availability of an optional form of benefit subject to such an age condition, service condition, or both, an employer may project the age and service of employees to the last date on which the optional form of benefit subject to the age condition or service condition (or both) is available under the plan. An employer's ability to protect age and service to the last date on which the optional form of benefit is available under the plan is not cut off by a plan termination occurring prior to that date. Thus, for example, assume that an employer maintaining a plan that permits employees terminating from employment on or after age 55 between June 1, 1991 to May 31, 1992, to elect a single sum distribution, decides to terminate the plan on December 31, 1991. In determining the group of employees to whom the single sum optional form of benefit is currently available, this employer may project employees' ages through May 31, 1992.

(C) *Certain other conditions disregarded.* Conditions on the availability of optional forms of benefit requiring termination of employment, death, satisfaction of a specified health condition (or failure to meet such condition), disability, hardship, marital status, default on a plan loan secured by a participant's account balance, or execution of a covenant not to compete may be disregarded in determining the group of employees to whom an optional form of benefit is currently available.

(2) *Employees taken into account.* For purposes of applying paragraph (a) of this Q&A–2, the tests are to be applied on the basis of the employer's nonexcludable employees (whether or not they are participants in the plan) in the same manner as such tests would be applied in determining whether the plan providing the optional form of benefit satisfies the tests under section 410(b).

(3) *Definition of ''plan''.* For purposes of applying paragraph (a) of this Q&A–2, the term ''plan'' has the meaning that such term has for purposes of determining whether the amount of contributions or benefits and whether other benefits, rights, and features are nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4).

(4) *Restructuring optional forms of benefit*—(i) *In general.* For purposes of applying paragraph (a) of this Q&A–2, the availability of two or more optional forms of benefit under a plan may be tested by restructuring such benefits into two or more restructured optional forms of benefit and testing the availability of such restructured optional forms of benefit. If two or more optional forms of benefit under a plan contain both common and distinct components, such optional forms of benefit may be restructured as a single optional form of benefit comprising the common component, and one or more optional forms of benefit comprising each distinct component. Components of optional forms of benefit may be treated as common only if they are identical with respect to all characteristics taken into account under Q&A–1(b) of § 1.411(d)–4. The availability of each restructured optional form of benefit must satisfy the applicable nondiscrimination requirements of paragraph (a) of this Q&A–2.

(ii) *Example.* A profit-sharing plan covering all the employees of an employer provides a single sum distribution option upon termination from employment for all employees earning less than $50,000 and a single sum distribution option upon termination from employment after the attainment of age 55 for all employees earning $50,000 or more. These distribution options are identical in all other respects. For purposes of applying section 401(a)(4), such optional forms of benefit may be restructured into two different optional forms of benefit: (A) a single sum distribution option upon termination from employment after the attainment of age 55 for all employees (i.e., the common component), and (B) a single sum distribution option upon termination from employment before the attainment of age 55 for all employees earning less than $50,000. The availability of each of these restructured optional forms of benefit must satisfy section 401(a)(4).

(c) *Commissioner may provide additional tests.* The Commissioner may provide such additional factors, tests, and safe harbors as are necessary or appropriate for purposes of determining whether the availability of an optional form of benefit is discriminatory under section 401(a)(4). In addition, the Commissioner may provide that additional

eligibility conditions not related directly or indirectly to compensation or wealth may be disregarded under paragraph (b)(1)(ii)(C) of this Q&A–2 in determining the current availability of an optional form of benefit. The Commissioner may provide such additional guidance only through the publication of revenue rulings, notices or other documents of general applicability.

Q–3: May a plan condition the availability of an optional form of benefit on employer discretion?

A–3: No. Even if the availability of an optional form of benefit that is conditioned on employer discretion satisfies the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4), the plan providing the optional form of benefit will fail to satisfy certain other requirements of section 401(a), including, in applicable circumstances, the definitely determinable requirement of section 401(a) and the requirements of section 401(a)(25) and section 411(d)(6). See § 1.411(d)–4.

Q–4: Will a plan provision violate section 401(a)(4) merely because it requires that an employee who terminates from service with the employer receive a single sum distribution in the event that the present value of the employee's benefit is not more than $3,500, as permitted by sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e)?

A–4: No. A plan will not be treated as discriminatory under section 401(a)(4) merely because the plan mandates a single sum distribution when the present value of an employee's benefit is not more than $3,500, as permitted by sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e). This is an exception to the general principles of this section. (No similar provision exists excepting such single sum distributions from the limits on employer discretion under section 411(d)(6). See § 1.411(d)–4 Q&A–4.)

Q–5: If the availability of an optional form of benefit discriminates, or may reasonably be expected to discriminate, in favor of the highly compensated group, what acceptable alternatives exist for amending the plan without violating section 411(d)(6)?

A–5: (a) *Transitional rules*—(1) *In general.* The following rules apply for purposes of making necessary amendments to existing plans (as defined in Q&A–6 of this section) under which the availability of an optional form of benefit violates the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) or may reasonably be expected to violate such requirements. These transitional rules are provided under the authority of section 411(d)(6), which allows the elimination of certain optional forms of benefit if permitted by regulations, and section 7805(b).

(2) *Nondiscrimination*—(i) *In general.* The determination of whether the availability of an optional form of benefit violates section 401(a)(4) is to be made in accordance with Q&A–2 of this section. In addition, the availability of a particular optional form of benefit may reasonably be expected to violate the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) if, under the applicable facts and circumstances, there is a significant possibility that the current availability of such optional form of benefit will impermissibly favor the highly compensated group. This determination must be made on the basis of the seventy percent test of section 410(b)(1)(A) or the nondiscriminatory classification test of section 410(b)(1)(B) as such tests existed prior to the effective date of the amendments made to section 410(b) by section 1112(a) of TRA '86. Thus, a condition may not reasonably be expected to discriminate for purposes of these rules merely because it results in a significant possibility that discrimination will result because of the amendments made to section 410(b) by section 1112(a) of TRA '86. In addition, the availability of an optional form of benefit may not reasonably be expected to discriminate merely because of an age or service condition that may be disregarded in determining the current availability of such optional form of benefit under paragraph (b)(1)(ii)(A) of Q&A–2 of this section. Similarly, the availability of an optional form of benefit may not reasonably be expected to discriminate merely because of an age or service condition that, after permitted projection, does not cause such optional form to fail to satisfy the requirement of this paragraph (a)(2).

(ii) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this Q&A–5 can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A plan provides that a single sum distribution option is available only to (A) employees earning $50,000 or more in the final year of employment, (B) employees who furnish evidence that they have a net worth above a certain specified amount, and (C) employees who present a letter from an accountant or attorney declaring that it is in the employee's best interest to receive a single sum distribution. Whether the availability of such optional form of benefit discriminates depends on whether it meets the requirements of Q&A–2 of this § 1.401(a)–4. However, each of the specified conditions limiting the availability of the optional form of benefit may reasonably be expected to discriminate in favor of the highly compensated group in operation because of the likelihood of a significant positive correlation between the ability to meet any of the specified conditions and membership in the highly compensated group.

Example (2). A plan limits the availability of a single sum distribution option to employees employed in one particular division of the employer's company. All the employees of the company are participants in the plan. During the 1988 plan year, the division employs individuals who represent a nondiscriminatory classification of that company's employees (under section 410(b)(1)(B) prior to the effective date of the amendments made to section 410(b) by section 1112(a) of TRA '86) and is unlikely to cease employing such a nondiscriminatory classification in the future. The availability of a single sum distribution under this plan does not result in discrimination during the 1988 plan year and may not reasonably be expected to do so.

(b) *Transitional alternatives.* If the availability of an optional form of benefit under an existing plan is discriminatory under section 401(a)(4), the plan must be amended either to eliminate the optional form of benefit or to make the availability of the optional form of benefit nondiscriminatory. For example, the availability of an optional form of benefit may be made nondiscriminatory by making such benefit available to sufficient additional employees who are not in the highly compensated group or by imposing nondiscriminatory objective criteria on its availability such that the group of employees to whom the benefit is available is nondiscriminatory. See Q&A–6 of § 1.411(d)–4 for requirements with respect to such objective criteria. If, under an exisitng plan, the availability of an optional form of benefit may reasonably be expected to discriminate, the plan may be amended in the same manner permitted where the availability of an optional form of benefit is discriminatory. See paragraph (d) of this Q&A–5 for rules limiting the period during which the availability of optional forms of benefit may be eliminated or reduced under this paragraph.

(c) *Compliance and amendment date provisions*—(1) *Operational compliance requirement.* On or before the applicable effective date for the plan (see Q&A–6 of this section), the plan sponsor must select one of the alternatives permitted under paragraph (b) of this Q&A–5 with respect to each affected optional form of benefit and the plan must be operated in accordance with this selection. This is an operational requirement and does not require a plan amendment prior to the period set forth in paragraph (c)(2) of this Q&A–5. There is no special reporting requirement under the Code or this section with respect to this selection.

(2) *Deferred amendment date.* If paragraph (c)(1) of this Q&A–5 is satisfied, a plan amendment conforming the plan to the particular alternative selected under paragraph (b) of this Q&A–5 must be adopted within the time period permitted for amending plans in order to meet the requirements of section 410(b) as amended by TRA '86. Such conforming amendment must be consistent with the sponsor's selection as reflected by plan practice during the period from the effective date to the date the amendment is adopted. Thus, for example, if an existing calendar year noncollectively bargained defined benefit plan has a single sum distribution form subject to a discriminatory condition, that was available as of January 30, 1986 (subject to such condition), and such employer makes one or more single sum distributions available on or after the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989, and before the plan amendment, then such employer may not adopt a plan amendment eliminating the single sum distribution form. Instead, such employer must adopt an amendment making the distribution form available to a nondiscriminatory group of employees while retaining the availability of such distribution form with respect to the group of employees to whom the

benefit is already available. Similarly, any objective criteria that are adopted as part of such amendment must be consistent with the plan practice for the applicable period prior to the amendment. A conforming amendment under this paragraph (c)(2) must be made with respect to each optional form of benefit for which such amendment is required and must be retroactive to the applicable effective date.

(d) *Limitation on transitional alternatives.* The transitional alternatives permitting the elimination or reduction of optional forms of benefit will not violate section 411(d)(6) during the period prior to the applicable effective date for the plan (see Q&A–6 of this section). After the applicable effective date, any amendment (other than one described in paragraph (c)(2) of this Q&A–5) that eliminates or reduces an optional form of benefit or imposes new objective criteria restricting the availability of such optional form of benefit will fail to qualify for the exception to section 411(d)(6) provided in this Q&A–5. This is the case without regard to whether the availability of the optional form of benefit is discriminatory or may reasonably be expected to be discriminatory.

Q–6: For what period are the rules of this section effective?

A–6: (a) *General effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, the provisions of this section are effective January 30, 1986, and do not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994. For rules applicable to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994, see §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), except as otherwise provided in this section, the provisions of this section are effective January 30, 1986, and do not apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996. For rules applicable to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996, see §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(b) *New plans*—(1) *In general.* Unless otherwise provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this Q&A–6, plans that are either adopted or made effective on or after January 30, 1986, are ''new plans''. With respect to such new plans, this section is effective January 30, 1986. This effective date is applicable to such plans whether or not they are collectively bargained.

(2) *Exception with respect to certain new plans.* Plans that are new plans as defined in paragraph (b)(1) of this Q&A–6, under which the availability of an optional form of benefit is discriminatory or may reasonably be expected to be discriminatory, and that receive a favorable determination letter that covered such plan provisions with respect to an application submitted prior to July 11, 1988, will be treated as existing plans with respect to such optional form of benefit for purposes of the transitional rules of this section. Thus, such plans are eligible for the compliance and amendment alternatives set forth in the transitional rule in Q&A–5 of this section.

(c) *Existing plans*—(1) *In general.* Plans that are both adopted and in effect prior to January 30, 1986, are ''existing plans''. In addition, new plans described in paragraph (b)(2) of this Q&A–6 are treated as existing plans with respect to certain forms of benefit. Subject to the limitations in paragraph (d) of this Q&A–6, the effective dates set forth in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this Q&A–6 apply to these existing plans for purposes of this section.

(2) *Existing noncollectively bargained plans.* With respect to existing noncollectively bargained plans, this section is effective for the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989.

(3) *Existing collectively bargained plans.* With respect to existing collectively bargained plans, this section is effective for the later of the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989, or the first day of the first plan year that the requirements of section 410(b) as amended by TRA '86 apply to such plan.

(d) *Delayed effective dates not applicable to new optional forms of benefit or conditions*—(1) *In general.* The delayed effective dates in paragraph (c) (2) and (3) of this Q&A–6 for existing plans are applicable with respect to an optional

form of benefit only if both the optional form of benefit and any applicable condition either causing the availability of such optional form of benefit to be discriminatory or making it reasonable to expect that the availability of such optional form will be discriminatory were both adopted and in effect prior to January 30, 1986. If the preceding sentence is not satisfied with respect to an optional form of benefit, this section is effective with respect to such optional form of benefit as if the plan were a new plan.

(2) *Exception for certain amendments covered by a favorable determination letter.* If a condition causing the availability of an optional form of benefit to be discriminatory, or to be reasonably expected to discriminate, was adopted or made effective on or after January 30, 1986, and a favorable determination letter that covered such plan provision is or was received with respect to an application submitted before July 11, 1988, the effective date of this section with respect to such provision is the applicable effective date determined under the rules with respect to existing plans, as though such provision had been adopted and in effect prior to January 30, 1986.

(e) *Transitional rule effective date.* The transitional rule provided in Q&A–5 of this section is effective January 30, 1986.

[53 FR 26054, July 11, 1988, as amended by T.D. 8360, 56 FR 47536, Sept. 19, 1991; T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46778, Sept. 3, 1993; T.D. 8212, 61 FR 14247, Apr. 1, 1996]

§ 1.401(a)–11 Qualified joint and survivor annuities.

(a) *General rule*—(1) *Required provisions.* A trust, to which section 411 (relating to minimum vesting standards) applies without regard to section 411(e)(2), which is a part of a plan providing for the payment of benefits in any form of a life annuity (as defined in paragraph (b)(1) of this section), shall not constitute a qualified trust under section 401(a)(11) and this section unless such plan provides that:

(i) Unless the election provided in paragraph (c)(1) of this section has been made, life annuity benefits will be paid in a form having the effect of a qualified joint and survivor annuity (as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section) with respect to any participant who—

(A) Begins to receive payments under such plan on or after the date the normal retirement age is attained, or

(B) Dies (on or after the date the normal retirement age is attained) while in active service of the employer maintaining the plan, or

(C) In the case of a plan which provides for the payment of benefits before the normal retirement age, begins to receive payments under such plan on or after the date the qualified early retirement age (as defined in paragraph (b)(4) of this section) is attained, or

(D) Separates from service on or after the date the normal retirement age (or the qualified early retirement age) is attained and after satisfaction of eligibility requirements for the payment of benefits under the plan (except for any plan requirement that there be filed a claim for benefits) and thereafter dies before beginning to receive life annuity benefits;

(ii) Any participant may elect, as provided in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, not to receive life annuity benefits in the form of a qualified joint and survivor annuity; and

(iii) If the plan provides for the payment of benefits before the normal retirement age, any participant may elect, as provided in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, that life annuity benefits be payable as an early survivor annuity (as defined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section) upon his death in the event that he—

(A) Attains the qualified early retirement age (as defined in paragraph (b)(4) of this section), and

(B) Dies on or before the day normal retirement age is attained while employed by an employer maintaining the plan.

(2) *Certain cash-outs.* A plan will not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(11) and this section merely because it provides that if the present value of the entire nonforfeitable benefit derived from employer contributions of a participant at the time of his separation from service does not exceed $1,750 (or such smaller amount as the plan may specify), such benefit will be paid to him in a lump sum.

(3) *Illustrations.* The provisions of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). The X Corporation Defined Contribution Plan was established in 1960. As in effect on January 1, 1974, the plan provided that, upon the participant's retirement, the participant may elect to receive the balance of his account in the form of (1) a single-sum cash payment, (2) a single-sum distribution consisting of X Corporation stock, (3) five equal annual cash payments, (4) a life annuity, or (5) a combination of options (1) through (4). The plan also provided that, if a participant did not elect another form of distribution, the balance of his account would be distributed to him in the form of a single-sum cash payment upon his retirement. Assume that section 401(a)(11) and this section became applicable to the plan as of its plan year beginning January 1, 1976, with respect to persons who were active participants in the plan as of such date (see paragraph (f) of this section). If X Corporation Defined Contribution Plan continues to allow the life annuity payment option after December 31, 1975, it must be amended to provide that if a participant elects a life annuity option the life annuity benefit will be paid in a form having the effect of a qualified joint and survivor annuity, except to the extent that the participant elects another form of benefit payment. However, the plan can continue to provide that, if no election is made, the balance will be paid as a single-sum cash payment. If the trust is not so amended, it will fail to qualify under section 401(a).

Example (2). The Corporation Retirement Plan provides that plan benefits are payable only in the form of a life annuity and also provides that a participant may retire before the normal retirement age of 65 and receive a benefit if he has completed 30 years of service. Under this plan, an employee who begins employment at the age of 18 will be eligible to receive retirement benefits at the age of 48 if he then has 30 years of service. This plan must allow a participant to elect in the time and manner prescribed in paragraph (c)(2) of this section an early survivor annuity (defined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section) to be payable on the death of the participant if death occurs while the participant is in active service for the employer maintaining the plan and on or after the date the participant reaches the qualified early retirement age of 55 (the later of the date the participant reaches the earliest retirement age (age 48) or 10 years before normal retirement age (age 55)) but before the day after the day the participant reaches normal retirement age (age 65).

Example (3). Assume the same facts as in Example (2). A, B, and C began employment with Y Corporation when they each attained age 18. A retires and begins to receive benefit payments at age 48 after completing 30 years of service. The plan is not required to pay a qualified joint and survivor annuity to A and his spouse at any time. B does not elect an early survivor annuity at age 55, but retires at age 57 after completing 39 years of service. Unless B makes an election under subparagraph (1)(ii) of this paragraph, the plan is required to pay a qualified joint and survivor annuity to B and his spouse. C makes no elections described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, and dies while in active service at age 66 after completing 48 years of service. The plan is required to pay a qualified survivor annuity to C's spouse.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this section—(1) *Life annuity.* (i) The term ''life annuity'' means an annuity that provides retirement payments and requires the survival of the participant or his spouse as one of the conditions for any payment or possible payment under the annuity. For example, annuities that make payments for 10 years or until death, whichever occurs first or whichever occurs last, are life annuities.

(ii) However, the term ''life annuity'' does not include an annuity, or that portion of an annuity, that provides those benefits which, under section 411(a)(9), would not be taken into account in the determination of the normal retirement benefit or early retirement benefit. For example, ''social security supplements'' described in the fourth sentence of section 411(a)(9) are not considered to be life annuities for the purposes of this section, whether or not an early retirement benefit is provided under the plan.

(2) *Qualified joint and survivor annuity.* The term ''qualified joint and survivor annuity'' means an annuity for the life of the participant with a survivor annuity for the life of his spouse which is neither (i) less than one-half of, nor (ii) greater than, the amount of the annuity payable during the joint lives of the participant and his spouse. For purposes of the preceding sentence, amounts described in § 1.401(a)–11(b)(1)(ii) may be disregarded. A qualified joint and survivor annuity must be at least the actuarial equivalent of the normal form of life annuity or, if greater, of any optional form of life annuity offered under the plan. Equivalence may be determined, on the basis of consistently applied reasonable actuarial

factors, for each participant or for all participants or reasonable groupings of participants, if such determination does not result in discrimination in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated. An annuity is not a qualified joint and survivor annuity if payments to the spouse of a deceased participant are terminated, or reduced, because of such spouse's remarriage.

(3) *Early survivor annuity.* The term ''early survivor annuity'' means an annuity for the life of the participant's spouse the payments under which must not be less than the payments which would have been made to the spouse under the joint and survivor annuity if the participant had made the election described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section immediately prior to his retirement and if his retirement had occurred on the day before his death and within the period during which an election can be made under such paragraph (c)(2). For example, if a participant would be entitled to a single life annuity of $100 per month or a reduced amount under a qualified joint and survivor annuity of $80 per month, his spouse is entitled to a payment of at least $40 per month. However, the payments may be reduced to reflect the number of months of coverage under the survivor annuity pursuant to paragraph (e) of this section.

(4) *Qualified early retirement age.* The term ''qualified early retirement age'' means the latest of—

(i) The earliest date, under the plan, on which the participant could elect (without regard to any requirement that approval of early retirement be obtained) to receive retirement benefits (other than disability benefits).

(ii) The first day of the 120th month beginning before the participant reaches normal retirement age, or

(iii) The date on which the participant begins participation.

(5) *Normal retirement age.* The term ''normal retirement age'' has the meaning set forth in section 411(a)(8).

(6) *Annuity starting date.* The term ''annuity starting date'' means the first day of the first period with respect to which an amount is received as a life annuity, whether by reason of retirement or by reason of disability.

(7) *Day.* The term ''day'' means a calendar day.

(c) *Elections*—(1) *Election not to take joint and survivor annuity form*—(i) *In general.* (A) A plan shall not be treated as satisfying the requirements of this section unless it provides that each participant may elect, during the election period described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, not to receive a qualified joint and survivor annuity. However, if a plan provides that a qualified joint and survivor annuity is the only form of benefit payable under the plan with respect to a married participant, no election need be provided.

(B) The election shall be in writing and clearly indicate that the participant is electing to receive all or, if permitted by the plan, part of his benefits under the plan in a form other than that of a qualified joint and survivor annuity. A plan will not fail to meet the requirements of this section merely because the plan requires the participant to obtain the written approval of his spouse in order for the participant to make this election or if the plan provides that such approval is not required.

(ii) *Election period.* (A) For purposes of the election described in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section, the plan shall provide an election period which shall include a period of at least 90 days following the furnishing of all of the applicable information required by subparagraph (3)(i) of this paragraph and ending prior to commencement of benefits. In no event may the election period end earlier than the 90th day before the commencement of benefits. Thus, for example, the commencement of benefits may be delayed until the end of such election period because the amount of payments to be made to a participant cannot be ascertained before the end of such period; see § 1.401(a)–14(d).

If a participant makes a request for additional information as provided in subparagraph (3)(iii) of this paragraph on or before the last day of the election

period, the election period shall be extended to the extent necessary to include at least the 90 calendar days immediately following the day the requested additional information is personally delivered or mailed to the participant. Notwithstanding the immediately preceding sentence, a plan may provide in cases in which the participant has been furnished by mail or personal delivery all of the applicable information required by subparagraph (3)(i) of this paragraph, that a request for such additional information must be made on or before a date which is not less than 60 days from the date of such mailing or delivery; and if the plan does so provide, the election period shall be extended to the extent necessary to include at least the 60 calendar days following the day the requested additional information is personally delivered or mailed to the participant.

(B) In the case of a participant in a plan to which this subparagraph applies who separated from service after section 401(a)(11) and this section became applicable to such plan with respect to such participant, and to whom an election required by this subparagraph has not been previously made available (and will not become available in normal course), the plan must provide an election to receive the balance of his benefits (properly adjusted, if applicable, for payments received, prior to the exercise of such election, in the form of a qualified joint and survivor annuity) in a form other than that of a qualified joint and survivor annuity. The provisions of paragraph (c)(1)(ii)(A) shall apply except that in no event shall the election period end before the 90th day after the date on which notice of the availability of such election and the applicable information required by subparagraph (3)(i) of this paragraph is given directly to the participant. If such notice and information is given by mail, it shall be treated as given on the date of mailing. If such participant has died, such election shall be made available to such participant's personal representative.

(2) *Election of early survivor annuity*—(i) *In general.* (A) A plan described in subparagraph (a)(1)(iii) of this section shall not be treated as satisfying the requirements of this section unless it provides that each participant may elect, during the period described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, an early survivor annuity as described in paragraph (a)(1)(iii) of this section. Breaks in service after the participant has attained the qualified early retirement age neither invalidate a previous election or revocation nor prevent an election from being made or revoked during the election period.

(B) The election shall be in writing and clearly indicate that the participant is electing the early survivor annuity form.

(C) A plan is not required to provide an election under this subparagraph if—

(*1*) The plan provides that an early survivor annuity is the only form of benefit payable under the plan with respect to a married participant who dies while employed by an employer maintaining the plan,

(*2*) In the case of a defined contribution plan, the plan provides a survivor benefit at least equal in value to the vested portion of the participant's account balance, if the participant dies while in active service with an employer maintaining the plan, or

(*3*) In the case of a defined benefit plan, the plan provides a survivor benefit at least equal in value to the present value of the vested portion of the participant's normal form of the accrued benefit payable at normal retirement age (determined immediately prior to death), if the participant dies while in active service with an employer maintaining the plan. Any present values must be determined in accordance with either the actuarial assumptions or factors specified in the plan, or a variable standard independent of employer discretion for converting optional benefits specified in the plan.

(ii) *Election period.* (A) For purposes of the election described in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section the plan shall provide an election period which, except as provided in the following sentence, shall begin not later than the later of either the 90th day before a participant attains the qualified early retirement age or the date on which his participation begins, and shall end on

the date the participant terminates his employment. If such a plan contains a provision that any election made under this subparagraph does not become effective or ceases to be effective if the participant dies within a certain period beginning on the date of such election, the election period prescribed in this subdivision (ii) shall begin not later than the later of (*1*) a date which is 90 days plus such certain period before the participant attains the qualified early retirement age or (*2*) the date on which his participation begins. For example, if a plan provides that an election made under this subparagraph does not become effective if the participant dies less than 2 years after the date of such election, the period for making an election under this subparagraph must begin not later than the later of (*1*) 2 years and 90 days before the participant attains the qualified early retirement age, or (*2*) the date on which his participation begins. However, the election period for an individual who was an active participant on the date this section became effective with regard to the plan need not begin earlier than such effective date.

(B) In the case of a participant in a plan to which this subparagraph applies who dies after section 401(a)(11) and this section became applicable to such plan with respect to such participant and to whom an election required by this subparagraph has not been previously made available, the plan must give the participant's surviving spouse or, if dead, such spouse's personal representative the option of electing an early survivor annuity. The plan may reduce the surviving spouse's annuity to take into account any benefits already received. The period for making such election shall not end before the 90th day after the date on which written notice of the availability of such election and applicable information required by subparagraph (3)(i) of this paragraph is given directly to such surviving spouse or personal representative. If such notice and information is given by mail, if shall be treated as given on the date of mailing.

(3) *Information to be provided by plan administrator.* (i) A plan which is required to provide either or both of the elections described in paragraph (c) (1) or (2) of this section must provide to the participants, at the time and in the manner specified in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, the following information, as applicable to the plan, in written nontechnical language:

(A) In the case of the election described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, a general description or explanation of the qualified joint and survivor annuity, the circumstances in which it will be provided unless the participant has elected not to have benefits provided in that form, and the availability of such election;

(B) In the case of the election described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, a general description of the early survivor annuity, the circumstances under which it will be paid if elected, and the availability of such election; and

(C) A general explanation of the relative financial effect on a participant's annuity of either or both elections, as the case may be.

Various methods may be used to explain such relative financial effect. With regard to a qualified joint and survivor annuity, they include: information as to the benefits the participant would receive under the qualified joint and survivor annuity stated as an arithmetic or percentage reduction from a single life annuity; a table showing the difference between a straight life annuity and a qualified joint and survivor annuity in terms of a reduction in dollar amounts; a table showing a percentage reduction from the straight life annuity or, in the case of a profit-sharing plan, an approximate dollar amount reduction. The notice and explanation required by this subdivision (i) must also inform the participants of the availability of the additional information specified in subdivision (iii) of this subparagraph and how they may obtain such information.

(ii) The method or methods used to provide the information described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph may vary. Posting which meets the requirements of § 1.7476–2(c)(1) may be used; see § 1.7476–2(c)(1) for examples of other methods which may be used. One or more methods may be used to provide the required information provided that all of the required information is

provided by one method or a combination of methods by or within the time period specified in this subdivision (ii). If mail or personal delivery is used, then, whether or not the information has been previously provided, there must be a mailing or personal delivery of the information by such time as to reasonably assure that it will be received on or about: (*1*) In the case of a plan which does not provide for the payment of benefits before the normal retirement age, the date which is 9 months before the participant attains normal retirement age; (*2*) in the case of a plan which provides for the payment of benefits before the normal retirement age and which is required to provide the election described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section (whether or not it is also required to provide the election described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section), the date which is 90 days before the latest date prescribed by paragraph (c)(2)(ii)(A) for the beginning of the election period for the early survivor annuity; or (*3*) in the case of a plan which provides for the payment of benefits before the normal retirement age and which is required to provide only the election described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, the date which is nine months before the participant attains the qualified early retirement age; except that in the case of a plan described in (*2*) or (*3*), if the qualified early retirement age is the date the participant begins participation in the plan, the information may be provided on or about such date. If a method other than mail or personal delivery is used to provide participants with some or all of such information, if must be a method which is reasonably calculated to reach the attention of a participant on or about the date prescribed in the immediately preceding sentence and to continue to reach the attention of such participant during the election period applicable to him for which the information is being provide (as, for example, by permanent posting, repeated publication, etc.).

(iii) The plan administrator must furnish to a particular participant, upon a timely written request, a written explanation in nontechnical language of the terms and conditions of the qualified joint and survivor annuity and the financial effect upon the particular participant's annuity of making any election under this paragraph. Such financial effect shall be given in terms of dollars per annuity payment; and in the case of a defined contribution plan, the projected annuity for a particular participant may be based on his account balance as of the most recent valuation date. The plan administrator need not comply with more than one such request made by a particular participant. This explanation must be personally delivered or mailed (first class mail, postage prepaid) to the participant within 30 days from the date of the participant's written request.

(4) *Election is revocable.* A plan to which this section applies must provide that any election made under this paragraph may be revoked in writing during the specified election period, and that after such election has been revoked, another election under this paragraph may be made during the specified election period.

(5) *Election by surviving spouse.* A plan will not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(11) and this section merely because it provides that the spouse of a deceased participant may elect to have benefits paid in a form other than a survivor annuity. If the plan provides that such a spouse may make such an election, the plan administrator must furnish to this spouse, within a reasonable amount of time after a written request has been made by this spouse, a written explanation in non-technical language of the survivor annuity and any other form of payment which may be selected. This explanation must state the financial effect (in terms of dollars) of each form of payment. A plan need not respond to more than one such request.

(d) *Permissible additional plan provisions*—(1) *In general.* A plan will not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(11) and this section merely because it contains one or more of the provisions described in paragraphs (d)(2) through (5) of this section.

(2) *Claim for benefits.* A plan may provide that as a condition precedent to the payment of benefits, a participant must express in writing to the plan administrator the form in which he prefers benefits to be paid and provide all

the information reasonably necessary for the payment of such benefits. However, if a participant files a claim for benefits with the plan administrator and provides the plan administrator with all the information necessary for the payment of benefits but does not indicate a preference as to the form for the payment of benefits, benefits must be paid in the form of a qualified joint and survivor annuity if the participant has attained the qualified early retirement age unless such participant has made an effective election not to receive benefits in such form. For rules relating to provisions in a plan to the effect that a claim for benefits must be filed before the payment of benefits will commence, see § 1.401(a)–14.

(3) *Marriage requirements.* A plan may provide that a joint and survivor annuity will be paid only if—

(i) The participant and his spouse have been married to each other throughout a period (not exceeding one year) ending on the annuity starting date.

(ii) The spouse of the participant is not entitled to receive a survivor annuity (whether or not the election described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section has been made) unless the participant and his spouse have been married to each other throughout a period (not exceeding one year) ending on the date of such participant's death.

(iii) The same spouse must satisfy the requirements of subdivisions (i) and (ii) of this subparagraph.

(iv) The participant must notify the plan administrator (as defined by section 414(g)) of his marital status within any reasonable time period specified in the plan.

(4) *Effect of participant's death on an election or revocation of an election under paragraph (c).* A plan may provide that any election described in paragraph (c) of this section or any revocation of any such election does not become effective or ceases to be effective if the participant dies within a period, not in excess of 2 years, beginning on the date of such election or revocation. However, a plan containing a provision described in the preceding sentence shall not satisfy the requirements of this section unless it also provides that any such election or any revocation of any such election will be given effect in any case in which—

(i) The participant dies from accidental causes,

(ii) A failure to give effect to the election or revocation would deprive the participant's survivor of a survivor annuity, and

(iii) Such election or revocation is made before such accident occurred.

(5) *Benefit option approval by third party.* (i) A plan may provide that an optional form of benefit elected by a participant is subject to the approval of an administrative committee or similar third party. However, the administrative committee cannot deny a participant any of the benefits required by section 401(a)(11). For example, if a plan offers a life annuity option, the committee may deny the participant a qualified joint and survivor annuity only by denying the participant access to all life annuity options without knowledge of whether the participant wishes to receive a qualified joint and survivor annuity. Alternatively, if the committee knows which form of life annuity the participant has chosen before the committee makes its decision, the committee cannot withhold its consent for payment of a qualified joint and survivor annuity event though it denies all other life annuity options. This subparagraph (5) only applies before the effective date of the amendment made to section 411(d)(6) by section 301 of the Retirement Equity Act of 1984. See section 411(d)(6) and the regulations thereunder for rules limiting employer discretion.

(ii) The provisions of this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. In 1980 plan M provides that the automatic form of benefit is a single sum distribution. The plan also permits, subject to approval by the administrative committee, the election of several optional forms of life annuity. On the election form that is reviewed by the administrative committee the participant indicates whether any life annuity option is preferred, without indicating the particular life annuity chosen. Thus, the committee approves or disapproves the election without knowledge of whether a qualified joint and survivor annuity will be elected. The administrative committee approval provision in Plan M does not cause the plan to fail to satisfy this section. On the other hand, if the form indicates which form of life

annuity is preferred, committee disapproval of any election of the qualified joint and survivor annuity would cause the plan to fail to satisfy this section.

(e) *Costs of providing qualified joint and survivor annuity form or early survivor annuity form.* A plan may take into account in any equitable manner consistent with generally accepted actuarial principles applied on a consistent basis any increased costs resulting from providing qualified joint and survivor annuity and early survivor annuity benefits. A plan may give a participant the option of paying premiums only if it provides another option under which an out-of-pocket expense by the participant is not required.

(f) *Application and effective date.* Section 401(a)(11) and this section shall apply to a plan only with respect to plan years beginning after December 31, 1975, and shall apply only if—

(1) The participant's annuity starting date did not fall within a plan year beginning before January 1, 1976, and

(2) The participant was an active participant in the plan on or after the first day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1975.

For purposes of this paragraph, the term ''active participant'' means a participant for whom benefits are being accrued under the plan on his behalf (in the case of a defined benefit plan), the employer is obligated to contribute to or under the plan on his behalf (in the case of a defined contribution plan other than a profit-sharing plan), or the employer either is obligated to contribute to or under the plan on his behalf or would have been obligated to contribute to or under the plan on his behalf if any contribution were made to or under the plan (in the case of a profit-sharing plan).

If benefits under a plan are provided by the distribution to the participants of individual annuity contracts, the annuity starting date will be considered for purposes of this paragraph to fall within a plan year beginning before January 1, 1976, with respect to any such individual contract that was distributed to the participant during a plan year beginning before January 1, 1976, if no premiums are paid with respect to such contract during a plan year beginning after December 31, 1975. In the case of individual annuity contracts that are distributed to participants before January 1, 1978, and which contain an option to provide a qualified joint and survivor annuity, the requirements of this section will be considered to have been satisfied if, not later than January 1, 1978, holders of individual annuity contracts who are participants described in the first sentence of this paragraph are given an opportunity to have such contracts amended, so as to provide for a qualified joint and survivor annuity in the absence of a contrary election, within a period of not less than one year from the date such opportunity was offered. In no event, however, shall the preceding sentence apply with respect to benefits attributable to premiums paid after December 31, 1977.

(g) *Effect of REA 1984*—(1) *In general.* The Retirement Equity Act of 1984 (REA 1984) significantly changed the qualified joint and survivor annuity rules generally effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1984. The new survivor annuity rules are primarily in sections 401(a)(11) and 417 as revised by REA 1984 and §§ 1.401(a)–20 and 417(e)–1.

(2) *Regulations after REA 1984.* (i) REA and the regulations thereunder to the extent inconsistent with pre-REA 1984 section 401(a)(11) and this section are controlling for years to which REA 1984 applies. See *e.g.*, paragraphs (a)(1) and (2) of this section, relating to required provisions and certain cash-outs, respectively and (e), relating to costs of providing annuities, for rules that are inconsistent with REA 1984 and, therefore, are not applicable to REA 1984 years.

(ii) To the extent that the pre-REA 1984 law either is the same as or consistent with REA 1984 and the new regulations hereunder, the rules in this section shall continue to apply for years to which REA 1984 applies. (See, *e.g.*, paragraph (c) (relating to how information is furnished participants and spouses) and paragraph (b) (defining a life annuity) for some of the rules that apply to REA 1984 years.) The rules in this section shall not apply for such years to the extent that they are inconsistent with REA 1984 and the regulations thereunder.

(iii) The Commissioner may provide additional guidance as to the continuing effect of the various rules in this section for years to which REA 1984 applies.

(Secs. 401(a)(11), 7805 Internal Revenue Code of 1954, (88 Stat. 935, 68A Stat. 917; (26 U.S.C. 401(a)(11), 7805)))

[T.D. 7458, 42 FR 1466, Jan. 7, 1977; 42 FR 6367, Feb. 2, 1977; T.D. 7510, 42 FR 53956, Oct. 4, 1977; T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31841, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§ 1.401(a)–12 Mergers and consolidations of plans and transfers of plan assets.

A trust will not be qualified under section 401 unless the plan of which the trust is a part provides that in the case of any merger or consolidation with, or transfer of assets or liabilities to, another plan after September 2, 1974, each participant in the plan would receive a minimum benefit if the plan terminated immediately after the merger, consolidation, or transfer. This benefit must be equal to or greater than the benefit the participant would have been entitled to receive immediately before the merger, consolidation, or transfer if the plan in which he was a participant had then terminated. This section applies to a multiemployer plan only to the extent determined by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. For additional rules concerning mergers or consolidations of plans and transfers of plan assets, see section 414(l) and § 1.414(l)–1.

[T.D. 7638, 44 FR 48195, Aug. 17, 1979]

§ 1.401(a)–13 Assignment or alienation of benefits.

(a) *Scope of the regulations.* This section applies only to plans to which section 411 applies without regard to section 411(e)(2). Thus, for example, it does not apply to a governmental plan, within the meaning of section 414(d); a church plan, within the meaning of section 414(e), for which there has not been made the election under section 410(a) to have the participation, vesting, funding, etc. requirements apply; or a plan which at no time after September 2, 1974, provided for employer contributions.

(b) *No assignment or alienation*—(1) *General rule.* Under section 401(a)(13), a trust will not be qualified unless the plan of which the trust is a part provides that benefits provided under the plan may not be anticipated, assigned (either at law or in equity), alienated or subject to attachment, garnishment, levy, execution or other legal or equitable process.

(2) *Federal tax levies and judgments.* A plan provision satisfying the requirements of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall not preclude the following:

(i) The enforcement of a Federal tax levy made pursuant to section 6331.

(ii) The collection by the United States on a judgment resulting from an unpaid tax assessment.

(c) *Definition of assignment and alienation*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of this section, the terms ''assignment'' and ''alienation'' include—

(i) Any arrangement providing for the payment to the employer of plan benefits which otherwise would be due the participant under the plan, and

(ii) Any direct or indirect arrangement (whether revocable or irrevocable) whereby a party acquires from a participant or beneficiary a right or interest enforceable against the plan in, or to, all or any part of a plan benefit payment which is, or may become, payable to the participant or beneficiary.

(2) *Specific arrangements not considered an assignment or alienation.* The terms ''assignment'' and ''alienation'' do not include, and paragraph (e) of this section does not apply to, the following arrangements:

(i) Any arrangement for the recovery of amounts described in section 4045(b) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, 88 Stat. 1027 (relating to the recapture of certain payments),

(ii) Any arrangement for the withholding of Federal, State or local tax from plan benefit payments,

(iii) Any arrangement for the recovery by the plan of overpayments of benefits previously made to a participant,

(iv) Any arrangement for the transfer of benefit rights from the plan to another plan, or

(v) Any arrangement for the direct deposit of benefit payments to an account in a bank, savings and loan association or credit union, provided such arrangement is not part of an arrangement constituting an assignment or alienation. Thus, for example, such an arrangement could provide for the direct deposit of a participant's benefit payments to a bank account held by the participant and the participant's spouse as joint tenants.

(d) *Exceptions to general rule prohibiting assignments or alienations*—(1) *Certain voluntary and revocable assignments or alienations.* Not withstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, a plan may provide that once a participant or beneficiary begins receiving benefits under the plan, the participant or beneficiary may assign or alienate the right to future benefit payments provided that the provision is limited to assignments or alienations which—

(i) Are voluntary and revocable;

(ii) Do not in the aggregate exceed 10 percent of any benefit payment; and

(iii) Are neither for the purpose, nor have the effect, of defraying plan administration costs.

For purposes of this subparagraph, an attachment, garnishment, levy, execution, or other legal or equitable process is not considered a voluntary assignment or alienation.

(2) *Benefits assigned or alienated as security for loans.* (i) Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, a plan may provide for loans from the plan to a participant or a beneficiary to be secured (by whatever means) by the participant's accrued nonforfeitable benefit provided that the following conditions are met.

(ii) The plan provision providing for the loans must be limited to loans from the plan. A plan may not provide for the use of benefits accrued or to be accrued under the plan as security for a loan from a party other than the plan, regardless of whether these benefits are nonforfeitable within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder.

(iii) The loan, if made to a participant or beneficiary who is a disqualified person (within the meaning of section 4975(e)(2)), must be exempt from the tax imposed by section 4975 (relating to the tax imposed on prohibited transactions) by reason of section 4975(d)(1). If the loan is made to a participant or beneficiary who is not a disqualified person, the loan must be one which would the exempt from the tax imposed by section 4975 by reason of section 4975(d)(1) if the loan were made to a disqualified person.

(e) *Special rule for certain arrangements*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of this section and notwithstanding paragraph (c)(1) of this section, an arrangement whereby a participant or beneficiary directs the plan to pay all, or any portion, of a plan benefit payment to a third party (which includes the participant's employer) will not constitute an ''assignment or alienation'' if—

(i) It is revocable at any time by the participant or beneficiary; and

(ii) The third party files a written acknowledgement with the plan administrator pursuant to subparagraph (2) of this paragraph.

(2) *Acknowledgement requirement for third party arrangements.* In accordance with paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section, the third party is required to file a written acknowledgement with the plan administrator. This acknowledgement must state that the third party has no enforceable right in, or to, any plan benefit payment or portion thereof (except to the extent of payments actually received pursuant to the terms of the arrangement). A blanket written acknowledgement for all participants and beneficiaries who are covered under the arrangement with the third party is sufficient. The written acknowledgement must be filed with the plan administrator no later than the later of—

(i) August 18, 1978; or

(ii) 90 days after the arrangement is entered into.

(f) *Effective date.* Section 401(a)(13) is applicable as of January 1, 1976, and the plan provision required by this section must be effective as of that date. However, regardless of when the provision is adopted, it will not affect—

(1) Attachments, garnishments, levies, or other legal or equitable process permitted under the plan that are made before January 1, 1976;

(2) Assignments permitted under the plan that are irrevocable on December 31, 1975, including assignments made before January 1, 1976, as security for loans to a participant or beneficiary from a party other than the plan; and

(3) Renewals or extensions of loans described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, if—

(i) The principal amount of the obligation outstanding on December 31, 1975 (or, if less, the principal amount outstanding on the date of renewal or extension), is not increased;

(ii) The loan, as renewed or extended, does not bear a rate of interest in excess of the rate prevailing for similar loans at the time of the renewal or extensions; and

(iii) With respect to loans that are renewed or extended to bear a variable interest rate, the formula for determining the applicable rate is consistent with the formula for formulae prevailing for similar loans at the time of the renewal or extension.

For purposes of subparagraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph, a loan from a party other than the plan made after December 31, 1975, will be treated as a new loan. This is so even if the lender's security interest for the loan arises from an assignment of the participant's accrued nonforfeitable benefit made before that date.

(g) *Special rules for qualified domestic relations orders*—(1) *Definition*. The term ''qualified domestic relations order'' (QDRO) has the meaning set forth in section 414(p). For purposes of the Internal Revenue Code, a QDRO also includes any domestic relations order described in section 303(d) of the Retirement Equity Act of 1984.

(2) *Plan amendments.* A plan will not fail to satisfy the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) merely because it does not include provisions with regard to a QDRO.

(3) *Waiver of distribution requirements.* A plan shall not be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of sections 401 (a) and (k) and 409(d) solely because of a payment to an alternate payee pursuant to a QDRO. This is the case even if the plan provides for payments pursuant to a QDRO to an alternate payee prior to the time it may make payments to a participant. Thus, for example, a pension plan may pay an alternate payee even though the participant may not receive a distribution because he continues to be employed by the employer.

(4) *Coordination with section 417*—(i) *Former spouse.* (A) *In general.* Under section 414(p)(5), a QDRO may provide that a former spouse shall be treated as the current spouse of a participant for all or some purposes under sections 401(a)(11) and 417.

(B) *Consent.* (*1*) To the extent a former spouse is treated as the current spouse of the participant by reason of a QDRO, any current spouse shall not be treated as the current spouse. For example, assume H is divorced from W, but a QDRO provides that H shall be treated as W's current spouse with respect to all of W's benefits under a plan. H will be treated as the surviving spouse under the QPSA and QJSA unless W obtains H's consent to waive the QPSA or QJSA or both. The fact that W married S after W's divorce from H is disregarded. If, however, the QDRO had provided that H shall be treated as W's current spouse only with respect to benefits that accrued prior to the divorce, then H's consent would be needed by W to waive the QPSA or QJSA with respect to benefits accrued before the divorce. S's consent would be required with respect to the remainder of the benefits.

(*2*) In the preceding examples, if the QDRO ordered that a portion of W's benefit (either through separate accounts or a percentage of the benefit) must be distributed to H rather than ordering that H be treated as W's spouse, the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 would not apply to the part of W's benefit awarded H. Instead, the terms of the QDRO would determine how H's portion of W's accrued benefit is paid. W is required to obtain S's consent if W elects to waive either the QJSA or QPSA with respect to the remaining portion of W's benefit.

(C) *Amount of the QPSA or QJSA.* (*1*) Where, because of a QDRO, more than one individual is to be treated as the surviving spouse, a plan may provide that the total amount to be paid in the form of a QPSA or survivor portion of a QJSA may not exceed the amount

that would be paid if there were only one surviving spouse. The QPSA or survivor portion of the QJSA, as the case may be, payable to each surviving spouse must be paid as an annuity based on the life of each such spouse.

(*2*) Where the QDRO splits the participant's accrued benefit between the participant and a former spouse (either through separate accounts or percentage of the benefit), the surviving spouse of the participant is entitled to a QPSA or QJSA based on the participant's accrued benefit as of the date of death or the annuity starting date, less the separate account or percentage that is payable to the former spouse. The calculation is made as if the separate account or percentage had been distributed to the participant prior to the relevant date.

(ii) *Current spouse.* Under section 414(p)(5), even if the applicable election periods (*i.e.*, the first day of the year in which the participant attains age 35 and 90 days before the annuity starting date) have not begun, a QDRO may provide that a current spouse shall not be treated as the current spouse of the participant for all or some purposes under sections 401(a)(11) and 417. A QDRO may provide that the current spouse waives all future rights to a QPSA or QJSA.

(iii) *Effects on benefits.* (A) A plan is not required to provide additional vesting or benefits because of a QDRO.

(B) If an alternate payee is treated pursuant to a QDRO as having an interest in the plan benefit, including a separate account or percentage of the participant's account, then the QDRO cannot provide the alternate payee with a greater right to designate a beneficiary for the alternate payee's benefit amount than the participant's right. The QJSA or QPSA provisions of section 417 do not apply to the spouse of an alternate payee.

(C) If the former spouse who is treated as a current spouse dies prior to the participant's annuity starting date, then any actual current spouse of the participant is treated as the current spouse, except as otherwise provided in a QDRO.

(iv) *Section 415 requirements.* Even though a participant's benefits are awarded to an alternate payee pursuant to a QDRO, the benefits are benefits of the participant for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415 to the participant's benefits.

[T.D. 7534, 43 FR 6943, Feb. 17, 1978, as amended by T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31850, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§1.401(a)–14 Commencement of benefits under qualified trusts.

(a) *In general.* Under section 401(a)(14), a trust to which section 411 applies (without regard to section 411(e)(2) is not qualified under section 401 unless the plan of which such trust is a part provides that the payment of benefits under the plan to the participant will begin not later than the 60th day after the close of the plan year in which the latest of the following events occurs—

(1) The attainment by the participant of age 65, or, if earlier, the normal retirement age specified under the plan,

(2) The 10th anniversary of the date on which the participant commenced participation in the plan,

(3) The termination of the participant's service with the employer, or

(4) The date specified in an election made pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section.

Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, a plan may require that a participant file a claim for benefits before payment of benefits will commence.

(b) *Election of later date*—(1) *General rule.* A plan may permit a participant to elect that the payment to him of any benefit under a plan will commence at a date later than the dates specified under paragraphs (a)(1), (2), and (3) of this section.

(2) *Manner of election.* A plan permitting an election under this paragraph shall require that such election must be made by submitting to the plan administrator a written statement, signed by the participant, which describes the benefit and the date on which the payment of such benefit shall commence.

(3) *Restriction.* An election may not be made pursuant to a plan provision permitted by this paragraph if the exercise of such election will cause benefits payable under the plan with respect to the participant in the event of his death to be more than ''incidental''

within the meaning of paragraph (b)(1)(i) of § 1.401–1.

(c) *Special early retirement rule*—(1) *Separation prior to early retirement age.* A trust forming part of a plan which provides for the payment of an early retirement benefit is not qualified under section 401 unless, upon satisfaction of the age requirement for such early retirement benefit, a participant who—

(i) Satisfied the service requirements for such early retirement benefit, but

(ii) Separated from service (with any nonforfeitable right to an accrued benefit) before satisfying such age requirement,

is entitled to receive not less than the reduced normal retirement benefit described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section. A plan may establish reasonable conditions for payments of early retirement benefits (including for example, a requirement that a claim for benefits be made) if the conditions are equally applicable to participants who separate from service when eligible for an early retirement benefit and participants who separate from service earlier.

(2) *Reduced normal retirement benefit.* For purposes of this section, the reduced normal retirement benefit is the benefit to which the participant would have been entitled under the plan at normal retirement age, reduced in accordance with reasonable actuarial assumptions.

(3) *Separation prior to effective date of this section.* The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply in the case of a plan participant who separates from service before attainment of early retirement age and prior to the effective date of this section set forth in paragraph (e) of this section.

(4) *Illustration.* The provisions of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. The X Corporation Defined Benefit Plan provides that a normal retirement benefit will be payable to a participant upon attainment of age 65. The plan also provides that an actuarially reduced retirement benefit will be payable, upon application, to any participant who has completed 10 years of service with the X Corporation and attained age 60. When he is 55 years of age and has completed 10 years of service with X Corporation, A, a participant in the plan, leaves the service of X Corporation and does not return. The plan will not be qualified under section 401 unless, upon attainment of age 60 and application for benefits, A is entitled to receive a reduced normal retirement benefit described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph.

(d) *Retroactive payment rule.* If the amount of the payment required to commence on the date determined under this section cannot be ascertained by such date, or if it is not possible to make such payment on such date because the plan administrator has been unable to locate the participant after making reasonable efforts to do so, a payment retroactive to such date may be made no later than 60 days after the earliest date on which the amount of such payment can be ascertained under the plan or the date on which the participant is located (whichever is applicable).

(e) *Effective date.* This section shall apply to a plan for those plan years to which section 411 of the Code applies without regard to section 411(e)(2).

(Secs. 401(a)(14), 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 937, 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 401(a)(14), 7805))

[T.D. 7436, 41 FR 42651, Sept. 28, 1976; 41 FR 44690, Oct. 12, 1976]

§ 1.401(a)–15 Requirement that plan benefits are not decreased on account of certain Social Security increases.

(a) *In general.* Under section 401(a)(15), a trust which is part of a plan to which section 411 applies (without regard to section 411(e)(2)) is not qualified under section 401 unless, under the plan of which such trust is a part:

(1) *Benefit being received by participant or beneficiary.* A benefit (including a death or disability benefit) being received under the plan by a participant or beneficiary (other than a participant to whom subparagraph (2)(ii) of this paragraph applies, or a beneficiary of such a participant) is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social security benefit increase effective after the later of—

(i) September 2, 1974, or

(ii) The date of first receipt of any retirement benefit, death benefit, or disability benefit under the plan by the participant or by a beneficiary of the

participant (whichever receipt occurs first).

(2) *Benefit to which participant separated from service has nonforfeitable right.* In the case of a benefit to which a participant has a nonforfeitable right under such plan—

(i) If such participant is separated from service and does not subsequently return to service and resume participation in the plan, such benefit is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social security benefit increase effective after the later of September 2, 1974, or separation from service, or

(ii) If such participant is separated from service and subsequently returns to service and resumes participation in the plan, such benefit is not decreased by reason of any post-separation social security benefit increase effective after September 2, 1974, which occurs during separation from service and which would decrease such benefit to a level below the level of benefits to which he would have been entitled had he not returned to service after his separation.

(b) *Post-separation social security benefit increase.* For purposes of this section, the term ''post-separation social security benefit increase'' means, with respect to a participant or a beneficiary of the participant, an increase in a benefit level or wage base under title II of the Social Security Act (whether such increase is a result of an amendment of such title II or is a result of the application of the provisions of such title II) occurring after the earlier of such participant's separation from service or commencement of benefits under the plan.

(c) *Illustrations.* The provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A plan to which section 401(a)(15) applies provides an annual benefit at the normal retirement age, 65, in the form of a stated benefit formula amount less a specified percentage of the primary insurance amount payable under title II of the Social Security Act. The plan provides no early retirement benefits. In the case of a participant who separates from service before age 65 with a nonforfeitable right to a benefit under the plan, the plan defines the primary insurance amount as the amount which the participant is entitled to receive under title II of the Social Security Act at age 65, multiplied by the ratio of the number of years of service with the employer to the number of years of service the participant would have had if he had worked for the employer until age 65. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(15), because social security increases that occur after a participant's separation from service will reduce the benefit the participant will receive under the plan.

Example (2). A plan to which section 401(a)(15) applies provides an annual benefit at the normal retirement age, 65, in the form of a stated benefit formula amount less a specified percentage of the primary insurance amount payable under title II of the Social Security Act. The plan provides no early retirement benefits. In the case of a participant who separates from service before age 65 with a nonforfeitable right to a benefit under the plan, the plan defines the primary insurance amount as the amount which the participant is entitled to receive under title II of the Social Security Act at age 65 based upon the assumption that he will continue to receive until reaching age 65 compensation which would be treated as wages for purposes of the Social Security Act at the same rate as he received such compensation at the time he separated from service, but determined without regard to any post-separation social security benefit increase, multiplied by the ratio of the number of years of service with the employer to the number of years of service the participant would have had if he had worked for the employer until age 65. The plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(15), because social security increases that occur after a participant's separation from service will not reduce the benefit the participant will receive under the plan.

(d) *Other Federal or State laws.* To the extent applicable, the rules discussed in this section will govern classifications under a plan supplementing the benefits provided by other Federal or State laws, such as the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937. See section 206(b) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Public Law 93–406, 88 Stat. 864).

(e) *Effect on prior law.* Nothing in this section shall be construed as amending or modifying the rules applicable to post-separation social security increases prior to September 2, 1974. See paragraph (e) of § 1.401–3.

(f) *Effective date.* Section 401(a)(15) and this section shall apply to a plan only with respect to plan years to which section 411 (relating to minimum

vesting standards) is applicable to the plan without regard to section 411(e)(2).

[T.D. 7434, 41 FR 42650, Sept. 28, 1976]

§ 1.401(a)–16 Limitations on benefits and contributions under qualified plans.

A trust will not be a qualified trust and a plan will not be a qualified plan if the plan provides for benefits or contributions which exceed the limitations of section 415. Section 415 and the regulations thereunder provide rules concerning these limitations on benefits and contributions.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1696, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.401(a)–19 Nonforfeitability in case of certain withdrawals.

(a) *Application of section.* Section 401(a)(19) and this section apply to a plan to which section 411(a) applies. (See section 411(e) and § 1.411(a)–2 for applicability of section 411).

(b) *Prohibited forfeitures*—(1) *General rule.* A plan to which this section applies is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if, under such plan, any part of a participant's accrued benefit derived from employer contributions is forfeitable solely because a benefit derived from the participant's contributions under the plan is voluntarily withdrawn by him after he has become a 50 percent vested participant.

(2) *50 percent vested participant.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, a participant is a 50 percent vested participant when he has a nonforfeitable right (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) to at least 50 percent of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions. Whether or not a participant is 50 percent vested shall be determined by the ratio of the participant's total nonforfeitable employer-derived accrued benefit under the plan to his total employer-derived accrued benefit under the plan.

(3) *Certain forfeitures.* Paragraph (b)(1) of this section does not apply in the case of a forfeiture permitted by section 411(a)(3)(D)(iii) and § 1.411(a)–7(d)(3) (relating to forfeitures of certain benefits accrued before September 2, 1974).

(c) *Supersession.* Section 11.401(a)–(19) of the Temporary Income Tax Regulations under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is superseded by this section.

(Sec. 411 Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42320, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.401(a)–20 Requirements of qualified joint and survivor annuity and qualified preretirement survivor annuity.

Q–1: What are the survivor annuity requirements added to the Code by the Retirement Equity Act of 1984 (REA 1984)?

A–1: REA 1984 replaced section 401(a)(11) with a new section 401(a)(11) and added section 417. Plans to which new section 401(a)(11) applies must comply with the requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 in order to remain qualified under sections 401(a) or 403(a). In general, these plans must provide both a qualified joint and survivor annuity (QJSA) and a qualified preretirement survivor annuity (QPSA) to remain qualified. These survivor annuity requirements are applicable to any benefit payable under a plan, including a benefit payable to a participant under a contract purchased by the plan and paid by a third party.

Q–2: Must annuity contracts purchased and distributed to a participant or spouse by a plan subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 satisfy the requirements of those sections?

A–2: Yes. Rights and benefits under section 401(a)(11) or 417 may not be eliminated or reduced because the plan uses annuity contracts to provide benefits merely because (a) such a contract is held by a participant or spouse instead of a plan trustee, or (b) such contracts are distributed upon plan termination. Thus, the requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to payments under the annuity contracts, not to the distributions of the contracts.

Q–3: What plans are subject to the survivor annuity requirements of section 401(a)(11)?

A–3: (a) Section 401(a)(11) applies to any defined benefit plan and to any defined contribution plan that is subject to the minimum funding standards of

section 412. This section also applies to any participant under any other defined contribution plan unless all of the following conditions are satisfied—

(1) The plan provides that the participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefit is payable in full, upon the participant's death, to the participant's surviving spouse (unless the participant elects, with spousal consent that satisfies the requirements of section 417(a)(2), that such benefit be provided instead to a designated beneficiary);

(2) The participant does not elect the payment of benefits in the form of a life annuity; and

(3) With respect to the participant, the plan is not a transferee or an offset plan. (See Q&A 5 of this section.)

(b) A defined contribution plan not subject to the minimum funding standards of section 412 will not be treated as satisfying the requirement of paragraph (a)(1) unless both of the following conditions are satisfied—

(1) The benefit is available to the surviving spouse within a reasonable time after the participant's death. For this purpose, availability within the 90-day period following the date of death is deemed to be reasonable and the reasonableness of longer periods shall be determined based on the particular facts and circumstances. A time period longer than 90 days, however, is deemed unreasonable if it is less favorable to the surviving spouse than any time period under the plan that is applicable to other distributions. Thus, for example, the availability of a benefit to the surviving spouse would be unreasonable if the distribution was required to be made by the close of the plan year including the participant's death while distributions to employees who separate from service were required to be made within 90 days of separation.

(2) The benefit payable to the surviving spouse is adjusted for gains or losses occurring after the participant's death in accordance with plan rules governing the adjustment of account balances for other plan distributions. Thus, for example, the plan may not provide for distributions of an account balance to a surviving spouse determined as of the last day of the quarter in which the participant's death occurred with no adjustments of an account balance for gains or losses after death if the plan provides for such adjustments for a participant who separates from service within a quarter.

(c) For purposes of determining the extent to which section 401(a)(11) applies to benefits under an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)), the portion of a participant's accrued benefit that is subject to section 409(h) is to be treated as though such benefit were provided under a defined contribution plan not subject to section 412.

(d) The requirements set forth in section 401(a)(11) apply to other employee benefit plans that are covered by applicable provisions under Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. For purposes of applying the regulations under sections 401(a)(11) and 417, plans subject to ERISA section 205 are treated as if they were described in section 401(a). For example, to the extent that section 205 covers section 403(b) contracts and custodial accounts they are treated as section 401(a) plans. Individual retirement plans (IRAs), including IRAs to which contributions are made under simplified employee pensions described in section 408(k) and IRAs that are treated as plans subject to Title I, are not subject to these requirements.

Q–4: What rules apply to a participant who elects a life annuity option under a defined contribution plan not subject to section 412?

A–4: If a participant elects at any time (irrespective of the applicable election period defined in section 417(a)(6)) a life annuity option under a defined contribution plan not subject to section 412, the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 will always thereafter apply to all of the participant's benefits under such plan unless there is a separate accounting of the account balance subject to the election. A plan may allow a participant to elect an annuity option prior to the applicable election period described in section 417(a)(6). If a participant elects an annuity option, the plan must satisfy the applicable written explanation, consent, election, and withdrawal rules of section 417, including waiver of the QJSA within 90 days

of the annuity starting date. If a participant selecting such an option dies, the surviving spouse must be able to receive the QPSA benefit described in section 417(c)(2) which is a life annuity, the actuarial equivalent of which is not less than 50 percent of the nonforfeitable account balance (adjusted for loans as described in Q&A 24(d) of this section). The remaining account balance may be paid to a designated nonspouse beneficiary.

Q–5: How do sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to transferee plans which are defined contribution plans not subject to section 412?

A–5: (a) *Transferee plans.* Although the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 generally do not apply to defined contribution plans not subject to section 412, such plans are subject to the survivor annuity requirements to the extent that they are transferee plans with respect to any participant. A defined contribution plan is a transferee plan with respect to any participant if the plan is a direct or indirect transferee of such participant's benefits held on or after January 1, 1985, by:

(1) A defined benefit plan,

(2) A defined contribution plan subject to section 412 or

(3) A defined contribution plan that is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 with respect to that participant.

If through a merger, spinoff, or other transaction having the effect of a transfer, benefits subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 are held under a plan that is not otherwise subject to such requirements, such benefits will be subject to the survivor annuity requirements even though they are held under such plan. Even if a plan satisfies the survivor annuity requirements, other rules apply to these transactions. See, *e.g.*, section 411(d)(6) and the regulations thereunder. A transfer made before January 1, 1985, and any rollover contribution made at any time, are not transactions that subject the transferee plan to the survivor annuity requirements with respect to a participant. If a plan is a transferee plan with respect to a participant, the survivor annuity requirements do not apply with respect to other plan participants solely because of the transfer. Any plan that would not otherwise be subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 whose benefits are used to offset benefits in a plan subject to such requirements is subject to the survivor annuity requirements with respect to those participants whose benefits are offset. Thus, if a stock bonus or profit-sharing plan offsets benefits under a defined benefit plan, such a plan is subject to the survivor annuity requirements.

(b) *Benefits covered.* The survivor annuity requirements apply to all accrued benefits held for a participant with respect to whom the plan is a transferee plan unless there is an acceptable separate accounting between the transferred benefits and all other benefits under the plan. A separate accounting is not acceptable unless gains, losses, withdrawals, contributions, forfeitures, and other credits or charges are allocated on a reasonable and consistent basis between the accrued benefits subject to the survivor annuity requirements and other benefits. If there is an acceptable separate accounting between transferred benefits and any other benefits under the plan, only the transferred benefits are subject to the survivor annuity requirements.

Q–6: Is a frozen or terminated plan required to satisfy the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417?

A–6: In general, benefits provided under a plan that is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 must be provided in accordance with those requirements even if the plan is frozen or terminated. However, any plan that has a termination date prior to September 17, 1985, and that distributed all remaining assets as soon as administratively feasible after the termination date, is not subject to the survivor annuity requirements. The date of termination is determined under section 411(d)(3) and § 1.411(d)–2(c).

Q–7: If the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) is administering a plan, are benefits payable in the form of a QPSA or QJSA-

A–7: Yes, the PBGC will pay benefits in such forms.

Q–8: How do the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to participants?

A–8: (a) If a participant dies before the annuity starting date with vested benefits attributable to employer or employee contributions (or both), benefits must be paid to the surviving spouse in the form of a QPSA. If a participant survives until the annuity starting date with vested benefits attributable to employer or employee contributions (or both), benefits must be provided to the participant in the form of a QJSA.

(b) A participant may waive the QPSA or the QJSA (or both) if the applicable notice, election, and spousal consent requirements of section 417 are satisfied.

(c) Benefits are not required to be paid in the form of a QPSA or QJSA if at the time of death or distribution the participant was vested only in employee contributions and such death occurred, or distribution commenced, before October 22, 1986.

(d) *Certain mandatory distributions.* A distribution may occur without satisfying the spousal consent requirements of section 417 (a) and (e) if the present value of the nonforfeitable benefit does not exceed $3,500. See § 1.417(e)–1.

Q–9: May separate portions of a participant's accrued benefit be subject to QPSA and QJSA requirements at any particular point in time?

A–9: (a) *Dual QPSA and QJSA rights.* One portion of a participant's benefit may be subject to the QPSA and another portion to the QJSA requirements at the same time. For example, in order for a money purchase pension plan to distribute any portion of a married participant's benefit to the participant, the plan must distribute such portion in the form of a QJSA (unless the plan satisfies the applicable consent requirements of section 417 (a) and (e) with respect to such portion of the participant's benefit). This rule applies even if the distribution is merely an in-service distribution attributable to voluntary employee contributions and regardless of whether the participant has attained the normal retirement age under the plan. The QJSA requirements apply to such a distribution because the annuity starting date has occurred with respect to this portion of the participant's benefit. In the event of a participant's death following the commencement of a distribution in the form of a QJSA, the remaining payments must be made to the surviving spouse under the QJSA. In addition, the plan must satisfy the QPSA requirements with respect to any portion of the participant's benefits for which the annuity starting date had not yet occurred.

(b) *Example.* Assume that participant A has a $100,000 account balance in a money purchase pension plan. A makes an in-service withdrawal of $20,000 attributable to voluntary employee contributions. The QJSA requirements apply to A's withdrawal of the $20,000. Accordingly, unless the QJSA form is properly waived such amount must be distributed in the form of a QJSA. A's remaining account balance ($80,000) remains subject to the QPSA requirements because the annuity starting date has not occurred with respect to the $80,000. (If A survives until the annuity starting date, the $80,000 would be subject to the QJSA requirements.) If A died on the day following the annuity starting date for the withdrawal, A's spouse would be entitled to a QPSA with a value equal to at least $40,000 with respect to the $80,000 account balance, in addition to any survivor benefit without respect to the $20,000. If the $20,000 payment to A had been the first payment of an annuity purchased with the entire $100,000 account balance rather than an in-service distribution, then the QJSA requirements would apply to the entire account balance at the time of the annuity starting date. In such event, the plan would have no obligation to provide A's spouse with a QPSA benefit upon A's death. Of course, A's spouse would receive the QJSA benefit (if the QJSA had not been waived) based on the full $100,000.

Q–10: What is the relevance of the annuity starting date with respect to the survivor benefit requirements?

A–10: (a) *Relevance.* The annuity starting date is relevant to whether benefits are payable as either a QJSA or QPSA, or other selected optional form of benefit. If a participant is alive on the annuity starting date, the benefits must be payable as a QJSA. If the participant is not alive on the annuity starting date, the surviving spouse must receive a QPSA. The annuity starting date is also used to determine when a spouse may consent to and a

participant may waive a QJSA. A waiver is only effective if it is made 90 days before the annuity starting date. Thus, a deferred annuity cannot be selected and a QJSA waived until 90 days before payments commence under the deferred annuity. In some cases, the annuity starting date will have occurred with respect to a portion of the participant's accrued benefit and will not have occurred with respect to the remaining portion. (See Q&A–9.)

(b) *Annuity starting date*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of sections 401(a)(11), 411(a)(11) and 417, the annuity starting date is the first day of the first period for which an amount is paid as an annuity or any other form.

(2) *Annuity payments.* The annuity starting date is the first date for which an amount is paid, not the actual date of payment. Thus, if participant A is to receive annuity payments as of the first day of the first month after retirement but does not receive any payments until three months later, the annuity starting date is the first day of the first month. For example, if an annuity is to commence on January 1, January 1 is the annuity starting date even though the payment for January is not actually made until a later date. In the case of a deferred annuity, the annuity starting date is the date for which the annuity payments are to commence, not the date that the deferred annuity is elected or the date the deferred annuity contract is distributed.

(3) *Administrative delay.* A payment shall not be considered to occur after the annuity starting date merely because actual payment is reasonably delayed for calculation of the benefit amount if all payments are actually made.

(4) *Forfeitures on death.* Prior to the annuity starting date, section 411(a)(3)(A) allows a plan to provide for a forfeiture of a participant's benefit, except in the case of a QPSA or a spousal benefit described in section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii)(I). Once the annuity starting date has occurred, even if actual payment has not yet been made, a plan must pay the benefit in the distribution form elected.

(5) *Surviving spouses, alternate payees, etc.* The definition of ''annuity starting date'' for surviving spouses, other beneficiaries and alternate payees under section 414(p) is the same as it is for participants.

(c) *Disability auxiliary benefit*—(1) *General rule.* The annuity starting date for a disability benefit is the first day of the first period for which the benefit becomes payable unless the disability benefit is an auxiliary benefit. The payment of any auxiliary disability benefits is disregarded in determining the annuity starting date. A disability benefit is an auxiliary benefit if upon attainment of early or normal retirement age, a participant receives a benefit that satisfies the accrual and vesting rules of section 411 without taking into account the disability benefit payments up to that date.

(2) *Example.* (i) Assume that participant A at age 45 is entitled to a vested accrued benefit of $100 per month commencing at age 65 in the form of a joint and survivor annuity under Plan X. If prior to age 65 A receives a disability benefit under Plan X and the payment of such benefit does not reduce the amount of A's retirement benefit of $100 per month commencing at age 65, any disability benefit payments made to A between ages 45 and 65 are auxiliary benefits. Thus, A's annuity starting date does not occur until A attains age 65. A's surviving spouse B would be entitled to receive a QPSA if A died before age 65. B would be entitled to receive the survivor portion of a QJSA (unless waived) if A died after age 65. The QPSA payable to B upon A's death prior to age 65 would be computed by reference to the QJSA that would have been payable to A and B had A survived to age 65.

(ii) If in the above example A's benefit payable at age 65 is reduced to $99 per month because a disability benefit is provided to A prior to age 65, the disability benefit would not be an auxiliary benefit. The benefit of $99 per month payable to A at age 65 would not, without taking into account the disability benefit payments to A prior to age 65, satisfy the minimum vesting and accrual rules of section 411. Accordingly, the first day of the first period for which the disability payments are to be made to A would constitute A's annuity starting date, and any benefit paid to A would be required to be paid in the form of a QJSA (unless waived by A with the consent of B).

(d) *Other rules*—(1) *Suspension of benefits.* If benefit payments are suspended after the annuity starting date pursuant to a suspension of benefits described in section 411(a)(3)(B) after an

employee separates from service, the recommencement of benefit payments after the suspension is not treated as a new annuity starting date unless the plan provides otherwise. In such case, the plan administrator is not required to provide new notices nor to obtain new waivers for the recommenced distributions if the form of distribution is the same as the form that was appropriately selected prior to the suspension. If benefits are suspended for an employee who continues in service without a separation and who never receives payments, the commencement of payments after the period of suspension is treated as the annuity starting date unless the plan provides otherwise.

(2) *Additional accruals.* In the case of an annuity starting date that occurs on or after normal retirement age, such date applies to any additional accruals after the annuity starting date, unless the plan provides otherwise. For example, if a participant who continues to accrue benefits elects to have benefits paid in an optional form at normal retirement age, the additional accruals must be paid in the optional form selected unless the plan provides otherwise. In the case of an annuity starting date that occurs prior to normal retirement age, such date does not apply to any additional accruals after such date.

Q–11: Do the survivor annuity requirements apply to benefits derived from both employer and employee contributions?

A–11: Yes. The survivor annuity benefit requirements apply to benefits derived from both employer and employee contributions. Benefits are not required to be paid in the form of a QPSA or a QJSA if the participant was vested only in employee contributions at the time of death or distribution and such death or distribution occurred before October 22, 1986. All benefits provided under a plan, including benefits attributable to rollover contributions, are subject to the survivor annuity requirements.

Q–12: To what benefits do the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply?

A–12: (a) *Defined benefit plans.* Under a defined benefit plan, sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply only to benefits in which a participant was vested immediately prior to death. They do not apply to benefits to which a participant's beneficiary becomes entitled by reason of death or to the proceeds of a life insurance contract to the extent such proceeds exceed the present value of the participant's nonforfeitable benefits that existed immediately prior to death.

(b) *Defined contribution plans.* Sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to all nonforfeitable benefits which are payable under a defined contribution plan, whether nonforfeitable before or upon death, including the proceeds of insurance contracts.

Q–13: Does the rule of section 411(a)(3)(A) which permits forfeitures on account of death apply to a QPSA or the spousal benefit described in section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii)?

A–13: No. Section 411(a)(3)(A) permits forfeiture on account of death prior to the time all the events fixing payment occur. However, this provision does not operate to deprive a surviving spouse of a QPSA or the spousal benefit described in section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii). Therefore, sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to benefits that were nonforfeitable immediately prior to death (determined without regard to section 411(a)(3)(A)). Thus, in the case of the death of a married participant in a defined contribution plan not subject to section 412 which provides that, upon a participant's death, the entire nonforfeitable accrued benefit is payable to the participant's spouse, the nonforfeitable benefit is determined without regard to the provisions of section 411(a)(3)(A).

Q–14: Do sections 411(a)(11), 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to accumulated deductible employee contributions, as defined in section 72(o)(5)(B) (Accumulated DECs)?

A–14: (a) *Employee consent, section 411.* The requirements of section 411(a)(11) apply to Accumulated DECs. Thus, Accumulated DECs may not be distributed without participant consent unless the applicable exemptions apply.

(b) *Survior requirements.* Accumulated DECs are treated as though held under a separate defined contribution plan that is not subject to section 412. Thus,

section 401(a)(11) applies to Accumulated DECs only as provided in section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii). All Accumulated DECs are treated in this manner, including Accumulated DECs that are the only benefit held under a plan and Accumulated DECs that are part of a defined benefit or a defined contribution plan.

(c) *Effective date.* Sections 401(a)(11) and 411(a)(11) shall not apply to distributions of accumulated DECs until the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1988.

Q–15: How do the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to a defined benefit plan that includes an accrued benefit based upon a contribution to a separate account or mandatory employee contributions?

A–15: (a) *414(k) plans.* In the case of a section 414(k) plan that includes both a defined benefit plan and a separate account, the rules of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply separately to the defined benefit portion and the separate account portion of the plan. The separate account portion is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 and the special QPSA rules in section 417(c)(2).

(b) *Employee contributions*—(1) *Voluntary.* In the case of voluntary employee contributions to a defined benefit plan, the plan must maintain a separate account with respect to the voluntary employee contributions. This separate account is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 and the special QPSA rules in section 417(c)(2).

(2) *Mandatory.* In the case of a defined benefit plan providing for mandatory employee contributions, the entire accrued benefit is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 as a defined benefit plan.

(c) *Accumulated DECs.* See Q&A 14 of this section for the rule applicable to accumulated deductible employee contributions.

Q–16: Can a plan provide a benefit form more valuable than the QJSA and if a plan offers more than one annuity option satisfying the requirements of a QJSA, is spousal consent required when the participant chooses among the various forms?

A–16: In the case of an unmarried participant, the QJSA may be less valuable than other optional forms of benefit payable under the plan. In the case of a married participant, the QJSA must be at least as valuable as any other optional form of benefit payable under the plan at the same time. Thus, if a plan has two joint and survivor annuities that would satisfy the requirements for a QJSA, but one has a greater actuarial value than the other, the more valuable joint and survivor annuity is the QJSA. If there are two or more actuarially equivalent joint and survivor annuities that satisfy the requirements for a QJSA, the plan must designate which one is the QJSA and, therefore, the automatic form of benefit payment. A plan, however, may allow a participant to elect out of such a QJSA, without spousal consent, in favor of another actuarially equivalent joint and survivor annuity that satisfies the QJSA conditions. Such an election is not subject to the requirement that it be made within the 90-day period before the annuity starting date. For example, if a plan designates a joint and 100% survivor annuity as the QJSA and also offers an actuarially equivalent joint and 50% survivor annuity that would satisfy the requirements of a QJSA, the participant may elect the joint and 50% survivor annuity without spousal consent. The participant, however, does need spousal consent to elect a joint and survivor annuity that was not actuarially equivalent to the automatic QJSA.

Q–17: When must distributions to a participant under a QJSA commence?

A–17: (a) *QJSA benefits upon earliest retirement.* A plan must permit a participant to receive a distribution in the form of a QJSA when the participant attains the earliest retirement age under the plan. Written consent of the participant is required. However, the consent of the participant's spouse is not required. Any payment not in the form of a QJSA is subject to spousal consent. For example, if the participant separates from service under a plan that allows for distributions on separation from service or if a plan allows for in-service distributions, the participant may receive a QJSA without spousal consent in such events.

Payments in any other form, including a single sum, would require waiver of the QJSA by the participant's spouse.

(b) *Earliest retirement age.* (1) This paragraph (b) defines the term ''earliest retirement age'' for purposes of sections 401(a)(11), 411(a)(11) and 417.

(2) In the case of a plan that provides for voluntary distributions that commence upon the participant's separation from service, earliest retirement age is the earliest age at which a participant could separate from service and receive a distribution. Death of a participant is treated as a separation from service.

(3) In the case of a plan that provides for in-service distributions, earliest retirement age is the earliest age at which such distributions may be made.

(4) In the case of a plan not described in subparagraph (2) or (3) of this paragraph, the rule below applies. Earliest retirement age is the early retirement age determined under the plan, or if no early retirement age, the normal retirement age determined under the plan. If the participant dies or separates from service before such age, then only the participant's actual years of service at the time of the participant's separation from service or death are taken into account. Thus, in the case of a plan under which benefits are not payable until the attainment of age 65, or upon attainment of age 55 and completion of 10 years of service, the earliest retirement age of a participant who died or separated from service with 8 years of service is when the participant would have attained age 65 (if the participant had survived). On the other hand, if a participant died or separated from service after 10 years of service, the earliest retirement age is when the participant would have attained age 55 (if the participant had survived).

Q–18: What is a qualified preretirement survivor annuity (QPSA) in a defined benefit plan?

A–18: A QPSA is an immediate annuity for the life of the surviving spouse of a participant. Each payment under a QPSA under a defined benefit plan is not to be less than the payment that would have been made to the survivor under the QJSA payable under the plan if (a) in the case of a participant who dies after attaining the earliest retirement age under the plan, the participant had retired with a QJSA on the day before the participant's death, and (b) in the case of a participant who dies on or before the participant's earliest retirement age under the plan, the participant had separated from service at the earlier of the actual time of separation or death, survived until the earliest retirement age, retired at that time with a QJSA, and died on the day thereafter. If the participant elects before the annuity starting date a form of joint and survivor annuity that satisfies the requirements for a QJSA and dies before the annuity starting date, the elected form is treated as the QJSA and the QPSA must be based on such form.

Q–19: What rules apply in determining the amount and forfeitability of a QPSA?

A–19: The QPSA is calculated as of the earliest retirement age if the participant dies before such time, or at death if the participant dies after the earliest retirement age. The plan must make reasonable actuarial adjustments to reflect a payment earlier or later than the earliest retirement age. A defined benefit plan may provide that the QPSA is forfeited if the spouse does not survive until the date prescribed under the plan for commencement of the QPSA (*i.e.*, the earliest retirement age). Similarly, if the spouse survives past the participant's earliest retirement age (or other earlier QPSA distribution date under the plan) and elects after the death of the participant to defer the commencement of the QPSA to a later date, a defined benefit plan may provide for a forfeiture of the QPSA benefit if the spouse does not survive until the deferred commencement date. The account balance in a defined contribution plan may not be forfeited even though the spouse does not survive until the time the account balance is used to purchase the QPSA. See Q&A–17 of this section for the meaning of earliest retirement age.

Q–20: What preretirement survivor annuity benefits must a defined contibution plan subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 provide?

A–20: A defined contribution plan that is subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 must provide a preretirement survivor annuity with a value which is not less than 50 percent of the nonforfeitable account balance of the participant as of the date of the participant's death. If a contributory defined contribution plan has a forfeiture provision permitted by section 411(a)(3)(A), not more than a proportional percent of the account balance attributable to contributions that may not be forfeited at death (for example, employee and section 401(k) contributions) may be used to satisfy the QPSA benefit. Thus, for example, if the QPSA benefit is to be provided from 50 percent of the account balance, not more than 50 percent of the nonforfeitable contributions may be used for the QPSA.

Q–21: May a defined benefit plan charge the participant for the cost of the QPSA benefit?

A–21: Prior to the later of the time the plan allows the participant to waive the QPSA or provides notice of the ability to waive the QPSA, a defined benefit plan may not charge the participant for the cost of the QPSA by reducing the participant's plan benefits or by any other method. The preceding sentence does not apply to any charges prior to the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1988. Once the participant is given the opportunity to waive the QPSA or the notice of the QPSA is later, the plan may charge the participant for the cost of the QPSA. A charge for the QPSA that reasonably reflects the cost of providing the QPSA will not fail to satisfy section 411 even if it reduces the accrued benefit.

Q–22: When must distributions to a surviving spouse under a QPSA commence?

A–22: (a) In the case of a defined benefit plan, the plan must permit the surviving spouse to direct the commencement of payments under QPSA no later than the month in which the participant would have attained the earliest retirement age. However, a plan may permit the commencement of payments at an earlier date.

(b) In the case of a defined contribution plan, the plan must permit the surviving spouse to direct the commencement of payments under the QPSA within a reasonable time after the participant's death.

Q–23: Must a defined benefit plan obtain the consent of a participant and the participant's spouse to commence payments in the form of a QJSA in order to avoid violating section 415 or 411(b)?

A–23: No. A defined benefit plan may commence distributions in the form of a QJSA without the consent of the participant and spouse, even if consent would otherwise be required (see § 1.417(e)–1(b)), to the extent necessary to avoid a violation of section 415 or 411(b). For example, assume a plan has a normal retirement age of 55. A is a married participant, age 55, and has accrued a $75,000 joint and 100 percent survivor annuity that satisfies section 415. If an actuarial increase would be required under section 411 because of deferred commencement and the increase would cause the benefit to exceed the applicable limit under section 415, the plan may commence payment of a QJSA at age 55 without the participant's election or consent and without the spouse's concent.

Q–24: What are the rules under sections 401(a)(11) and 417 applicable to plan loans?

A–24: (a) *Consent rules.* (1) A plan does not satisfy the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 unless the plan provides that, at the time the participant's accrued benefit is used as security for a loan, spousal consent to such use is obtained. Consent is required even if the accrued benefit is not the primary security for the loan. No spousal consent is necessary if, at the time the loan is secured, no consent would be required for a distribution under section 417(a)(2)(B). Spousal consent is not required if the plan or the participant is not subject to section 401(a)(11) at the time the accrued benefit is used as security, or if the total accrued benefit subject to the security is not in excess of $3,500. The spousal consent must be obtained no earlier than the beginning of the 90-day period that ends on the date on which the loan is to be so secured. The consent is subject to the requirements of section 417(a)(2). Therefore, the consent must be in writing,

must acknowledge the effect of the loan and must be witnessed by a plan representative or a notary public.

(2) Participant consent is deemed obtained at the time the participant agrees to use his accrued benefit as security for a loan for purposes of satisfying the requirements for participant consent under sections 401(a)(11), 411(a)(11) and 417.

(b) *Change in status.* If spousal consent is obtained or is not required under paragraph (a) of this Q&A 24 at the time the benefits are used as security, spousal consent is not required at the time of any setoff of the loan against the accrued benefit resulting from a default, even if the participant is married to a different spouse at the time of the setoff. Similarly, in the case of a participant who secured a loan while unmarried, no consent is required at the time of a setoff of the loan against the accrued benefit even if the participant is married at the time of the setoff.

(c) *Renegotiation.* For purposes of obtaining any required spousal consent, any renegotiation, extension, renewal, or other revision of a loan shall be treated as a new loan made on the date of the renegotiation, extension, renewal, or other revision.

(d) *Effect on benefits.* For purposes of determining the amount of a QPSA or QJSA, the accrued benefit of a participant shall be reduced by any security interest held by the plan by reason of a loan outstanding to the participant at the time of death or payment, if the security interest is treated as payment in satisfaction of the loan under the plan. A plan may offset any loan outstanding at the participant's death which is secured by the participant's account balance against the spousal benefit required to be paid under section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii).

(e) *Effective date.* Loans made prior to August 19, 1985, are deemed to satisfy the consent requirements of paragraph (a) of this Q&A 24.

Q–25: How do the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply with respect to participants who are not married or to surviving spouses and participants who have a change in marital status?

A–25: (a) *Unmarried participant rule.* Plans subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 must satisfy those requirements applicable to QJSAs with respect to participants who are not married. A QJSA for a participant who is not married is an annuity for the life of the participant. Thus, an unmarried participant must be provided the written explanation described in section 417(a)(3)(A) and a single life annuity unless another form of benefit is elected by the participant. An unmarried participant is deemed to have waived the QPSA requirements. This deemed waiver is null and void if the participant later marries.

(b) *Marital status change.*—(1) *Remarriage.* If a participant is married on the date of death, payments to a surviving spouse under a QPSA or QJSA must continue even if the surviving spouse remarries.

(2) *One-year rule.* (i) A plan is not required to treat a participant as married unless the participant and the participant's spouse have been married throughout the one-year period ending on the earlier of (A) the participant's annuity starting date or (B) the date of the participant's death. Nevertheless, for purposes of the preceding sentence, a participant and the participant's spouse must be treated as married throughout the one-year period ending on the participant's annuity starting date even though they are married to each other for less than one year before the annuity starting date if they remain married to each other for at least one year. See section 417(d)(2). If a plan adopts the one-year rule provided in section 417(d), the plan must treat the participant and spouse who are married on the annuity starting date as married and must provide benefits which are to commence on the annuity starting date in the form of a QJSA unless the participant (with spousal consent) elects another form of benefit. The plan is not required to provide the participant with a new or retroactive election or the spouse with a new consent when the one-year period is satisfied. If the participant and the spouse do not remain married for at least one year, the plan may treat the participant as

having not been married on the annuity starting date. In such event, the plan may provide that the spouse loses any survivor benefit right; further, no retroactive correction of the amount paid the participant is required.

(ii) *Example.* Plan X provides that participants who are married on the annuity starting date for less than one year are treated as unmarried participants. Plan X provides benefits in the form of a QJSA or an optional single sum distribution. Participant A was married 6 months prior to the annuity starting date. Plan X must treat A as married and must commence payments to A in the form of a QJSA unless another form of benefit is elected by A with spousal consent. If a QJSA is paid and A is divorced from his spouse S, within the first year of the marriage, S will no longer have any survivor rights under the annuity (unless a QDRO provides otherwise). If A continues to be married to S, and A dies within the one-year period, Plan X may treat A as unmarried and forfeit the OJSA benefit payable to S.

(3) *Divorce.* If a participant divorces his spouse prior to the annuity starting date, any elections made while the participant was married to his former spouse remain valid, unless otherwise provided in a QDRO, or unless the participant changes them or is remarried. If a participant dies after the annuity starting date, the spouse to whom the participant was married on the annuity starting date is entitled to the QJSA protection under the plan. The spouse is entitled to this protection (unless waived and consented to by such spouse) even if the participant and spouse are not married on the date of the participant's death, except as provided in a QDRO.

Q–26: In the case of a defined contribution plan not subject to section 412, does the requirement that a participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefit be payable in full to a surviving spouse apply to a spouse who has been married to the participant for less than one year?

A–26: A plan may provide that a spouse who has not been married to a participant throughout the one-year period ending on the earlier of (a) the participant's annuity starting date or (b) the date of the participant's death is not treated as a surviving spouse and is not required to receive the participant's account balance. The special exception described in section 417(d)(2) and Q&A 25 of this section does not apply.

Q–27: Are there circumstances when spousal consent to a participant's election to waive the QJSA or the QPSA is not required?

A–27: Yes. If it is established to the satisfaction of a plan representative that there is no spouse or that the spouse cannot be located, spousal consent to waive the QJSA or the QPSA is not required. If the spouse is legally incompetnent to give consent, the spouse's legal guardian, even if the guardian is the participant, may give consent. Also, if the participant is legally separated or the participant has been abandoned (within the meaning of local law) and the participant has a court order to such effect, spousal consent is not required unless a QDRO provides otherwise. Similar rules apply to a plan subject to the requirements of section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii)(I).

Q–28: Does consent contained in an antenuptial agreement or similar contract entered into prior to marriage satisfy the consent requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417?

A–28: No. An agreement entered into prior to marriage does not satisfy the applicable consent requirements, even if the agreement is executed within the applicable election period.

Q–29: If a participant's spouse consents under section 417(a)(2)(A) to the participant's waiver of a survivor annuity form of benefit, is a subsequent spouse of the same participant bound by the consent?

A–29: No. A consent under section 417(a)(2)(A) by one spouse is binding only with respect to the consenting spouse. See Q&A–24 of this section for an exception in the case of plan benefits securing plan loans.

Q–30: Does the spousal consent requirement of section 417(a)(2)(A) require that a spouse's consent be revocable?

A–30: No. A plan may preclude a spouse from revoking consent once it has been given. Alternatively, a plan may also permit a spouse to revoke a consent after it has been given, and thereby to render ineffective the participant's prior election not to receive a QPSA or QJSA. A participant must

always be allowed to change his election during the applicable election period. Spousal consent is required in such cases to the extent provided in Q&A 31, except that spousal consent is never required for a QJSA or QPSA.

Q–31: What rules govern a participant's waiver of a QPSA or QJSA under section 417(a)(2)?

A–31: (a) *Specific beneficiary*. Both the participant's waivers of a QPSA and QJSA and the spouse's consents thereto must state the specific nonspouse beneficiary (including any class of beneficiaries or any contingent beneficiaries) who will receive the benefit. Thus, for example, if spouse B consents to participant A's election to waive a QPSA, and to have any benefits payable upon A's death before the annuity starting date paid to A's children, A may not subsequently change beneficiaries without the consent of B (except if the change is back to a QPSA). If the designated beneficiary is a trust, A's spouse need only consent to the designation of the trust and need not consent to the designation of trust beneficiaries or any changes of trust beneficiaries.

(b) *Optional form of benefit*—(1) *QJSA*. Both the participant's waiver of a QJSA (and any required spouse's consent thereto) must specify the particular optional form of benefit. The participant who has waived a QJSA with the spouse's consent in favor of another form of benefit may not subsequently change the optional form of benefit without obtaining the spouse's consent (except back to a QJSA). Of course, the participant may change the form of benefit if the plan so provides after the spouse's death or a divorce (other than as provided in a QDRO). A participant's waiver of a QJSA (and any required spouse's consent thereto) made prior to the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1986, is not required to specify the optional form of benefit.

(2) *QPSA*. A participant's waiver of a QPSA and the spouse's consent thereto are not required to specify the optional form of any preretirement benefit. Thus, a participant who waives the QPSA with spousal consent may subsequently change the form of the preretirement benefit, but not the nonspouse beneficiary, without obtaining the spouse's consent.

(3) *Change in form*. After the participant's death, a beneficiary may change the optional form of survivor benefit as permitted by the plan.

(c) *General consent*. In lieu of satisfying paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Q&A 31, a plan may permit a spouse to execute a general consent that satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (c). A general consent permits the participant to waive a QPSA or QJSA, and change the designated beneficary or the optional form of benefit payment without any requirement of further consent by such spouse. No general consent is valid unless the general consent acknowledges that the spouse has the right to limit consent to a specific beneficiary and a specific optional form of benefit, where applicable, and that the spouse voluntarily elects to relinquish both of such rights. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, a spouse may execute a general consent that is limited to certain beneficiaries or forms of benefit payment. In such case, paragraphs (a) and (b) of this Q&A 31 shall apply to the extent that the limited general consent is not applicable and this paragraph (c) shall apply to the extent that the limited general consent is applicable. A general consent, including a limited general consent, is not effective unless it is made during the applicable election period. A general consent executed prior to October 22, 1986 does not have to satisfy the specificity requirements of this Q&A 31.

Q–32: What rules govern a participant's waiver of the spousal benefit under section 401(a)(11)(B)?

A–32: (a) *Application*. In the case of a defined contribution plan that is not subject to the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417, a participant may waive the spousal benefit of section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii) if the conditions of paragraph (b) are satisfied. In general, a spousal benefit is the nonforfeitable account balance on the participant's date of death.

(b) *Conditions*. In general, the same conditions, other than the age 35 requirement, that apply to the participant's waiver of a QPSA and the spouse's consent thereto apply to the

participant's waiver of the spousal benefit and the spouse's consent thereto. See Q&A–31. Thus, the participant's waiver of the spousal benefit must state the specific nonspouse beneficiary who will receive such benefit. The waiver is not required to specify the optional form of benefit. The participant may change the optional form of benefit, but not the nonspouse beneficiary, without obtaining the spouse's consent.

Q–33: When and in what manner, may a participant waive a spousal benefit or a QPSA?

A–33: (a) *Plans not subject to section 401(a)(11)*. A participant in a plan that is not subject to the survivor annuity requirements of section 401(a)(11) (because of subparagraph (B)(iii) thereof) may waive the spousal benefit at any time, provided that no such waiver shall be effective unless the spouse has consented to the waiver. The spouse may consent to a waiver of the spousal benefit at any time, even prior to the participant's attaining age 35. No spousal consent is required for a payment to the participant or the use of the accrued benefit as security for a plan loan to the participant.

(b) *Plans subject to section 401(a)(11)*. A participant in a plan subject to the survivor annuity requirements of section 401(a)(11) generally may waive the QPSA benefit (with spousal consent) only on or after the first day of the plan year in which the participant attains age 35. However, a plan may provide for an earlier waiver (with spousal consent), provided that a written explanation of the QPSA is given to the participant and such waiver becomes invalid upon the beginning of the plan year in which the participant's 35th birthday occurs. If there is no new waiver after such date, the participant's spouse must receive the QPSA benefit upon the participant's death.

Q–34: Must the written explanations required by section 417(a)(3) be provided to nonvested participants?

A–34: Such written explantions must be provided to nonvested participants who are employed by an employer maintaining the plan. Thus, they are not required to be provided to those nonvested participants who are no longer employed by such an employer.

Q–35: When must a plan provide the written explanation, required by section 417(a)(3)(B), of the QPSA to a participant?

A–35: (a) *General rule*. A plan must provide the written explanation of the QPSA to a participant within the applicable period. Except as provided in paragraph (b), the applicable period means, with respect to a participant, whichever of the following periods ends last:

(1) The period beginning with the first day of the plan year in which the participant attains age 32 and ending with the close of the plan year preceding the plan year in which the participant attains age 35.

(2) A reasonable period ending after the individual becomes a participant.

(3) A reasonable period ending after the QPSA is no longer fully subsidized.

(4) A reasonable period ending after section 401(a)(11) first applies to the participant. Section 401(a)(11) would first apply when a benefit is transferred from a plan not subject to the survivor annuity requirements of section 401(a)(11) to a plan subject to such section or at the time of an election of an annuity under a defined contribution plan described in section 401(a)(11)(B)(iii).

(b) *Pre-35 separations*. In the case of a participant who separates from service before attaining age 35, the applicable period means the period beginning one year before the separation from service and ending one year after such separation. If such a participant returns to service, the plan must also comply with pragraph (a).

(c) *Reasonable period*. For purposes of applying paragraph (a), a reasonable period ending after the enumerated events described in paragraphs (a) (2), (3) and (4) is the end of the one-year period beginning with the date the applicable event occurs. The applicable period for such events begins one year prior to the occurrence of the enumerated events.

(d) *Transition rule*. In the case of an individual who was a participant in the plan on August 23, 1984, and, as of that date had attained age 34, the plan will satisfy the requriement of section

417(a)(3)(B) if it provided the explanation not later than December 31, 1985.

Q–36: How do plans satisfy the requirements of providing participants explanations of QPSAs and QJSAs?

A–36: Section 417(a)(3) sets forth the requirements for providing plan participants written explanations of QPSAs and QJSAs. The requirement that the terms and conditions of the QJSA or QPSA, as the case may be, be furnished to participants is not satisfied unless the written explanation complies with the requirements set forth in § 1.401(a)–11(c)(3). Also, for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, participants must be furnished a general description of the eligibility conditions and other material features of the optional forms of benefit and sufficient additional information to explain the relative values of the optional forms of benefit available under the plan (*e.g.*, the extent to which optional forms are subsidized relative to the normal form of benefit or the interest rates used to calculate the optional forms).

Q–37: What are the consequences of fully subsidizing the cost of either a QJSA or a QPSA in accordance with section 417(a)(5)?

A–37: If a plan fully subsidizes a QJSA or QPSA in accordance with section 417(a)(5) and does not allow a participant to waive such QJSA or QPSA or to select a nonspouse beneficiary, the plan is not required to provide the written explanation required by section 417(a)(3). However, if the plan offers an election to waive the benefit or designate a beneficiary, it must satisfy the election, consent, and notice requirements of section 417(a) (1), (2), and (3), with respect to such subsidized QJSA or QPSA, in accordance with section 417(a)(5).

Q–38: What is a fully subsidized benefit?

A–38: (a) *QJSA*—(1) *General rule*. A fully subsidized QJSA is one under which no increase in cost to, or decrease in actual amounts received by, the participant may result from the participant's failure to elect another form of benefit.

(2) *Examples*.

Example (1). If a plan provides a joint and survivor annuity and a single sum option, the plan does not fully subsidize the joint and survivor annuity, regardless of the actuarial value of the joint and survivor annuity because, in the event of the participant's early death, the participant would have received less under the annuity than he would have received under the single sum option.

Example (2). If a plan provides for a life annuity of $100 per month and a joint and 100% survivor benefit of $99 per month, the plan does not fully subsidize the joint and survivor benefit.

(b) *QPSA*. A QPSA is fully subsidized if the amount of the participant's benefit is not reduced because of the QPSA coverage and if no charge to the participant under the plan is made for the coverage. Thus, a QPSA is fully subsidized in a defined contribution plan.

Q–39: When do the survivor annuity requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to plans?

A–39: Sections 401(a)(11) and 417 generally apply to plan years beginning after December 31, 1984. Sections 302 and 303 of REA 1984 provide specific effective dates and transitional rules under which the QJSA or QPSA (or pre-REA 1984 section 401(a)(11)) requirements may be applicable to particular plans or with respect to benefits provided to (as amended by REA 1984) particular participants. In general, the section 401(a)(11) (as amended by REA 1984) survivor annuity requirements do not apply with respect to a participant who does not have at least one hour of service or one hour of paid leave under the plan after August 22, 1984.

Q–40: Are there special effective dates for plans maintained pursuant to collective bargaining agreements?

A–40: Yes. Section 302(b) of REA 1984 as amended by section 1898(g) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 provides a special deferred effective date for such plans. Whether a plan is described in section 302(b) of REA 1984 is determined under the principles applied under section 1017(c) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. See H.R. Rep. No. 1280, 93d Cong., 2d Sess. 266 (1974). In addition, a plan will not be treated as maintained under

a collective bargaining agreement unless the employee representatives satisfy section 7701(a)(46) of the Internal Revenue Code after March 31, 1984. See § 301.7701–17T for other requirements for a plan to be considered to be collectively bargained. Nothing in section 302(b) of REA 1984 denies a participant or spouse the rights set forth in sections 303(c)(2), 303(c)(3), 303(e)(1), and 303(e)(2) of REA 1984.

Q–41: What is one hour of service or paid leave under the plan for purposes of the transition rules in section 303 of REA 1984?

A–41: One hour of service or paid leave under the plan is one hour of service or paid leave recognized or required to be recognized under the plan for any purpose, *e.g.*, participation, vesting percentage, or benefit accrual purposes. For plans that do not compute hours of service, one hour of service or paid leave means any service or paid leave recognized or required to be recognized under the plan for any purpose.

Q–42: Must a plan be amended to provide for the QPSA required by section 303(c)(2) of REA 1984, or for the survivor annuities required by section 303(e) of REA 1984?

A–42: A plan will not fail to satisfy the qualification requirements of section 401(a) or 403(a) merely because it is not amended to provide the QPSA required by section 303(c)(2) or the survivor annuities required by section 303(e). The plan must, however, satisfy those requirements in operation.

Q–43: Is a participant's election, or a spouse's consent to an election, with respect to a QPSA, made before August 23, 1984, valid?

A–43: No.

Q–44: Is spousal consent required for certain survivor annuity elections made by the participant after December 31, 1984, and before the first plan year to which new sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply?

A–44: Yes. Section 303(c)(3) of REA 1984 provides that any election not to take a QJSA made after December 31, 1984, and before the date sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to the plan by a participant who has 1 hour of service or leave under the plan after August 23, 1984, is not effective unless the spousal consent requirements of section 417 are met with respect to such election. Unless the participant's annuity starting date occurred before January 1, 1985, the spousal consent required by section 417 (a)(2) and (e) must be obtained even though the participant elected the benefit prior to January 1, 1985. The plan is not required to be amended to comply with section 303(c)(3) of REA 1984, but the plan must satisfy this requirement in operation.

Q–45: Are there special rules for certain participants who separated from service prior to August 23, 1984?

A–45: Yes. Section 303(e) of REA 1984 provides special rules for certain participants who separated from service before August 23, 1984. Section 303(e)(1), which applies only to plans subject to section 401(a)(11) of the Code (as in effect on August 22, 1984), provides that participants whose annuity starting date did not occur before August 24, 1984, and who had one hour of service on or after September 2, 1974, but not in a plan year beginning after December 31, 1975, may elect to receive the benefits required to be provided under section 401(a)(11) of the Code (as in effect on August 22, 1984). Section 303(e)(2) provides that certain participants who had one hour of service in a plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1976, but not after August 22, 1984, may elect QPSA coverage under new sections 401(a)(11) and 417 in plans subject to these provisions. Section 303(e)(4)(A) requires plans or plan administrators to notify those participants of the provisions of section 303(e).

Q–46: When must a plan provide the notice required by section 303(e)(4)(A) of REA 1984?

A–46: The notice required by section 303(e)(4)(A) must be provided no later than the earlier of:

(a) The date the first summary annual report provided after September 17, 1985, is distributed to participants; or

(b) September 30, 1985.

A plan will not fail to satisfy the preceding sentence if the plan provides a fully subsidized QPSA with respect to any participant described in section 303(e) who dies on or after July 19, 1985, and before the notice is received. If the

plan ceases to fully subsidize the QPSA, the cessation must not be effective until the notice is given. For this purpose, an annuity payable to a nonspouse beneficiary elected by the participant, in lieu of a spouse, shall satisfy the QPSA requirement, so long as the survivor benefit is fully subsidized. The notice required by this paragraph must be in writing and sent to the participant's last known address.

Q–47: Is there another time when plans must provide notice of the right, described in section 303(e)(1) of REA '84, to elect a pre-REA 1984 qualified joint and survivor annuity?

A–47: Yes. Notice of this right must also be provided to a participant at the time the participant applies for benefit payments.

[53 FR 31842, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§1.401(a)–30 Limit on elective deferrals.

(a) *General Rule.* A trust that is part of a plan under which elective deferrals may be made during a calendar year is not qualified under section 401(a) unless the plan provides that the elective deferrals on behalf of an individual under the plan and all other plans, contracts, or arrangements of the employer maintaining the plan may not exceed the applicable limit for the individual's taxable year beginning in the calendar year. A plan may incorporate the applicable limit by reference. In the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer to which section 413 (b) or (c) applies, section 401(a)(30) and this section are applied as if each employer maintained a separate plan. See §1.402(g)–1(e) for rules permitting the distribution of excess deferrals to prevent disqualification of a plan or trust for failure to comply in operation with section 401(a)(30).

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section:

(1) *Applicable limit.* The term ''applicable limit'' has the meaning provided in §1.402(g)–1(d).

(2) *Elective deferrals.* The term ''elective deferrals'' has the meaning provided in §1.402(g)–1(b).

(c) *Effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (c), this section is effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1987.

(2) *Transition rule.* For plan years beginning in 1988, a plan may rely on a reasonable interpretation of the law as in effect on December 31, 1987.

(3) *Deferrals under collective bargaining agreements.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, this section does not apply to contributions made pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement for plan years beginning before the earlier of:

(i) The later of January 1, 1988, or the date on which the last collective bargaining agreement terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986), or

(ii) January 1, 1989.

[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40516, Aug. 15, 1991]

§1.401(a)–50 Puerto Rican trusts; election to be treated as a domestic trust.

(a) *In general.* Section 401(a) requires, among other things, that a trust forming part of a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan must be created or organized in the United States to be a qualified trust. Section 1022(i)(2) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) (88 Stat. 942) provides that trusts under certain pension, etc., plans created or organized in Puerto Rico whose administrators have made the election referred to in section 1022(i)(2) are to be treated as trusts created or organized in the United States for purposes of section 401(a). Thus, if a plan otherwise satisfies the qualification requirements of section 401(a), any trust forming part of the plan for which an election is made will be treated as a qualified trust under that section.

(b) *Manner and effect of election.* A plan administrator may make an election under ERISA section 1022(i)(2) by filing a statement making the election, along with a copy of the plan, with the Director's Representative of the Internal Revenue Service in Puerto Rico. The statement making the election must indicate that it is being made under ERISA section 1022(i)(2). The

statement may also be filed in conjunction with a written request for a determination letter. If the election is made with a written request for a determination letter, the election may be conditioned upon issuance of a favorable determination letter and will be irrevocable upon issuance of such letter. Otherwise, once made, an election is irrevocable. It is generally effective for plan years beginning after the date it has been made. However, an election made before March 3, 1983 may, at the option of the plan administrator at the time he or she makes the election, be considered to have been made on any date between September 2, 1974, and the actual date of the election. The election will then be effective for plan years beginning on or after the date chosen by the plan administrator.

(c) *Annuities, custodial accounts, etc.* See section 401 (f) for rules relating to the treatment of certain annuities, custodial accounts or other contracts, as trusts for purposes of section 401(a).

(d) *Source of plan distributions to participants and beneficiaries residing outside the United States.* Except as provided under section 871(f) (relating to amounts received as an annuity by nonresident aliens), the amount of a distribution from an electing plan that is to be treated as income from sources within the United States is determined as described below. The portion of the distribution considered to be a return of employer contributions is to be treated as income from sources within the United States in an amount equal to the portion of the distribution considered to be a return of employer contributions multiplied by the following fraction:

$$\frac{\text{Days of performance of labor or services within the United States for the employer.}}{\text{Total days of performance of labor or services for the employer.}}$$

The days of performance of labor or services within the United States shall not include the time period for which the employee's compensation is deemed not to be income from sources within the United States under subtitle A of the Code. Thus, for example, if an employee's compensation was not deemed to be income from sources within the United States under section 861(a)(3), then the time the emloyee was present in the United States while such compensation was earned would not be included in determining the days of performance of labor or services within the United States in the numerator of the above fraction. In addition, days of performance of labor or services for the employer in both the numerator and denominator of the above fraction are limited to days of plan participation by the employee and any service used for determining an employee's accrued benefit under the plan. The remaining portion of the distribution, that is, any amount other than the portion of the distribution considered to be a return of employer contributions, is not to be treated as income from sources within the United States. For example, if a distribution consists of amounts representing employer contributions, employee contributions, and earnings on employer and employee contributions, no part of the portion of the distribution attributable to employee contributions, or earnings on employer and employee contributions, will be treated as income from sources within the United States.

[T.D. 7859, 47 FR 54297, Dec. 2, 1982]

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[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46778, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 Nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4).

(a) *In general.* Section 401(a)(4) provides that a plan is a qualified plan only if the contributions or the benefits provided under the plan do not discriminate in favor of HCEs. Whether a plan satisfies this requirement depends on the form of the plan and on its effect in operation. In making this determination, intent is irrelevant. This section sets forth the exclusive rules for determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4). A plan that complies in form and operation with the rules in this section therefore satisfies section 401(a)(4).

(b) *Requirements a plan must satisfy*—(1) *In general.* In order to satisfy section 401(a)(4), a plan must satisfy each of the requirements of this paragraph (b).

(2) *Nondiscriminatory amount of contributions or benefits*—(i) *General rule.* Either the contributions or the benefits provided under the plan must be nondiscriminatory in amount. It need not be shown that both the contributions and the benefits provided are nondiscriminatory in amount, but only that either the contributions alone or the benefits alone are nondiscriminatory in amount.

(ii) *Defined contribution plans*—(A) *General rule.* A defined contribution plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) if the contributions allocated under the plan (including forfeitures) are nondiscriminatory in amount under § 1.401(a)(4)–2. Alternatively, a defined contribution plan (other than an ESOP) satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) if the equivalent benefits provided under the plan are nondiscriminatory in amount under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b). Section 1.401(a)(4)–8(b) includes a safe-harbor testing method for contributions provided under a target benefit plan.

(B) *Section 401(k) plans and section 401(m) plans.* A section 401(k) plan is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (b)(2) because § 1.410(b)–9 defines a section 401(k) plan as a plan consisting of elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement (i.e., one that satisfies section 401(k)(3), the nondiscriminatory amount requirement applicable to qualified cash or deferred arrangements). A section 401(m) plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) only if the plan satisfies §§ 1.401(m)–1(b) and 1.401(m)–2. Contributions under a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement, elective contributions described in § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(iv) that fail to satisfy the allocation and compensation requirements of § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(i), matching contributions that fail to satisfy § 1.401(m)–1(b)(4)(ii)(A), and qualified nonelective contributions treated as elective or matching contributions for certain purposes under §§ 1.401(k)–1(b)(5) and 1.401(m)–1(b)(5), respectively, are not subject to the special rule in this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B), because they are not treated as part of a section 401(k) plan or section 401(m) plan as those terms are defined in § 1.410(b)–9. The contributions described in the preceding sentence must satisfy paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section.

(iii) *Defined benefit plans.* A defined benefit plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) if the benefits provided under the plan are nondiscriminatory in amount under § 1.401(a)(4)–3. Alternatively, a

defined benefit plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) if the equivalent allocations provided under the plan are nondiscriminatory in amount under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c). Section 1.401(a)(4)–8(c) includes a safe-harbor testing method for benefits provided under a cash balance plan. In addition, § 1.401(a)(4)–8(d) provides a safe-harbor testing method for benefits provided under a defined benefit plan that is part of a floor-offset arrangement.

(3) *Nondiscriminatory availability of benefits, rights, and features.* All benefits, rights, and features provided under the plan must be made available in the plan in a nondiscriminatory manner. Rules for determining whether this requirement is satisfied are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–4.

(4) *Nondiscriminatory effect of plan amendments and terminations.* The timing of plan amendments must not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs. Rules for determining whether this requirement is satisfied are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–5(a). Section 1.401(a)(4)–5(b) provides additional requirements regarding plan terminations.

(c) *Application of requirements*—(1) *In general.* The requirements of paragraph (b) of this section must be applied in accordance with the rules set forth in this paragraph (c).

(2) *Interpretation.* The provisions of §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 must be interpreted in a reasonable manner consistent with the purpose of preventing discrimination in favor of HCEs.

(3) *Plan-year basis of testing.* The requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are generally applied on the basis of the plan year and on the basis of the terms of the plan in effect during the plan year. Thus, unless otherwise provided, the compensation, contributions, benefit accruals, and other items used to apply these requirements must be determined with respect to the plan year being tested. However, § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g) provides rules allowing for corrective amendments made after the close of the plan year to be taken into account in satisfying certain requirements under paragraph (b) of this section.

(4) *Application of section 410(b) rules*—(i) *Relationship between sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b).* To be a qualified plan, a plan must satisfy both sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4). Section 410(b) requires that a plan benefit a nondiscriminatory group of employees, and section 401(a)(4) requires that the contributions or benefits provided to employees benefiting under the plan not discriminate in favor of HCEs. Consistent with this requirement, the definition of a plan subject to testing under section 401(a)(4) is the same as the definition of a plan subject to testing under section 410(b), i.e., the plan determined after applying the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c) and the permissive aggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(d). In addition, whichever testing option is used for the plan year under § 1.410(b)–8(a) (e.g., quarterly testing) must also be used for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) for the plan year.

(ii) *Special rules for certain aggregated plans.* Special rules are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–9(b) for applying the nondiscriminatory amount and availability requirements of paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section to a plan that includes one or more defined benefit plans and one or more defined contribution plans that have been permissively aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(d).

(iii) *Restructuring.* In certain circumstances, a plan may be restructured on the basis of employee groups and treated as comprising two or more plans, each of which is treated as a separate plan that must independently satisfy sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b). Rules relating to restructuring plans for purposes of applying the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c).

(iv) *References to section 410(b).* Except as otherwise specifically provided, references to satisfying section 410(b) in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 mean satisfying § 1.410(b)–2 (taking into account any special rules available in satisfying that section, other than the permissive aggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(d)). In the case of a plan described in section 410(c)(1) that has not made the election described in section 410(d) and is not subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i), references in

§§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 to satisfying section 410(b) mean satisfying section 410(c)(2).

(5) *Collectively-bargained plans.* The requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are treated as satisfied by a collectively-bargained plan that automatically satisfies section 410(b) under § 1.410(b)–2(b)(7).

(6) *Former employees.* In applying the nondiscriminatory amount and availability requirements of paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section, former employees are tested separately from active employees, unless otherwise provided. Rules for applying paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section to former employees are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–10.

(7) *Employee-provided contributions and benefits.* In applying the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, employee-provided contributions and benefits are tested separately from employer-provided contributions and benefits, unless otherwise provided. Rules for determining the amount of employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan that include employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b), and rules for applying paragraph (b)(2) of this section to employee contributions under such a plan are set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–6(c). See paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section for rules applicable to employee contributions allocated to separate accounts.

(8) *Allocation of earnings.* Notwithstanding any other provision in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13, a defined contribution plan does not satisfy paragraph (b)(2) of this section if the manner in which income, expenses, gains, or losses are allocated to accounts under the plan discriminates in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

(9) *Rollovers, transfers, and buybacks.* In applying the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, rollover (including direct rollover) contributions described in section 402(c), 402(e)(6), 403(a)(4), 403(a)(5), or 408(d)(3), elective transfers described in § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–3(b), transfers of assets and liabilities described in section 414(l), and employee buybacks are treated in accordance with the rules set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(b).

(10) *Vesting.* A plan does not satisfy the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of paragraph (b)(2) of this section unless it satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(c) with respect to the manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits.

(11) *Crediting service.* A plan does not satisfy paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section unless it satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d) with respect to the manner in which employees' service is credited under the plan. Service other than actual service with the employer may not be taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section except as provided in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d).

(12) *Governmental plans.* The rules of this section apply to a governmental plan within the meaning of section 414(d), except as provided in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–11(f) and 1.401(a)(4)–13(b).

(13) *Employee stock ownership plans.* [Reserved]

(14) *Section 401(h) benefits.* In applying the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, the portion of a plan providing benefits described in section 401(h) is tested separately from the portion of the same plan providing retirement benefits, and thus is not required to satisfy this section. Rules applicable to section 401(h) benefits are set forth in § 1.401–14(b)(2).

(15) *Definitions.* In applying the requirements of this section, the definitions in § 1.401(a)(4)–12 govern.

(16) *Effective dates and fresh-start rules.* In applying the requirements of this section, the effective dates set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13 govern. Section 1.401(a)(4)–13 also provides certain transition and fresh-start rules that apply for purposes of this section.

(d) *Additional guidance.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance, published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin, provide any additional guidance that may be necessary or appropriate in applying the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4), including additional safe harbors and alternative methods and

procedures for satisfying those requirements. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46780, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–2 Nondiscrimination in amount of employer contributions under a defined contribution plan.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *Overview.* This section provides rules for determining whether the employer contributions allocated under a defined contribution plan are nondiscriminatory in amount as required by § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(A). Certain defined contribution plans that provide uniform allocations are permitted to satisfy this requirement by meeting one of the safe harbors in paragraph (b) of this section. Plans that do not provide uniform allocations may satisfy this requirement by satisfying the general test in paragraph (c) of this section. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B) for the exclusive tests applicable to section 401(k) plans and section 401(m) plans.

(2) *Alternative methods of satisfying nondiscriminatory amount requirement.* A defined contribution plan is permitted to satisfy paragraph (b)(2) or (c) of this section on a restructured basis pursuant to § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c). Alternatively, a defined contribution plan (other than an ESOP) is permitted to satisfy the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(A) on the basis of equivalent benefits pursuant to § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b).

(b) *Safe harbors*—(1) *In general.* The employer contributions allocated under a defined contribution plan are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if the plan satisfies either of the safe harbors in paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. Paragraph (b)(4) of this section provides exceptions for certain plan provisions that do not cause a plan to fail to satisfy this paragraph (b).

(2) *Safe harbor for plans with uniform allocation formula*—(i) *General rule.* A defined contribution plan satisfies the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(2) for a plan year if the plan allocates all amounts taken into account under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section for the plan year under an allocation formula that allocates to each employee the same percentage of plan year compensation, the same dollar amount, or the same dollar amount for each uniform unit of service (not to exceed one week) performed by the employee during the plan year.

(ii) *Permitted disparity.* If a plan satisfies section 401(l) in form, differences in employees' allocations under the plan attributable to uniform disparities permitted under § 1.401(l)–2 (including differences in disparities that are deemed uniform under § 1.401(l)–2(c)(2)) do not cause the plan to fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(2).

(3) *Safe harbor for plans with uniform points allocation formula*—(i) *General rule.* A defined contribution plan (other than an ESOP) satisfies the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(3) for a plan year if it satisfies both of the following requirements:

(A) The plan must allocate amounts under a uniform points allocation formula. A uniform points allocation formula defines each employee's allocation for the plan year as the product of the total of all amounts taken into account under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section and a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's points for the plan year and the denominator of which is the sum of the points of all employees in the plan for the plan year. For this purpose, an employee's points for a plan year equal the sum of the employee's points for age, service, and units of plan year compensation for the plan year. Under a uniform points allocation formula, each employee must receive the same number of points for each year of age, the same number of points for each year of service, and the same number of points for each unit of plan year compensation. (See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) regarding service that may be taken into account as years of service.) A uniform points allocation formula need not grant points for both age and service, but it must grant points for at least one of them. If the allocation formula grants points for years of service, the plan is permitted to limit the number of years of service taken into account to a single maximum number of years of service. A uniform points allocation formula need not grant points for units of plan year compensation, but if it does, the unit used must be a single dollar

amount for all employees that does not exceed $200.

(B) For the plan year, the average of the allocation rates for the HCEs in the plan must not exceed the average of the allocation rates for the NHCEs in the plan. For this purpose, allocation rates are determined in accordance with paragraph (c)(2) of this section, without imputing permitted disparity and without grouping allocation rates under paragraphs (c)(2) (iv) and (v) of this section, respectively.

(ii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(3):

Example. (a) Plan A has a single allocation formula that applies to all employees, under which each employee's allocation for the plan year equals the product of the total of all amounts taken into account for all employees for the plan year under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section and a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's points for the plan year and the denominator of which is the sum of the points of all employees for the plan year. Plan A grants each employee 10 points for each year of service (including pre-participation service and imputed service credited under Plan A that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)) and one point for each $100 of plan year compensation. For the 1994 plan year, the total allocations are $71,200, and the total points for all employees are 7,120. Each employee's allocation for the 1994 plan year is set forth in the table below.

Employee	Years of service	Plan year compensation	Points	Amount of allocation	Allocation rate (percent)
H1	20	$150,000	1,700	$17,000	11.3
H2	10	150,000	1,600	16,000	10.7
H3	30	100,000	1,300	13,000	13.0
H4	3	100,000	1,030	10,300	10.3
N1	10	40,000	500	5,000	12.5
N2	5	35,000	400	4,000	11.4
N3	3	30,000	330	3,300	11.0
N4	1	25,000	260	2,600	10.4
Total			7,120	71,200	

(b) Under these facts, for the 1994 plan year, Plan A allocates amounts under a uniform points allocation formula within the meaning of paragraph (b)(3)(i)(A) of this section.

(c) For the 1994 plan year, the average allocation rate for the HCEs (H1 through H4) is 11.3 percent, and the average allocation rate for NHCEs (N1 through N4) is 11.3 percent. Because the average of the allocation rates for the HCEs does not exceed the average of the allocation rates for the NHCEs, Plan A satisfies paragraph (b)(3)(i)(B) of this section and, thus, the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(3) for the 1994 plan year.

(4) *Use of safe harbors not precluded by certain plan provisions*—(i) *In general.* A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b) merely because the plan contains one or more of the provisions described in this paragraph (b)(4). Unless otherwise provided, any such provision must apply uniformly to all employees.

(ii) *Entry dates.* The plan provides one or more entry dates during the plan year as permitted by section 410(a)(4).

(iii) *Certain conditions on allocations.* The plan provides that an employee's allocation for the plan year is conditioned on either the employee's employment on the last day of the plan year or the employee's completion of a minimum number of hours of service during the plan year (not to exceed 1,000), or both. Such a provision may include an exception from this condition for all employees whose employment terminates during the plan year or only for those employees whose employment terminates during the plan year on account of one or more of the following circumstances: retirement, disability, death, or military service.

(iv) *Certain limits on allocations.* The plan limits allocations otherwise provided under the allocation formula to a maximum dollar amount or a maximum percentage of plan year compensation, limits the dollar amount of plan year compensation taken into account in determining the amount of allocations, or applies the restrictions of section 409(n) or the limits of section 415.

(v) *Lower allocations for HCEs.* The allocations provided to one or more HCEs

under the plan are less than the allocations that would otherwise be provided to those employees if the plan satisfied this paragraph (b) (without regard to this paragraph (b)(4)(v)).

(vi) *Multiple formulas*—(A) *General rule.* The plan provides that an employee's allocation under the plan is the greater of the allocations determined under two or more formulas, or is the sum of the allocations determined under two or more formulas. This paragraph (b)(4)(vi) does not apply to a plan unless each of the formulas under the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(vi) (B) through (D) of this section.

(B) *Sole formulas.* The formulas must be the only formulas under the plan.

(C) *Separate testing.* Each of the formulas must separately satisfy this paragraph (b). A formula that is available solely to some or all NHCEs is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(C).

(D) *Availability*—(*1*) *General rule.* All of the formulas must be available on the same terms to all employees.

(*2*) *Formulas for NHCEs.* A formula does not fail to be available on the same terms to all employees merely because the formula is not available to any HCEs, but is available to some or all NHCEs on the same terms as all of the other formulas in the plan.

(*3*) *Top-heavy formulas.* In the case of a plan that provides the greater of the allocations under two or more formulas, one of which is a top-heavy formula, the top-heavy formula does not fail to be available on the same terms to all employees merely because it is available solely to all non-key employees on the same terms as all the other formulas under the plan. Furthermore, the top-heavy formula does not fail to be available on the same terms as the other formulas under the plan merely because it is conditioned on the plan's being top-heavy within the meaning of section 416(g). Finally, the top-heavy formula does not fail to be available on the same terms as the other formulas under the plan merely because it is available to all employees described in § 1.416–1, Q&A M–10 (i.e., all non-key employees who have not separated from service as of the last day of the plan year). The preceding sentence does not apply, however, unless the plan would satisfy section 410(b) if all employees who are benefiting under the plan solely as a result of receiving allocations under the top-heavy formula were treated as not currently benefiting under the plan. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(D)(*3*), a top-heavy formula is a formula that provides the minimum benefit described in section 416(c)(2) (taking into account, if applicable, the modification in section 416(h)(2)(A)(ii)(II)).

(E) *Provisions may be applied more than once.* The provisions of this paragraph (b)(4)(vi) may be applied more than once. For example, a plan satisfies this paragraph (b) if an employee's allocation under the plan is the greater of the allocations under two or more formulas, and one or more of those formulas is the sum of the allocations under two or more other formulas, provided that each of the formulas under the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(vi) (B) through (D) of this section.

(F) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(4)(vi):

Example 1. Under Plan A, each employee's allocation equals the sum of the allocations determined under two formulas. The first formula provides an allocation of five percent of plan year compensation. The second formula provides an allocation of $100. Plan A satisfies this paragraph (b)(4)(vi).

Example 2. Under Plan B, each employee's allocation equals the greater of the allocations determined under two formulas. The first formula provides an allocation of seven percent of plan year compensation and is available to all employees who complete at least 1,000 hours of service during the plan year and who have not separated from service as of the last day of the plan year. The second formula is a top-heavy formula that provides an allocation of three percent of plan year compensation and that is available to all employees described in § 1.416–1, Q&A M–10. Plan B does not satisfy the general rule in paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(D)(*1*) of this section because the two formulas are not available on the same terms to all employees (i.e., an employee is required to complete 1,000 hours of service during the plan year to receive an allocation under the first formula, but not under the second formula). Nonetheless, because the second formula is a top-heavy formula, the special availability rules for top-heavy formulas in paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(D)(*3*) of this section apply. Thus,

the second formula does not fail to be available on the same terms as the first formula merely because the second formula is available to all employees described in § 1.416–1, Q&A M–10, as long as the plan would satisfy section 410(b) if all employees who are benefiting under the plan solely as a result of receiving allocations under the top-heavy formula were treated as not currently benefiting under the plan. This is true even if the plan conditions the availability of the second formula on the plan's being top-heavy for the plan year.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 2,* except that the first formula is available to all employees who have not separated from service as of the last day of the plan year, regardless of whether they complete at least 1,000 hours of service during the plan year. Plan B still does not satisfy the general rule in paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(D)(*1*) of this section because the two formulas are not available on the same terms to all employees (i.e., the second formula is only available to all non-key employees). Nonetheless, because the second formula is a top-heavy formula, the special availability rules for top-heavy formulas in paragraph (b)(4)(vi)(D)(*3*) of this section apply. Thus, the second formula does not fail to be available on the same terms as the first formula merely because the second formula is available solely to all non-key employees.

(c) *General test for nondiscrimination in amount of contributions*—(1) *General rule.* The employer contributions allocated under a defined contribution plan are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if each rate group under the plan satisfies section 410(b). For purposes of this paragraph (c), a rate group exists under a plan for each HCE and consists of the HCE and all other employees in the plan (both HCEs and NHCEs) who have an allocation rate greater than or equal to the HCE's allocation rate. Thus, an employee is in the rate group for each HCE who has an allocation rate less than or equal to the employee's allocation rate.

(2) *Determination of allocation rates*—(i) *General rule.* The allocation rate for an employee for a plan year equals the sum of the allocations to the employee's account for the plan year, expressed either as a percentage of plan year compensation or as a dollar amount.

(ii) *Allocations taken into account.* The amounts taken into account in determining allocation rates for a plan year include all employer contributions and forfeitures that are allocated or treated as allocated to the account of an employee under the plan for the plan year, other than amounts described in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section. For this purpose, employer contributions include annual additions described in § 1.415–6(b)(2)(i) (regarding amounts arising from certain transactions between the plan and the employer). In the case of a defined contribution plan subject to section 412, an employer contribution is taken into account in the plan year for which it is required to be contributed and allocated to employees' accounts under the plan, even if all or part of the required contribution is not actually made.

(iii) *Allocations not taken into account.* Allocations of income, expenses, gains, and losses attributable to the balance in an employee's account are not taken into account in determining allocation rates.

(iv) *Imputation of permitted disparity.* The disparity permitted under section 401(l) may be imputed in accordance with the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–7.

(v) *Grouping of allocation rates*—(A) *General rule.* An employer may treat all employees who have allocation rates within a specified range above and below a midpoint rate chosen by the employer as having an allocation rate equal to the midpoint rate within that range. Allocation rates within a given range may not be grouped under this paragraph (c)(2)(v) if the allocation rates of HCEs within the range generally are significantly higher than the allocation rates of NHCEs in the range. The specified ranges within which all employees are treated as having the same allocation rate may not overlap and may be no larger than provided in paragraph (c)(2)(v)(B) of this section. Allocation rates of employees that are not within any of these specified ranges are determined without regard to this paragraph (c)(2)(v).

(B) *Size of specified ranges.* The lowest and highest allocation rates in the range must be within five percent (not five percentage points) of the midpoint rate. If allocation rates are determined as a percentage of plan year compensation, the lowest and highest allocation rates need not be within five percent of the midpoint rate, if they are no more

than one quarter of a percentage point above or below the midpoint rate.

(vi) *Consistency requirement.* Allocation rates must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees for the plan year.

(3) *Satisfaction of section 410(b) by a rate group*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of determining whether a rate group satisfies section 410(b), the rate group is treated as if it were a separate plan that benefits only the employees included in the rate group for the plan year. Thus, for example, under § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(4)(iv), the ratio percentage of the rate group is determined taking into account all nonexcludable employees regardless of whether they benefit under the plan. Paragraph (c)(3)(ii) and (iii) of this section provide additional special rules for determining whether a rate group satisfies section 410(b).

(ii) *Application of nondiscriminatory classification test.* A rate group satisfies the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 (including the reasonable classification requirement of § 1.410(b)–4(b)) if and only if the ratio percentage of the rate group is greater than or equal to the lesser of—

(A) The midpoint between the safe and the unsafe harbor percentages applicable to the plan; and

(B) The ratio percentage of the plan.

(iii) *Application of average benefit percentage test.* A rate group satisfies the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 if the plan of which it is a part satisfies § 1.410(b)–5 (without regard to § 1.410(b)–5(f)). In the case of a plan that relies on § 1.410(b)–5(f) to satisfy the average benefit percentage test, each rate group under the plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test (if applicable) only if the rate group separately satisfies § 1.410(b)–5(f).

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the general test in this paragraph (c):

Example 1. Employer X maintains two defined contribution plans, Plan A and Plan B, that are aggregated and treated as a single plan for purposes of sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) pursuant to § 1.410(b)–7(d). For the 1994 plan year, Employee M has plan year compensation of $10,000 and receives an allocation of $200 under Plan A and an allocation of $800 under Plan B. Employee M's allocation rate under the aggregated plan for the 1994 plan year is 10 percent (i.e., $1,000 divided by $10,000).

Example 2. The employees in Plan C have the following allocation rates (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation): 2.75 percent, 2.80 percent, 2.85 percent, 3.25 percent, 6.65 percent, 7.33 percent, 7.34 percent, and 7.35 percent. Because the first four rates are within a range of no more than one quarter of a percentage point above and below 3.0 percent (a midpoint rate chosen by the employer), under paragraph (c)(2)(v) of this section the employer may treat the employees who have those rates as having an allocation rate of 3.0 percent (provided that the allocation rates of HCEs within the range generally are not significantly higher than the allocation rates of NHCEs within the range). Because the last four rates are within a range of no more than five percent above and below 7.0 percent (a midpoint rate chosen by the employer), the employer may treat the employees who have those rates as having an allocation rate of 7.0 percent (provided that the allocation rates of HCEs within the range generally are not significantly higher than the allocation rates of NHCEs within the range).

Example 3. (a) Employer Y has only six nonexcludable employees, all of whom benefit under Plan D. The HCEs are H1 and H2, and the NHCEs are N1 through N4. For the 1994 plan year, H1 and N1 through N4 have an allocation rate of 5.0 percent of plan year compensation. For the same plan year, H2 has an allocation rate of 7.5 percent of plan year compensation.

(b) There are two rate groups under Plan D. Rate group 1 consists of H1 and all those employees who have an allocation rate greater than or equal to H1's allocation rate (5.0 percent). Thus, rate group 1 consists of H1, H2, and N1 through N4. Rate group 2 consists only of H2 because no other employee has an allocation rate greater than or equal to H2's allocation rate (7.5 percent).

(c) The ratio percentage for rate group 2 is zero percent—i.e., zero percent (the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group) divided by 50 percent (the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group). Therefore rate group 2 does not satisfy the ratio percentage test under § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2). Rate group 2 also does not satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 (as modified by paragraph (c)(3) of this section). Rate group 2 therefore does not satisfy section 410(b) and, as a result, Plan D does not satisfy the general test in paragraph (c)(1) of this section. This is true regardless of whether rate group 1 satisfies § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2).

Example 4. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 3,* except that N4 has an allocation rate of 8.0 percent.

(b) There are two rate groups in Plan D. Rate group 1 consists of H1 and all those employees who have an allocation rate greater than or equal to H1's allocation rate (5.0 percent). Thus, rate group 1 consists of H1, H2 and N1 through N4. Rate group 2 consists of H2, and all those employees who have an allocation rate greater than or equal to H2's allocation rate (7.5 percent). Thus, rate group 2 consists of H2 and N4.

(c) Rate group 1 satisfies the ratio percentage test under §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) because the ratio percentage of the rate group is 100 percent—i.e., 100 percent (the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group) divided by 100 percent (the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group).

(d) Rate group 2 does not satisfy the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) because the ratio percentage of the rate group is 50 percent—i.e., 25 percent (the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group) divided by 50 percent (the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group).

(e) However, rate group 2 does satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 because the ratio percentage of the rate group (50 percent) is greater than the safe harbor percentage applicable to the plan under §1.410(b)–4(c)(4) (45.5 percent).

(f) Under paragraph (c)(3)(iii) of this section, rate group 2 satisfies the average benefit percentage test, if Plan D satisfies the average benefit percentage test. (The requirement that Plan D satisfy the average benefit percentage test applies even though Plan D satisfies the ratio percentage test and would ordinarily not need to run the average benefit percentage test.) If Plan D satisfies the average benefit percentage test, then rate group 2 satisfies section 410(b) and thus, Plan D satisfies the general test in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, because each rate group under the plan satisfies section 410(b).

Example 5. (a) Plan E satisfies section 410(b) by satisfying the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4 and the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5 (without regard to §1.410(b)–5(f)). See §1.410(b)–2(b)(3). Plan E uses the facts-and-circumstances requirements of §1.410(b)–4(c)(3) to satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of §1.410(b)–4. The safe and unsafe harbor percentages applicable to the plan under §1.410(b)–4(c)(4) are 29 and 20 percent, respectively. Plan E has a ratio percentage of 22 percent.

(b) Rate group 1 under Plan E has a ratio percentage of 23 percent. Under paragraph (c)(3)(ii) of this section, the rate group satisfies the nondiscriminatory classification requirement of §1.410(b)–4, because the ratio percentage of the rate group (23 percent) is greater than the lesser of—

(1) The ratio percentage for the plan as a whole (22 percent); and

(2) The midpoint between the safe and unsafe harbor percentages (24.5 percent).

(c) Under paragraph (c)(3)(iii) of this section, the rate group satisfies section 410(b) because the plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46781, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(4)–3 Nondiscrimination in amount of employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *Overview.* This section provides rules for determining whether the employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan are nondiscriminatory in amount as required by §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(iii). Certain defined benefit plans that provide uniform benefits are permitted to satisfy this requirement by meeting one of the safe harbors in paragraph (b) of this section. Plans that do not provide uniform benefits may satisfy this requirement by satisfying the general test in paragraph (c) of this section. Paragraph (d) of this section provides rules for determining the individual benefit accrual rates needed for the general test. Paragraph (e) of this section provides rules for determining compensation for purposes of applying the requirements of this section. Paragraph (f) of this section provides additional rules that apply generally for purposes of both the safe harbors in paragraph (b) of this section and the general test in paragraph (c) of this section. See §1.401(a)(4)–6 for rules for determining the amount of employer-provided benefits under a contributory DB plan, and for determining whether the employee-provided benefits under such a plan are nondiscriminatory in amount.

(2) *Alternative methods of satisfying nondiscriminatory amount requirement.* A defined benefit plan is permitted to satisfy paragraph (b) or (c) of this section on a restructured basis pursuant to §1.401(a)(4)–9(c). Alternatively, a defined benefit plan is permitted to satisfy the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(iii) on the basis of equivalent allocations pursuant to §1.401(a)(4)–8(c). In addition, a defined benefit plan that is part of a

floor-offset arrangement is permitted to satisfy this section pursuant to § 1.401(a)(4)–8(d).

(b) *Safe harbors*—(1) *In general.* The employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if the plan satisfies each of the uniformity requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section and any one of the safe harbors in paragraphs (b)(3) (unit credit plans), (b)(4) (fractional accrual plans), and (b)(5) (insurance contract plans) of this section. Paragraph (b)(6) of this section provides exceptions for certain plan provisions that do not cause a plan to fail to satisfy this paragraph (b). Paragraph (f) of this section provides additional rules that apply in determining whether a plan satisfies this paragraph (b).

(2) *Uniformity requirements*—(i) *Uniform normal retirement benefit.* The same benefit formula must apply to all employees. The benefit formula must provide all employees with an annual benefit payable in the same form commencing at the same uniform normal retirement age. The annual benefit must be the same percentage of average annual compensation or the same dollar amount for all employees who will have the same number of years of service at normal retirement age. (See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) regarding service that may be taken into account as years of service.) The annual benefit must equal the employee's accrued benefit at normal retirement age (within the meaning of section 411(a)(7)(A)(i)) and must be the normal retirement benefit under the plan (within the meaning of section 411(a)(9)).

(ii) *Uniform post-normal retirement benefit.* With respect to an employee with a given number of years of service at any age after normal retirement age, the annual benefit commencing at that employee's age must be the same percentage of average annual compensation or the same dollar amount that would be payable commencing at normal retirement age to an employee who had that same number of years of service at normal retirement age.

(iii) *Uniform subsidies.* Each subsidized optional form of benefit available under the plan must be currently available (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(2)) to substantially all employees. Whether an optional form of benefit is considered subsidized for this purpose may be determined using any reasonable actuarial assumptions.

(iv) *No employee contributions.* The plan must not be a contributory DB plan.

(v) *Period of accrual.* Each employee's benefit must be accrued over the same years of service that are taken into account in applying the benefit formula under the plan to that employee. For this purpose, any year in which the employee benefits under the plan (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–3(a)) is included as a year of service in which a benefit accrues. Thus, for example, a plan does not satisfy the safe harbor in paragraph (b)(4) of this section unless the plan uses the same years of service to determine both the normal retirement benefit under the plan's benefit formula and the fraction by which an employee's fractional rule benefit is multiplied to derive the employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year.

(vi) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(2):

Example 1. Plan A provides a normal retirement benefit equal to two percent of average annual compensation times each year of service commencing at age 65 for all employees. Plan A provides that employees of Division S receive their benefit in the form of a straight life annuity and that employees of Division T receive their benefit in the form of a life annuity with an automatic cost-of-living increase. Plan A does not provide a uniform normal retirement benefit within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section because the annual benefit is not payable in the same form to all employees.

Example 2. Plan B provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 1.5 percent of average annual compensation times each year of service at normal retirement age for all employees. The normal retirement age under the plan is the earlier of age 65 or the age at which the employee completes 10 years of service, but in no event earlier than age 62. Plan B does not provide a uniform normal retirement benefit within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section because the same uniform normal retirement age does not apply to all employees.

Example 3. Plan C is an accumulation plan under which the benefit for each year of service equals one percent of plan year compensation payable in the same form to all

employees commencing at the same uniform normal retirement age. Under paragraph (e)(2) of this section, an accumulation plan may substitute plan year compensation for average annual compensation. Plan C provides a uniform normal retirement benefit within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, because all employees with the same number of years of service at normal retirement age will receive an annual benefit that is treated as the same percentage of average annual compensation.

Example 4. The facts are the same as in *Example 3,* except that the benefit for each year of service equals one percent of plan year compensation increased by reference to the increase in the cost of living from the year of service to normal retirement age. Plan C does not provide a uniform normal retirement benefit, because the annual benefit defined by the benefit formula can vary for employees with the same number of years of service at normal retirement age, depending on the age at which those years of service were credited to the employee under the plan.

Example 5. Plan D provides a normal retirement benefit of 50 percent of average annual compensation at normal retirement age (age 65) for employees with 30 years of service at normal retirement age. Plan D provides that, in the case of an employee with less than 30 years of service at normal retirement age, the normal retirement benefit is reduced on a pro rata basis for each year of service less than 30. However, if an employee with less than 30 years of service at normal retirement age continues to work past normal retirement age, Plan D provides that the additional years of service worked past normal retirement age are taken into account for purposes of the 30 years of service requirement. Thus, an employee who has 26 years of service at age 65 but who does not retire until age 69 with 30 years of service will receive a benefit of 50 percent of average annual compensation. Plan D provides uniform post-normal retirement benefits within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section.

Example 6. (a) Plan E is amended on February 14, 1994, to provide an early retirement window benefit that consists of an unreduced early retirement benefit to employees who terminate employment after attainment of age 55 with 10 years of service and between June 1, 1994, and November 30, 1994. The early retirement window benefit is a single subsidized optional form of benefit. Paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section requires that the subsidized optional form of benefit be currently available (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(2)) to substantially all employees. Section 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(2)(ii)(A)(*2*) provides that age and service requirements are not disregarded in determining the current availability of an optional form of benefit if those requirements must be satisfied within a specified period of time. Thus, the early retirement window benefit is not currently available to an employee unless the employee will satisfy the eligibility requirements for the early retirement window benefit by the close of the early retirement window benefit period. Plan E will fail to satisfy paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section unless substantially all of the employees satisfy the eligibility requirements for the early retirement window benefit by November 30, 1994. However, see § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c)(6), *Example 2,* for an example of how a plan with an early retirement window benefit may be restructured into two component plans, each of which satisfies the safe harbors of this paragraph (b).

(b) A similar analysis would apply if, instead of an unreduced early retirement benefit, the early retirement window benefit consisted of a special schedule of early retirement factors, defined by starting with the plan's usual schedule and then treating each employee eligible for the early retirement window benefit as being five years older than the employee actually is, but not older than the employee's normal retirement age.

Example 7. Plan F generally provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.5 percent of an employee's average annual compensation multiplied by the employee's years of service with the employer. For employees transferred outside of the group of employees covered by the plan, the plan's benefit formula takes into account only years of service prior to the transfer, but determines average annual compensation taking into account section 414(s) compensation both before and after the transfer. Plan F does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(v) of this section with respect to transferred employees, because their benefits are accrued over years of service (i.e., after transfer) that are not taken into account in applying the plan's benefit formula to them. However, see *Example 2* of paragraph (b)(6)(x)(B) of this section for an example of how a plan that continues to take transferred employees' section 414(s) compensation into account after their transfer may still satisfy this paragraph (b).

(3) *Safe harbor for unit credit plans*—(i) *General rule.* A plan satisfies the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(3) for a plan year if it satisfies both of the following requirements:

(A) The plan must satisfy the 133⅓ percent accrual rule of section 411(b)(1)(B).

(B) Each employee's accrued benefit under the plan as of any plan year must be determined by applying the plan's benefit formula to the employee's years of service and (if applicable)

average annual compensation, both determined as of that plan year.

(ii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules in this paragraph (b)(3):

Example. Plan A provides that the accrued benefit of each employee as of any plan year equals the employee's average annual compensation times a percentage that depends on the employee's years of service determined as of that plan year. The percentage is 2 percent for each of the first 10 years of service, plus 1.5 percent for each of the next 10 years of service, plus 2 percent for all additional years of service. Plan A satisfies this paragraph (b)(3).

(4) *Safe harbor for plans using fractional accrual rule*—(i) *General rule.* A plan satisfies the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(4) for a plan year if it satisfies each of the following requirements:

(A) The plan must satisfy the fractional accrual rule of section 411(b)(1)(C).

(B) Each employee's accrued benefit under the plan as of any plan year before the employee reaches normal retirement age must be determined by multiplying the employee's fractional rule benefit (within the meaning of § 1.411(b)–1(b)(3)(ii)(A)) by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service determined as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age.

(C) The plan must satisfy one of the following requirements:

(*1*) Under the plan, it must be impossible for any employee to accrue in a plan year a portion of the normal retirement benefit described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section that is more than one-third larger than the portion of the same benefit accrued in that or any other plan year by any other employee, when each portion of the benefit is expressed as a percentage of each employee's average annual compensation or as a dollar amount. In making this determination, actual and potential employees in the plan with any amount of service at normal retirement must be taken into account (other than employees with more than 33 years of service at normal retirement age). In addition, in the case of a plan that satisfies section 401(l) in form, an employee is treated as accruing benefits at a rate equal to the excess benefit percentage in the case of a defined benefit excess plan or at a rate equal to the gross benefit percentage in the case of an offset plan.

(*2*) The normal retirement benefit under the plan must be a flat benefit that requires a minimum of 25 years of service at normal retirement age for an employee to receive the unreduced flat benefit, determined without regard to section 415. For this purpose, a flat benefit is a benefit that is the same percentage of average annual compensation or the same dollar amount for all employees who have a minimum number of years of service at normal retirement age (e.g., 50 percent of average annual compensation), with a pro rata reduction in the flat benefit for employees who have less than the minimum number of years of service at normal retirement age. An employee is permitted to accrue the maximum benefit permitted under section 415 over a period of less than 25 years, provided that the flat benefit under the plan, determined without regard to section 415, can accrue over no less than 25 years.

(*3*) The plan must satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(i)(C)(*2*) of this section (other than the requirement that the minimum number of years of service for receiving the unreduced flat benefit is at least 25 years), and, for the plan year, the average of the normal accrual rates for all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees must be at least 70 percent of the average of the normal accrual rates for all highly compensated nonexcludable employees. The averages in the preceding sentence are determined taking into account all nonexcludable employees (regardless of whether they benefit under the plan). In addition, contributions and benefits under other plans of the employer are disregarded. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(4)(i)(C)(*3*), normal accrual rates are determined under paragraph (d) of this section.

(ii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(4). In each example, it is assumed that the plan has never permitted employee contributions.

Example 1. Plan A provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 1.6 percent of average annual compensation times each year of service up to 25. Plan A further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year equals the employee's fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age. The greatest benefit that an employee could accrue in any plan year is 1.6 percent of average annual compensation (this is the case for an employee with 25 or fewer years of projected service at normal retirement age). Among potential employees with 33 or fewer years of projected service at normal retirement age, the lowest benefit that an employee could accrue in any plan year is 1.212 percent of average annual compensation (this is the case for an employee with 33 years of projected service at normal retirement age). Plan A satisfies paragraph (b)(4)(i)(C)(*1*) of this section because 1.6 percent is not more than one third larger than 1.212 percent.

Example 2. Plan B provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 1.0 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, and 1.6 percent of average annual compensation above the integration level, times each year of service up to 35. Plan B further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year equals the employee's fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age. For purposes of satisfying the one third larger rule in paragraph (b)(4)(i)(C)(*1*) of this section, because Plan B satisfies section 401(l) in form, all employees with less than 35 projected years of service are assumed to accrue benefits at the rate of 1.6 percent of average annual compensation (the excess benefit percentage under the plan). Plan B satisfies paragraph (b)(4)(i)(C) of this section because all employees with 33 or fewer years of projected service at normal retirement age accrue in each plan year a benefit of 1.6 percent of average annual compensation.

Example 3. Plan C provides a normal retirement benefit equal to four percent of average annual compensation times each year of service up to 10 and one percent of average annual compensation times each year of service in excess of 10 and not in excess of 30. Plan C further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year equals the employee's fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age. The greatest benefit that an employee could accrue in any plan year is four percent of average annual compensation (this is the case for an employee with 10 or fewer years of projected service at normal retirement age). Among employees with 33 or fewer years of projected service at normal retirement age, the lowest benefit that an employee could accrue in a plan year is 1.82 percent of average annual compensation (this is the case of an employee with 33 years of projected service at normal retirement age). Plan C fails to satisfy this paragraph (b)(4) because four percent is more than one third larger than 1.82 percent. See also § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c)(6), *Example 3.*

Example 4. Plan D provides a normal retirement benefit of 100 percent of average annual compensation, reduced by four percentage points for each year of service below 25 the employee has at normal retirement age. Plan D further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year is equal to the employee's fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service at normal retirement age. In the case of an employee who has five years of service as of the current plan year, and who is projected to have 10 years of service at normal retirement age, the employee's fractional rule benefit would be 40 percent of average annual compensation, and the employee's accrued benefit as of the current plan year would be 20 percent of average annual compensation (the fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction of five years over 10 years). Plan D satisfies this paragraph (b)(4).

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4,* except that the normal retirement benefit is 125 percent of average annual compensation, reduced by five percentage points for each year of service below 25 that the employee has at normal retirement age. Plan D satisfies this paragraph (b)(4), even though an employee may accrue the maximum benefit allowed under section 415 (i.e., 100 percent of the participant's average compensation for the high three years of service) in less than 25 years.

Example 6. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the plan determines each employee's accrued benefit by multiplying the employee's projected normal retirement benefit (rather than the fractional rule benefit) by the fraction described in *Example 1.* In determining an employee's projected normal retirement benefit, the plan defines each employee's average annual compensation as the average annual compensation the employee would have at normal retirement age if the employee's annual section 414(s) compensation in future plan years equaled the employee's plan year compensation for

the prior plan year. Under these facts, Plan A does not satisfy paragraph (b)(4)(i)(B) of this section because the employee's accrued benefit is determined on the basis of a projected normal retirement benefit that is not the same as the employee's fractional rule benefit determined in accordance with § 1.411(b)–1(b)(3)(ii)(A).

Example 7. Plan E provides a normal retirement benefit of 50 percent of average annual compensation, with a pro rata reduction for employees with less than 30 years of service at normal retirement age. Plan E further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year is equal to the employee's fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service at normal retirement age. For purposes of determining this fraction, the plan limits the years of service taken into account for an employee to the number of years the employee has participated in the plan. However, all years of service (including years of service before the employee commenced participation in the plan) are taken into account in determining an employee's normal retirement benefit under the plan's benefit formula. Plan E fails to satisfy this paragraph (b)(4) because the years of service over which benefits accrue differ from the years of service used in applying the benefit formula under the plan. See paragraph (b)(2)(v) of this section.

Example 8. (a) Plan F provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 2.0 percent of average annual compensation, plus 0.65 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, for each year of service up to 25. Plan F further provides that an employee's accrued benefit as of any plan year equals the sum of—

(1) The employee's fractional rule benefit (determined as if the normal retirement benefit under the plan equaled 2.0 percent of average annual compensation for each year of service up to 25) multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service as of the plan year and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age; plus

(2) 0.65 percent of the employee's average annual compensation above covered compensation multiplied by the employee's years of service (up to 25) as of the current plan year.

(b) Although Plan F satisfies the fractional accrual rule of section 411(b)(1)(C), the plan fails to satisfy this paragraph (b)(4) because the plan does not determine employees' accrued benefits in accordance with paragraph (b)(4)(i)(B) of this section.

(5) *Safe harbor for insurance contract plans.* A plan satisfies the safe harbor in this paragraph (b)(5) if it satisfies each of the following requirements:

(i) The plan must satisfy the accrual rule of section 411(b)(1)(F).

(ii) The plan must be an insurance contract plan within the meaning of section 412(i).

(iii) The benefit formula under the plan must be one that would satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(4) of this section if the stated normal retirement benefit under the formula accrued ratably over each employee's period of plan participation through normal retirement age in accordance with paragraph (b)(4)(i)(B) of this section. Thus, the benefit formula may not recognize years of service before an employee commenced participation in the plan because, otherwise, the definition of years of service for determining the normal retirement benefit would differ from the definition of years of service for determining the accrued benefit under paragraph (b)(4)(i)(B) of this section. See paragraph (b)(4)(ii), *Example 7,* of this section. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an insurance contract plan adopted and in effect on September 19, 1991, may continue to recognize years of service prior to an employee's participation in the plan for an employee who is a participant in the plan on that date to the extent provided by the benefit formula in the plan on such date.

(iv) The scheduled premium payments under an individual or group insurance contract used to fund an employee's normal retirement benefit must be level annual payments to normal retirement age. Thus, payments may not be scheduled to cease before normal retirement age.

(v) The premium payments for an employee who continues benefiting after normal retirement age must be equal to the amount necessary to fund additional benefits that accrue under the plan's benefit formula for the plan year.

(vi) Experience gains, dividends, forfeitures, and similar items must be used solely to reduce future premiums.

(vii) All benefits must be funded through contracts of the same series. Among other requirements, contracts of the same series must have cash values based on the same terms (including interest and mortality assumptions)

and the same conversion rights. A plan does not fail to satisfy this requirement, however, if any change in the contract series or insurer applies on the same terms to all employees. But see § 1.401(a)(4)–5(a)(4), *Example 12* (change in insurer considered a plan amendment subject to § 1.401(a)(4)–5(a)).

(viii) If permitted disparity is taken into account, the normal retirement benefit stated under the plan's benefit formula must satisfy § 1.401(l)–3. For this purpose, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance in § 1.401(l)–3(b)(2)(i) or (b)(3)(i), respectively, adjusted in accordance with § 1.401(l)–3(d)(9) and (e), is reduced by multiplying the factor by 0.80.

(6) *Use of safe harbors not precluded by certain plan provisions*—(i) *In general.* A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b) merely because the plan contains one or more of the provisions described in this paragraph (b)(6). Unless otherwise provided, any such provision must apply uniformly to all employees.

(ii) *Section 401(l) permitted disparity.* The plan takes permitted disparity into account in a manner that satisfies section 401(l) in form. Thus, differences in employees' benefits under the plan attributable to uniform disparities permitted under § 1.401(l)–3 (including differences in disparities that are deemed uniform under § 1.401(l)–3(c)(2)) do not cause a plan to fail to satisfy this paragraph (b).

(iii) *Different entry dates.* The plan provides one or more entry dates during the plan year as permitted by section 410(a)(4).

(iv) *Certain conditions on accruals.* The plan provides that an employee's accrual for the plan year is less than a full accrual (including a zero accrual) because of a plan provision permitted by the year-of-participation rules of section 411(b)(4).

(v) *Certain limits on accruals.* The plan limits benefits otherwise provided under the benefit formula or accrual method to a maximum dollar amount or to a maximum percentage of average annual compensation (e.g., by limiting service taken into account in the benefit formula) or in accordance with section 401(a)(5)(D), applies the limits of section 415, or limits the dollar amount of compensation taken into account in determining benefits.

(vi) *Dollar accrual per uniform unit of service.* The plan determines accruals based on the same dollar amount for each uniform unit of service (not to exceed one week) performed by each employee with the same number of years of service under the plan during the plan year. The preceding sentence applies solely for purposes of the unit credit safe harbor in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(vii) *Prior benefits accrued under a different formula.* The plan determines benefits for years of service after a fresh-start date for all employees under a benefit formula and accrual method that differ from the benefit formula and accrual method previously used to determine benefit accruals for employees in a fresh-start group for years of service before the fresh-start date. This paragraph (b)(6)(vii) applies solely to plans that satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) with respect to the fresh start.

(viii) *Employee contributions.* The plan is a contributory DB plan that would satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section if the plan's benefit formula provided benefits at employees' employer-provided benefit rates determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b). This paragraph (b)(6)(viii) does not apply to a plan tested under paragraph (b)(4) or (b)(5) of this section unless the plan satisfies one of the methods in § 1.401(a)(4)–6 (b)(4) through (b)(6). A minimum benefit added to the plan solely to satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b)(3) is not taken into account in determining whether this paragraph (b)(6)(viii) is satisfied.

(ix) *Certain subsidized optional forms.* The plan provides a subsidized optional form of benefit that is available to fewer than substantially all employees because the optional form of benefit has been eliminated prospectively as provided in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(3).

(x) *Lower benefits for HCEs*—(A) *General rule.* The benefits (including any subsidized optional form of benefit) provided to one or more HCEs under the plan are inherently less valuable to those HCEs (determined by applying the principles of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(d)(4)) than the benefits that would otherwise be provided to those HCEs if the plan

satisfied this paragraph (b) (determined without regard to this paragraph (b)(6)(x)). These inherently less valuable benefits are deemed to satisfy this paragraph (b).

(B) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(6)(x):

Example 1. Plan A would satisfy this paragraph (b) (determined without regard to this paragraph (b)(6)(x)), except for the fact that it fails to satisfy the requirement of paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section (i.e., a subsidized optional form must be available to substantially all employees on similar terms). Each subsidized optional form in the plan is available to all the NHCEs on similar terms, but one of the subsidized optional forms of benefit is not available to any of the HCEs. Plan A satisfies this paragraph (b), because Plan A is a safe harbor plan with respect to the NHCEs and provides inherently less valuable benefits to the HCEs.

Example 2. (a) Plan B would satisfy this paragraph (b) (determined without regard to this paragraph (b)(6)(x)), except for the fact that some employees are not being credited with years of service under the plan, but are continuing to accrue benefits as a result of compensation increases. These are employees who have been transferred from the employer that sponsors Plan B to another member of the controlled group whose employees are not covered by Plan B. For these employees, Plan B fails to satisfy the requirement of paragraph (b)(2)(v) of this section (i.e., each employee's benefit must accrue over the same years of service used in applying the benefit formula).

(b) Plan B is restructured into two component plans under the provisions of § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c). One component plan (Component Plan B1) consists of all NHCEs who are not being credited with years of service under the plan's benefit formula but are continuing to accrue benefits as a result of compensation increases, and the other component plan (Component Plan B2) consists of the balance of the employees.

(c) Component Plan B1 satisfies this section and section 410(b), because it benefits only NHCEs.

(d) Component Plan B2 is treated as satisfying this paragraph (b), because Plan B would satisfy this paragraph (b) (determined without regard to this paragraph (b)(6)(x)) with respect to the employees in Component Plan B2 but for the fact that it provides inherently less valuable benefits to some HCEs in that component plan (i.e., the employees who are credited only with compensation increases rather than both years of service and compensation increases).

(e) Under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c), if Component Plan B2 satisfies section 410(b), then Plan B satisfies this section.

(xi) *Multiple formulas*—(A) *General rule.* The plan provides that an employee's benefit under the plan is the greater of the benefits determined under two or more formulas, or is the sum of the benefits determined under two or more formulas. This paragraph (b)(6)(xi) does not apply to a plan unless each of the formulas under the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(6)(xi) (B) through (D) of this section.

(B) *Sole formulas.* The formulas must be the only formulas under the plan.

(C) *Separate testing.* Each of the formulas must separately satisfy the uniformity requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section and also separately satisfy one of the safe harbors in paragraphs (b)(3) through (b)(5) of this section. A formula that is available solely to some or all NHCEs is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(C).

(D) *Availability*—(*1*) *General rule.* All of the formulas must be available on the same terms to all employees.

(*2*) *Formulas for NHCEs.* A formula does not fail to be available on the same terms to all employees merely because the formula is not available to any HCEs, but is available to some or all NHCEs on the same terms as all of the other formulas in the plan.

(*3*) *Top-heavy formulas.* Rules parallel to those in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(4)(vi)(D)(*3*) apply in the case of a plan that provides the greater of the benefits under two or more formulas, one of which is a top-heavy formula. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(D)(*3*), a top-heavy formula is a formula that provides a benefit equal to the minimum benefit described in section 416(c)(1) (taking into account, if applicable, the modification in section 416(h)(2)(A)(ii)(I)).

(E) *Provisions may be applied more than once.* The provisions of this paragraph (b)(6)(xi) may be applied more than once. See § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(4)(vi)(E) for an example of the application of these provisions more than once.

(F) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(6)(xi):

Example 1. Under Plan A, each employee's benefit equals the sum of the benefits determined under two formulas. The first formula provides one percent of average annual compensation per year of service. The second formula provides $10 per year of service. Plan A is eligible to apply the rules in this paragraph (b)(6)(xi).

Example 2. Under Plan B, each employee's benefit equals the greater of the benefits determined under two formulas. The first formula provides $15 per year of service and is available to all employees who complete at least 500 hours of service during the plan year. The second formula provides 1.5 percent of average annual compensation per year of service and is available to all employees who complete at least 1,000 hours of service during the plan year. Plan B does not satisfy this paragraph (b)(6)(xi) because the two formulas are not available on the same terms to all employees.

Example 3. Under Plan C, each employee's benefit equals the greater of the benefits determined under two formulas. The first formula provides $15 per year of service and is available to all employees who complete at least 1,000 hours of service during the plan year. The second formula provides the minimum benefit described in section 416(c)(1) and is available to all non-key employees who complete at least 1,000 hours of service during the plan year. Plan C does not satisfy the general rule in paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(D)(*1*) of this section because the two formulas are not available on the same terms to all employees (i.e., the second formula is only available to all non-key employees). Nonetheless, because the second formula is a top-heavy formula, the special availability rules for top-heavy formulas in paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(D)(*3*) of this section apply. Thus, the second formula does not fail to be available on the same terms as the first formula merely because the second formula is available solely to all non-key employees on the same terms. This is true even if the plan conditions the availability of the second formula on the plan's being top-heavy for the plan year.

Example 4. Under Plan D, each employee's benefit equals the greater of the benefits determined under two formulas. The first formula is available to all employees and provides a benefit equal to 1.5 percent of average annual compensation per year of service. The second formula is only available to NHCEs and provides a benefit equal to two percent of average annual compensation per year of service, minus two percent of the primary insurance amount per year of service. The amount of the offset is not limited to the maximum permitted offset under § 1.401(l)–3(b). Under paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(D)(*2*) of this section, both formulas are treated as available to all employees on the same terms. Furthermore, even though the second formula does not satisfy any of the safe harbors in this paragraph (b), the formula is deemed to satisfy the separate testing requirement under paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(C) of this section, because the formula is available solely to some or all NHCEs.

Example 5. Plan E is a unit credit plan that provides a benefit of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service to all employees. In 1994, the plan is amended to provide a benefit of two percent of average annual compensation per year of service after 1993, while continuing to provide a benefit of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service for all years of service before 1994. Thus, the plan's amended benefit formula provides a benefit equal to the sum of the benefits determined under two benefit formulas: one percent of average annual compensation per year of service, plus one percent of average annual compensation per year of service after 1993. Plan E satisfies this paragraph (b)(6)(xi).

Example 6. The facts are the same as in *Example 5*, except that the plan amendment in 1994 decreases the benefit to 0.75 percent of average annual compensation per year of service after 1993, while retaining the one-percent formula for all years of service before 1994. Thus, the plan's amended benefit formula provides a benefit equal to the sum of the benefits determined under two benefit formulas: 0.75 percent of average annual compensation per year of service, plus 0.25 percent of average annual compensation per year of service before 1994. Under these facts, the second formula does not separately satisfy any of the safe harbors in this paragraph (b) because the years of service over which each employee's benefit accrues under the second formula (i.e., all years of service) are not the same years of service that are taken into account in applying the benefit formula under the plan to that employee (i.e., years of service before 1994). See paragraph (b)(2)(v) of this section. But see paragraph (b)(6)(vii) of this section and § 1.401(a)(4)–13, which provide rules under which Plan E, as amended, may be able to satisfy this paragraph (b).

Example 7. Plan F provides a benefit to all employees of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service. Employee M was hired as the president of the employer in December 1994 and was not a HCE under section 414(q) during the 1994 calendar plan year. In 1994, Plan F is amended to provide a benefit that is the greater of the benefit determined under the pre-existing formula in the plan and a new formula that is available solely to some NHCEs (including Employee M). The new formula does not satisfy the uniformity requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, because it provides a different benefit for some NHCEs than for other NHCEs. As a result of this change, Employee M receives a higher accrual in 1994 than the

NHCEs who are not eligible for the new formula. In 1995, when Employee M first becomes a HCE, the second formula no longer applies to Employee M. It would be inconsistent with the purpose of preventing discrimination in favor of HCEs for Plan F to use the special rule for a formula that is available solely to some or all NHCEs to satisfy the separate testing requirement of paragraph (b)(6)(xi)(C) of this section for the 1994 calendar plan year. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(2).

(c) *General test for nondiscrimination in amount of benefits*—(1) *General rule.* The employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if each rate group under the plan satisfies section 410(b). For purposes of this paragraph (c)(1), a rate group exists under a plan for each HCE and consists of the HCE and all other employees (both HCEs and NHCEs) who have a normal accrual rate greater than or equal to the HCE's normal accrual rate, and who also have a most valuable accrual rate greater than or equal to the HCE's most valuable accrual rate. Thus, an employee is in the rate group for each HCE who has a normal accrual rate less than or equal to the employee's normal accrual rate, and who also has a most valuable accrual rate less than or equal to the employee's most valuable accrual rate.

(2) *Satisfaction of section 410(b) by a rate group.* For purposes of determining whether a rate group satisfies section 410(b), the same rules apply as in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(3). See paragraph (c)(4) of this section and § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(4), *Example 3* through *Example 5,* for examples of this rule.

(3) *Certain violations disregarded.* A plan is deemed to satisfy paragraph (c)(1) of this section if the plan would satisfy that paragraph by treating as not benefiting no more than five percent of the HCEs in the plan, and the Commissioner determines that, on the basis of all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the plan does not discriminate with respect to the amount of employer-provided benefits. For this purpose, five percent of the number of HCEs may be determined by rounding to the nearest whole number (e.g., 1.4 rounds to 1 and 1.5 rounds to 2). Among the relevant factors that the Commissioner may consider in making this determination are—

(i) The extent to which the plan has failed the test in paragraph (c)(1) of this section;

(ii) The extent to which the failure is for reasons other than the design of the plan;

(iii) Whether the HCEs causing the failure are five-percent owners or are among the highest paid nonexcludable employees;

(iv) Whether the failure is attributable to an event that is not expected to recur (e.g., a plant closing); and

(v) The extent to which the failure is attributable to benefits accrued under a prior benefit structure or to benefits accrued when a participant was not a HCE.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (c):

Example 1. (a) Employer X has 1100 nonexcludable employees, N1 through N1000, who are NHCEs, and H1 through H100, who are HCEs. Employer X maintains Plan A, a defined benefit plan that benefits all of these nonexcludable employees. The normal and most valuable accrual rates (determined as a percentage of average annual compensation) for the employees in Plan A for the 1994 plan year are listed in the following table.

Employee	Normal accrual rate	Most valuable accrual rate
N1 through N100	1.0	1.4
N101 through N500	1.5	3.0
N501 through N750	2.0	2.65
N751 through N1000	2.3	2.8
H1 through H50	1.5	2.0
H51 through H100	2.0	2.65

(b) There are 100 rate groups in Plan A because there are 100 HCEs in Plan A.

(c) Rate group 1 consists of H1 and all those employees who have a normal accrual rate greater than or equal to H1's normal accrual rate (1.5 percent) and who also have a most valuable accrual rate greater than or equal to H1's most valuable accrual rate (2.0 percent). Thus, rate group 1 consists of H1 through H100 and N101 through N1000.

(d) Rate group 1 satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) because the ratio percentage of the rate group is 90 percent, i.e., 90 percent (the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group) divided by 100 percent (the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group).

(e) Because H1 through H50 have the same normal accrual rates and the same most valuable accrual rates, the rate group with respect to each of them is identical. Thus, because rate group 1 satisfies section 410(b), rate groups 2 through 50 also satisfy section 410(b).

(f) Rate group 51 consists of H51 and all those employees who have a normal accrual rate greater than or equal to H51's normal accrual rate (2.0 percent) and who also have a most valuable accrual rate greater than or equal to H51's most valuable accrual rate (2.65 percent). Thus, rate group 51 consists of H51 through H100 and N501 through N1000. (Even though N101 through N500 have a most valuable accrual rate (3.0 percent) greater than H51's most valuable accrual rate (2.65 percent), they are not included in this rate group because their normal accrual rate (1.5 percent) is less than H51's normal accrual rate (2.0 percent).)

(g) Rate group 51 satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) because the ratio percentage of the rate group is 100 percent, i.e., 50 percent (the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group) divided by 50 percent (the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are in the rate group).

(h) Because H51 through H100 have the same normal accrual rates and the same most valuable accrual rates, the rate group with respect to each of them is identical. Thus, because rate group 51 satisfies section 410(b), rate groups 52 through 100 also satisfy section 410(b).

(i) The employer-provided benefits under Plan A are nondiscriminatory in amount because each rate group under the plan satisfies section 410(b).

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that H96 has a most valuable accrual rate of 3.5. Each of the rate groups is the same as in *Example 1,* except that rate group 96 consists solely of H96 because no other employee has a most valuable accrual rate greater than 3.5. Because the plan would satisfy the test in paragraph (c)(1) of this section by treating H96 (who constitutes less than five percent of the HCEs in the plan) as not benefiting, the Commissioner may determine under paragraph (c)(3) of this section that, on the basis of all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the plan does not discriminate with respect to the amount of benefits.

(d) *Determination of accrual rates*—(1) *Definitions*—(i) *Normal accrual rate.* The normal accrual rate for an employee for a plan year is the increase in the employee's accrued benefit (within the meaning of section 411(a)(7)(A)(i)) during the measurement period, divided by the employee's testing service during the measurement period, and expressed either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the employee's average annual compensation.

(ii) *Most valuable accrual rate.* The most valuable accrual rate for an employee for a plan year is the increase in the employee's most valuable optional form of payment of the accrued benefit during the measurement period, divided by the employee's testing service during the measurement period, and expressed either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the employee's average annual compensation. The employee's most valuable optional form of payment of the accrued benefit is determined by calculating for the employee the normalized QJSA associated with the accrued benefit that is potentially payable in the current or any future plan year at any age under the plan and selecting the largest (per year of testing service). If the plan provides a QSUPP, the most valuable accrual rate also takes into account the QSUPP payable in conjunction with the QJSA at each age under the plan. Thus, the most valuable accrual rate reflects the value of all benefits accrued or treated as accrued under section 411(d)(6) that are payable in any form and at any time under the plan, including early retirement benefits, retirement-type subsidies, early retirement window benefits, and QSUPPs. In addition, the most valuable accrual rate must take into account any such benefits that are available during a plan year, even if the benefits cease to be available before the end of the current or any future plan year.

(iii) *Measurement period.* The measurement period can be—

(A) The current plan year;

(B) The current plan year and all prior years; or

(C) The current plan year and all prior and future years.

(iv) *Testing service*—(A) *General rule.* Testing service means an employee's years of service as defined in the plan for purposes of applying the benefit formula under the plan, subject to the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(iv)(B) of this section. Alternatively, testing service means service determined for all employees in a reasonable manner

that satisfies the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(iv)(B) of this section. For example, the number of plan years that an employee has benefited under the plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–3(a) is an acceptable definition of testing service because it determines service in a reasonable manner and satisfies paragraph (d)(1)(iv)(B) of this section. See also § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) (additional limits on service that may be taken into account as testing service).

(B) *Requirements for testing service*—(*1*) *Employees not credited with years of service under the benefit formula.* An employee must be credited with testing service for any year in which the employee benefits under the plan (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–3(a)), unless that year is part of a period of service that may not be taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3). This rule applies even if the employee does not receive service credit under the benefit formula for that year (e.g., because of a service cap in the benefit formula or because of a transfer out of the group of employees covered by the plan).

(*2*) *Current year testing service.* In the case of a measurement period that is the current plan year, testing service for the plan year equals one (1).

(2) *Rules of application*—(i) *Consistency requirement.* Both normal and most valuable accrual rates must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees for the plan year. Thus, for example, the same measurement periods must be used, and the rules of this paragraph (d)(2) and any available options described in paragraph (d)(3) of this section must be applied consistently. If plan benefits are not expressed as straight life annuities beginning at employees' testing ages, they must be normalized.

(ii) *Determining plan benefits, service and compensation*—(A) *In general.* Potential plan benefits, testing service, and average annual compensation must be determined in a reasonable manner, reflecting actual or projected service and compensation only through the end of the measurement period. The determination of potential plan benefits is not reasonable if it incorporates an assumption that, in future years, an employee's compensation will increase or the employee will terminate employment before the employee's testing age (other than the assumptions under paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section that the employee's service will end in connection with the payment of each potential QJSA in future years).

(B) Section 415 limits. For purposes of determining accrual rates under this paragraph (d), plan benefits are generally determined without regard to whether those benefits are permitted to be paid under section 415. However, plan provisions implementing any of the limits of section 415 may be taken into account in applying this paragraph (d) if the plan does not provide for benefit increases resulting from section 415(d)(1) adjustments for former employees who were employees in a plan year in which such plan provisions were taken into account in applying this paragraph (d). If the limits of section 415 are taken into account under this paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(B) as of the end of the measurement period, they must also be taken into account as of the beginning of the measurement period. If the limits of section 415 are not taken into account in testing the plan for the current plan year, but were taken into account in testing the plan for the preceding plan year, any resulting increase in the accrued benefits taken into account in testing the plan is treated as an increase in accrued benefits during the current plan year.

(iii) *Requirements for measurement period that includes future years*—(A) *Discriminatory pattern of accruals.* A measurement period that includes future years (as described in paragraph (d)(1)(iii)(C) of this section) may not be used if the pattern of accruals under the plan discriminates in favor of HCEs (i.e., if projected benefits for HCEs are relatively frontloaded when compared to the degree of front loading or backloading for NHCEs). This determination is made based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances.

(B) *Future-period limitation.* Future years beginning after an employee's attainment of the employee's testing age (or after the employee's assumed termination in the case of most valuable accrual rates) may not be included in the measurement period.

(3) *Optional rules*—(i) *Imputation of permitted disparity.* The disparity permitted under section 401(l) may be imputed in accordance with the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–7.

(ii) *Grouping of accrual rates*—(A) *General rule.* An employer may treat all employees who have accrual rates within a specified range above and below a midpoint rate chosen by the employer as having an accrual rate equal to the midpoint rate within that range. Accrual rates within a given range may not be grouped under this paragraph (d)(3)(ii) if the accrual rates of HCEs within the range generally are significantly higher than the accrual rates of NHCEs in the range. The specified ranges within which all employees are treated as having the same accrual rate may not overlap and may be no larger than provided in paragraph (d)(3)(ii)(B) of this section. Accrual rates of employees that are not within any of these specified ranges are determined without regard to this paragraph (d)(3)(ii).

(B) *Size of specified ranges.* In the case of normal accrual rates, the lowest and highest accrual rates in the range must be within five percent (not five percentage points) of the midpoint rate. In the case of most valuable accrual rates, the lowest and highest accrual rates in the range must be within 15 percent (not 15 percentage points) of the midpoint rate. If accrual rates are determined as a percentage of average annual compensation, the lowest and highest accrual rates need not be within five percent (or 15 percent) of the midpoint rate, if they are no more than one twentieth of a percentage point above or below the midpoint rate.

(iii) *Fresh-start alternative*—(A) *General rule.* Notwithstanding the definition of measurement period provided in paragraph (d)(1)(iii) of this section, a measurement period for a fresh-start group is permitted to be limited to the period beginning after the fresh-start date with respect to that group if the plan makes a fresh start that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) (without regard to § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(2)(i) and (ii)). If the measurement period is so limited or the measurement period is the plan year (whether or not so limited), any compensation adjustments during the measurement period to the frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date that are permitted under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) may be disregarded in determining the increase in accrued benefits during the measurement period, but only if—

(*1*) The plan makes a fresh start as of the fresh-start date that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) (without regard to § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(2)(ii)) in conjunction with a bona fide amendment to the benefit formula or accrual method under the plan; and

(*2*) The amendment provides for adjustments to employees' frozen accrued benefits as of the fresh-start date in accordance with the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d).

(B) *Application of consistency requirements.* Limiting the application of the fresh-start alternative in this paragraph (d)(3)(iii) to a fresh-start group that consists of fewer than all employees does not violate the consistency requirement of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section.

(iv) *Floor on most valuable accrual rate.* In lieu of determining an employee's most valuable accrual rate in accordance with the definition in paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section, an employer may determine an employee's most valuable accrual rate for the current plan year as the employee's highest most valuable accrual rate determined for any prior plan year. This option may be used only if the employee's normal accrual rate has not changed significantly from the normal accrual rate for the relevant prior plan year and, there have been no plan amendments in the interim period since that prior plan year that affect the determination of most valuable accrual rates.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d):

Example 1. The employees in Plan A have the following normal accrual rates (expressed as percentage of average annual compensation): 0.8 percent, 0.83 percent, 0.9 percent, 1.9 percent, 2.0 percent, and 2.1 percent. Because the first three rates are within a range of no more than one twentieth of a percentage point above or below 0.85 percent (a midpoint rate chosen by the employer), the employer may treat the employees who have those rates as having an accrual rate of

0.85 percent (provided that the accrual rates of HCEs within the range are not significantly higher than the accrual rates for NHCEs within the range). Because the last three rates are within a range of no more than five percent above or below 2.0 percent (a midpoint rate chosen by the employer), the employer may treat the employees who have those rates as having an accrual rate of 2.0 percent (provided that the accrual rates of HCEs within the range are not significantly higher than the accrual rates for NHCEs within the range).

Example 2. Employer X maintains a plan under which headquarters employees accrue a benefit of 1.25 percent of average compensation for the first 10 years of service and 0.75 percent of average compensation for subsequent years of service, while all other employees accrue a benefit of one percent of compensation for all years of service. Assume that the group of headquarters employees does not satisfy section 410(b). Under these facts, the pattern of accruals under the plan discriminates in favor of HCEs, and, therefore, under paragraph (d)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, the measurement period for determining accrual rates under the plan may not include future service.

(e) *Compensation rules*—(1) *In general.* This paragraph (e) provides rules for determining average annual compensation. Safe harbor plans that satisfy paragraph (b) of this section must determine benefits either as a dollar amount unrelated to employees' compensation or as a percentage of each employee's average annual compensation. In contrast, plans that must satisfy the general test of paragraph (c) of this section are not required under this section to determine benefits under any particular definition of compensation or in any particular manner, but the accrual rates used in testing these plans must be expressed either as a dollar amount or determined as a percentage of each employee's average annual compensation.

(2) *Average annual compensation*—(i) *General rule.* An employee's average annual compensation is the average of the employee's annual section 414(s) compensation determined over the averaging period in the employee's compensation history during which the average of the employee's annual section 414(s) compensation is the highest. For this purpose, an averaging period must consist of three or more consecutive 12-month periods, but need not be longer than the employee's period of employment. An employee's compensation history may begin at any time, but must be continuous, be no shorter than the averaging period, and end in the current plan year.

(ii) *Certain permitted modifications to average annual compensation*—(A) *Use of plan year compensation.* If the measurement period for determination of accrual rates is the current plan year, or the plan is an accumulation plan that satisfies paragraph (b) of this section, then plan year compensation may be substituted for average annual compensation.

(B) *Drop-out years.* Any of the following types of 12-month periods in an employee's compensation history may be disregarded in determining the employee's average annual compensation (including for purposes of the requirement to average section 414(s) compensation over consecutive 12-month periods), but only if the plan disregards the employee's compensation for those periods in determining benefits—

(*1*) The 12-month period in which the employee terminates employment;

(*2*) All 12-month periods in which the employee performs no services; or

(*3*) All 12-month periods in which the employee performs services for less than a specified number of hours or specified period of time in the 12-month period. The specified number of hours or specified period of time may be selected by the employer, but may not exceed three quarters of the time that an employee in the same job category working on a full-time basis would perform services during that 12-month period.

(C) *Drop-out months within 12-month periods.* If a plan determines an employee's average annual compensation using 12-month periods that do not end on a fixed date (e.g., average annual compensation as of a date is defined as the average of the employee's section 414(s) compensation for the 60 consecutive months within the compensation history in which the average is highest), then, for purposes of determining a 12-month period, any of the following type of months may be disregarded (including for purposes of the requirement to average section 414(s) compensation over consecutive 12-month periods), but

only if the plan disregards the employee's compensation for those months in determining benefits—

(*1*) The month in which the employee terminates employment;

(*2*) All months in which the employee performs no services; or

(*3*) All months in which the employee performs services for less than a specified number of hours or specified period of time in the month. The specified number of hours or specified period of time may be selected by the employer, but may not exceed three quarters of the time that an employee in the same job category working on a full-time basis would perform services during that month.

(D) *Employees working less than full-time.* In the case of an employee who normally works less than full-time, the rules in paragraphs (e)(2)(ii)(B)(*3*) and (e)(2)(ii)(C)(*3*) of this section may be applied in relation to that employee's normal work schedule (instead of a full- time employee's work schedule) by prorating the specified number of hours or specified period of time, based on the employee's normal work schedule as a fraction of a full-time schedule.

(E) *Exception from consecutive-periods requirement for certain plans.* The requirement that the periods taken into account under paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section be consecutive does not apply in the case of a plan that is not a section 401(l) plan, provided that it does not take permitted disparity into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–7. This paragraph (e)(2)(ii)(E) applies only if the plan does not take into account whether 12-month periods of compensation are consecutive in determining average compensation for purposes of calculating benefits.

(iii) *Consistency requirements.* Average annual compensation must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees.

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (e):

Example 1. Plan A is a defined benefit plan. Plan A determines benefits on the basis of the average of each employee's annual compensation for the five consecutive plan years (or the employee's period of employment, if shorter) during the employee's compensation history in which the average of the employee's annual compensation is the highest. The compensation history used for this purpose is the last 10 plan years, plus the current plan year. In determining compensation for each plan year in the compensation history, Plan A defines compensation using a single definition that satisfies section 414(s) as a safe harbor definition under § 1.414(s)–1(c). Plan A determines benefits on the basis of average annual compensation.

Example 2. Plan B is a defined benefit plan. Plan B determines benefits on the basis of the average of each employee's compensation for the five consecutive 12-month periods (or the employee's period of employment, if shorter) during the employee's compensation history in which the average of the employee's annual compensation is the highest. The compensation history used for this purpose is the 10 consecutive 12-month periods ending on the employee's termination date. In determining the average, Plan B disregards all months in which the employee performs services for less than 100 hours (60 percent of a full-time work schedule of 173 hours). In the case of an employee whose normal work schedule is less than a full-time schedule, Plan B disregards all months in which that employee performs services for less than 60 percent of the employee's normal work schedule. Plan B defines compensation for each 12-month period using a single definition that satisfies § 1.414(s)–1. Plan B determines benefits on the basis of average annual compensation.

Example 3. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that, for plan years prior to 1996, the compensation for a plan year was determined under a rate of pay definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s), while, for plan years after 1995, the compensation for a plan year is determined using a definition that satisfies section 414(s) as a safe harbor definition under § 1.414(s)–1(c).

(b) The underlying definition of compensation for each plan year in the employee's compensation history is section 414(s) compensation, because for each plan year the definition satisfies the requirements for section 414(s) compensation under § 1.401(a)(4)–12. Therefore, Plan A determines benefits on the basis of average annual compensation, even though the underlying definition used to measure the amount of compensation for each plan year in an employee's compensation history is not the same for all plan years.

Example 4. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan A determines benefits on the basis of the average of the employee's annual section 414(s) compensation for the five consecutive 12-month periods ending on June 30 during the employee's compensation history in which the average is highest. An employee's compensation history begins when the employee commences

participation in the plan and ends in the current plan year. In the case of an employee with less than five consecutive years of plan participation as of June 30, the compensation history is extended prior to the employee's commencement of participation to include the five consecutive 12-month periods ending on June 30 of the current plan year (or the employee's total period of employment, if shorter). Plan A determines benefits on the basis of average annual compensation.

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4,* except that Plan A determines benefits on the basis of the average of each employee's compensation for the employee's entire compensation history. Plan A determines benefits on the basis of average annual compensation.

(f) *Special rules*—(1) *In general.* The special rules in this paragraph (f) apply for purposes of applying the provisions of this section to a defined benefit plan. Any special rule provided in this paragraph (f) that is optional must, if used, apply uniformly to all employees.

(2) *Certain qualified disability benefits.* In general, qualified disability benefits (within the meaning of section 411(a)(9)) are not taken into account under this section. However, a qualified disability benefit that results from the crediting of compensation or service for a period of disability in the same manner as actual compensation or service is credited under a plan's benefit formula is permitted to be taken into account under this section as an accrued benefit upon the employee's return to service with the employer following the period of disability, provided that the qualified disability benefit is then treated in the same manner as an accrued benefit for all purposes under the plan.

(3) *Accruals after normal retirement age*—(i) *General rule.* An employee's accruals for any plan year after the plan year in which the employee attains normal retirement age are taken into account for purposes of this section. However, any plan provision that provides for increases in an employee's accrued benefit solely because the employee has delayed commencing benefits beyond the normal retirement age applicable to the employee under the plan may be disregarded, but only if—

(A) The same uniform normal retirement age applies to all employees; and

(B) The percentage factor used to increase the employee's accrued benefit is no greater than the largest percentage factor that could be applied to increase actuarially the employee's accrued benefit using any standard mortality table and any standard interest rate.

(ii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (f)(3). In each example, it is assumed that the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (f)(3)(i)(A) and (B) of this section.

Example 1. Plan A provides a benefit of two percent of average annual compensation per year of service for all employees. In addition, Plan A provides an actuarial increase in an employee's accrued benefit of six percent for each year that an employee defers commencement of benefits beyond normal retirement age. For employees who continue in service beyond normal retirement age, the employee's two-percent accrual for the current plan year is offset by the six-percent actuarial increase, as permitted under section 411(b)(1)(H)(iii)(II). For purposes of this section, the actuarial increase (and hence the offset) may be disregarded, and thus all employees may be treated as if they were accruing at the rate of two percent of average annual compensation per year.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the employee's two- percent accrual for the current plan year is not offset by the six-percent actuarial increase. The employer may disregard the actuarial increase and thus may treat all employees as if they were accruing at the rate of two percent of average annual compensation per year.

(4) *Early retirement window benefits*—(i) *General rule.* In applying the requirements of this section, all early retirement benefits, retirement-type subsidies, QSUPPs, and other optional forms of benefit under a plan, and changes in the plan's benefit formula, are taken into account regardless of whether they are permanent features of the plan or are offered only to employees whose employment terminates within a limited period of time. Additional rules and examples relevant to the testing of early retirement window benefits are found in *Example 6* of paragraph (b)(2)(vi) of this section; paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A)(2), *Example 2* of paragraph (c)(2), paragraph (d)(3), and *Example 3* of paragraph (e)(1)(iii) of § 1.401(a)(4)–4; paragraph (c)(4)(i) and *Example 2* of paragraph (c)(6) of

§ 1.401(a)(4)–9; and the definition of benefit formula in § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(ii) Special rules—(A) *Year in which early retirement window benefit taken into account.* Notwithstanding paragraph (f)(4)(i) of this section, an early retirement window benefit is disregarded for purposes of determining whether a plan satisfies this section with respect to an employee for all plan years other than the first plan year in which the benefit is currently available (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(2)) to the employee. For purposes of this paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(A), in determining which plan years the benefit is currently available, an early retirement window benefit that consists of a temporary change in the plan's benefit formula is treated as an optional form of benefit.

(B) *Treatment of early retirement window benefit that consists of temporary change in benefit formula.* An early retirement window benefit is disregarded for purposes of determining an employee's normal accrual rate, even if the early retirement window benefit consists of a temporary change in a plan's benefit formula. However, if an early retirement window benefit consists of a temporary change in a plan's benefit formula, the plan does not satisfy paragraph (b) of this section during the period for which the change is effective unless the plan satisfies paragraph (b) of this section both reflecting the temporary change in the benefit formula and disregarding that change.

(C) *Effect of early retirement window benefit on most valuable accrual rate.* In determining an employee's most valuable optional form of payment of the accrued benefit (which is used in determining the employee's most valuable accrual rate under paragraphs (d)(1)(ii) and (f)(4)(i) of this section), an early retirement window benefit that is currently available to the employee (within the meaning of paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(A) of this section) and that is not disregarded for a plan year under paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(A) of this section is taken into account in that plan year with respect to the employee's accrued benefit as of the earliest of the employee's date of termination, the close of the early retirement window, or the last day of that plan year.

(D) *Effect of early retirement window benefit on average benefit percentage test.* Notwithstanding paragraph (c)(2) of this section, a rate group under a plan that provides an early retirement window benefit is deemed to satisfy the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 if—

(*1*) All rate groups under the plan would satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) if the early retirement window benefit were disregarded; and

(*2*) The group of employees to whom the early retirement window benefit is currently available (within the meaning of paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(A) of this section) satisfies section 410(b) without regard to the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5.

(iii) *Early retirement window benefit defined.* For purposes of this paragraph (f)(4), an early retirement window benefit is an early retirement benefit, retirement-type subsidy, QSUPP, or other optional form of benefit under a plan that is available, or a change in the plan's benefit formula that is applicable, only to employees who terminate employment within a limited period specified by the plan (not to exceed one year) under circumstances specified by the plan. A benefit does not fail to be described in the preceding sentence merely because the plan contains provisions under which certain employees may receive the benefit even though, for bona fide business reasons, they terminate employment within a reasonable period after the end of the limited period. An amendment to an early retirement window benefit that merely extends the periods in the preceding sentences is not treated as a separate early retirement window benefit, provided that the periods, as extended, satisfy the preceding sentences. However, any other amendment to an early retirement window benefit creates a separate early retirement window benefit.

(iv) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (f)(4):

Example 1. (a) Plan A provides a benefit of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service and satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Thus, the plan provides the same benefit to

all employees with the same years of service under the Plan. Plan A is amended to treat all employees with ten or more years of service who terminate employment after attainment of age 55 and between March 1, 1999, and January 31, 2000, as if they had an additional five years of service under the benefit formula. However, in order to ensure the orderly implementation of the early retirement window, the plan amendment provides that designated employees in the human resources department who would otherwise be eligible for the early retirement window benefit are eligible to be treated as having the additional five years of service only if they terminate between January 1, 2000, and April 30, 2000.

(b) The additional benefits provided under this amendment are tested as benefits provided to employees rather than former employees. The effect of this amendment is temporarily to change the benefit formula for employees who are eligible for the early retirement window benefit because the amendment changes (albeit temporarily) the amount of the benefit payable to those employees at normal retirement age. See the definition of benefit formula in § 1.401(a)(4)–12. Assume that the additional years of service credited to employees eligible for the window benefit do not represent past service (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(B)) or pre-participation or imputed service (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(ii)(A) or (B), respectively) and thus may not be taken into account as years of service. See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(A) (regarding years of service that may not be taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)). Thus, the window-eligible employees are entitled to a larger benefit (as a percentage of average annual compensation) than other employees with the same number of years of service, and the plan does not satisfy the uniform normal retirement benefit requirement of paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section.

(c) Plan A is restructured under the provisions of § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c) into two component plans: Component Plan A1, consisting of all employees who are not eligible for the early retirement window benefit and all of their accruals and benefits, rights, and features under the plan, and Component Plan A2, consisting of all employees who are eligible for the early retirement window benefit (including the designated employees in the human resource department) and all of their accruals and benefits, rights, and features under the plan.

(d) Component Plan A1 still satisfies paragraph (b) of this section, because there has been no change for the employees in that component plan. Similarly, Component Plan A2 satisfies paragraph (b) of this section disregarding the change in the benefit formula.

(e) Because the early retirement window benefit consists of a temporary change in the benefit formula, paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(B) of this section requires that the plan satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section reflecting the change in order to remain a safe harbor plan. After reflecting the change, Component Plan A2 still provides the same benefit (albeit higher than under the regular benefit formula) to all employees with the same years of service that may be taken into account in testing the plan, and thus the benefit formula (as temporarily amended) satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (b)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section.

(f) Since Component Plan A2 also satisfies all of the other requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section and the safe harbor of paragraph (b)(3) of this section reflecting the change in the benefit formula, Component Plan A2 satisfies this paragraph (b) both reflecting and disregarding the change in the benefit formula. Thus, Component Plan A2 satisfies paragraph (b) of this section.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan A's benefit formula used the maximum amount of permitted disparity under section 401(l) prior to the amendment. The analysis is the same as in paragraphs (a) through the first sentence of paragraph (e) of *Example 1.* In order to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, a plan that uses permitted disparity must satisfy the requirements of section 401(l) after reflecting the change in the benefit formula. Because, as stated in *Example 1,* the additional five years of service may not be taken into account for purposes of satisfying paragraph (b) of this section, the disparity that results from crediting that service exceeds the maximum permitted disparity under section 401(l). Thus, Component Plan A2 does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan A is tested under the general test in paragraph (c) of this section. The early retirement window benefit is disregarded for purposes of determining the normal accrual rates, but is taken into account in 1999 for purposes of determining the most valuable accrual rates, of employees who were eligible for the early retirement window benefit (regardless of whether they elected to receive it). As stated in *Example 1,* the additional five years of service do not represent past service, pre-participation service, or imputed service, and thus under § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(A) may not be taken into account as testing service.

(5) *Unpredictable contingent event benefits*—(i) *General rule.* In general, an unpredictable contingent event benefit (within the meaning of section 412(l)(7)(B)(ii)) is not taken into account under this section until the occurrence of the contingent event. Thus,

the special rule in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(d)(7) (treating the contingent event as having occurred) does not apply for purposes of this section. In the case of an unpredictable contingent event that is expected to result in the termination from employment of certain employees within a period of time consistent with the rules for defining an early retirement window benefit in paragraph (f)(4)(iii) of this section, the unpredictable contingent event benefit available to those employees is permitted to be treated as an early retirement window benefit, thus permitting the rules of paragraph (f)(4) of this section to be applied to it.

(ii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules of this paragraph (f)(5):

Example. (a) Employer X operates various manufacturing plants and maintains Plan A, a defined benefit plan that covers all of its nonexcludable employees. Plan A provides an early retirement benefit under which employees who retire after age 55 but before normal retirement age and who have at least 10 years of service receive a benefit equal to their normal retirement benefit reduced by four percent per year for each year prior to normal retirement age. Plan A also provides a plant-closing benefit under which employees who satisfy the conditions for receiving the early retirement benefit and who work at a plant where operations have ceased and whose employment has been terminated will receive an unreduced normal retirement benefit. The plant-closing benefit is an unpredictable contingent event benefit.

(b) During the 1997 plan year, Employer X had no plant closings. Therefore, the plant-closing benefit is not taken into account for the 1997 plan year in determining accrual rates or in applying the safe harbors in paragraph (b) of this section.

(c) During the 1998 plan year, Employer X begins to close one plant. Employees M through Z, who are employees at the plant that is closing, are expected to terminate employment with Employer X during the plan year and will satisfy the conditions for the plant-closing benefit. Therefore, in testing Plan A under this section for the 1998 plan year, the availability of the plant-closing benefit to Employees M through Z must be taken into account in determining their accrual rates or in determining whether the plan satisfies one of the safe harbors under paragraph (b) of this section.

(d) Because the employees eligible for the unpredictable contingent event benefit are expected to terminate employment with Employer X during a period consistent with the rules for defining an early retirement window benefit, in testing Plan A under this section for the 1998 plan year, the special rules in paragraph (f)(4)(ii) of this section may be applied. Thus, for example, normal accrual rates may be determined without reference to the unpredictable contingent event benefit.

(e) Despite the closing of the plant, Employee Q remains an employee into the 1999 plan year. Under paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(A) of this section, the availability of the plant-closing benefit to Employee Q may be disregarded in the 1999 plan year.

(6) *Determination of benefits on other than plan-year basis.* For purposes of this section, accruals are generally determined based on the plan year. Nevertheless, an employer may determine accruals on the basis of any period ending within the plan year as long as the period is at least 12 months in duration. For example, accruals for all employees may be determined based on accrual computation periods ending within the plan year.

(7) *Adjustments for certain plan distributions.* For purposes of this section, an employee's accrued benefit includes the actuarial equivalent of prior distributions of accrued benefits from the plan to the employee if the years of service taken into account in determining the accrued benefits that were distributed continue to be taken into account under the plan for purposes of determining the employee's current accrued benefit. For purposes of this paragraph (f)(7), actuarial equivalence must be determined in a uniform manner for all employees using reasonable actuarial assumptions. A standard interest rate and a standard mortality table are among the assumptions considered reasonable for this purpose. Thus, for example, if an employee has commenced receipt of benefits in accordance with the minimum distribution requirements of section 401(a)(9), and the plan reduces the employee's accrued benefit to take into account the amount of the distributions, the employee's accrued benefit for purposes of this section is restored to the value it would have had if the distributions had not occurred.

(8) *Adjustment for certain QPSA charges.* For purposes of this section, an employee's accrued benefit includes the cost of a qualified preretirement survivor annuity (QPSA) that reduces

the employee's accrued benefit otherwise determined under the plan, as permitted under § 1.401(a)–20, Q&A–21. Thus, an employee's accrued benefit for purposes of this section is determined as if the cost of the QPSA had not been charged against the accrued benefit. This paragraph (f)(8) applies only if the QPSA charges apply uniformly to all employees.

(9) *Disregard of certain offsets*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of this section, an employee's accrued benefit under a plan includes that portion of the benefit that is offset under an offset provision described in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(D). The rule in the preceding sentence applies only to the extent that the benefit by which the benefit under the plan being tested is offset is attributable to periods for which the plan being tested credits pre-participation service (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(ii)(A)) that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(iii) or past service (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(B)), and only if—

(A) The benefit under the plan being tested is offset by either—

(*1*) Benefits under a qualified defined benefit plan or defined contribution plan (whether or not terminated); or

(*2*) Benefits under a foreign plan that are reasonably expected to be paid; and,

(B) If any portion of the benefit that is offset is nonforfeitable (within the meaning of section 411), that portion is offset by a benefit (or portion of a benefit) that is also nonforfeitable (or vested, in the case of a foreign plan).

(ii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (f)(9):

Example 1. (a) Employer X maintains two qualified defined benefit plans, Plan A and Plan B. Plan B provides that, whenever an employee transfers to Plan B from Plan A, the service that was credited under Plan A is credited in determining benefits under Plan B. The Plan A service credited under Plan B is pre-participation service that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(iii). Plan B offsets the benefits determined under Plan B by the employee's vested benefits under Plan A. Plan A does not credit additional benefit service or accrual service after employees transfer to Plan B.

(b) The Plan B provision providing for an offset of benefits under Plan A satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(D). This is because the provision applies to similarly-situated employees and the benefits under Plan A that are offset against the Plan B benefits are attributable to pre-participation service taken into account under Plan B.

(c) This paragraph (f)(9) applies in determining the benefits that are taken into account under this section for employees in Plan B who are transferred from Plan A. This is because the offset provision is described in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(D), the benefits under the other plan by which the benefits under the plan being tested are offset are attributable solely to pre-participation service that satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(iii), and the benefits are offset solely by vested benefits under another qualified plan. Thus, for example, the accrual rates of employees in Plan B are determined as if there were no offset, i.e., by adding back the benefits that are offset to the net benefits under Plan B.

(d) The result would be the same even if Plan A continued to recognize compensation paid after the transfer in the determination of benefits under Plan A. However, if Plan A continued to credit benefit or accrual service after the transfer, then, to the extent that Plan B's offset of benefits under Plan A increased as a result, the additional benefits offset under Plan B would not be added back in determining the benefits under Plan B that are taken into account under this section.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan A is not a plan described in paragraph (f)(9)(i)(A) of this section. None of the benefits under Plan B that are offset by benefits under Plan A may be added back in determining the benefits under Plan B that are taken into account under this section. Thus, benefits under Plan B are tested on a net basis.

(10) *Special rule for multiemployer plans.* For purposes of this section, if a multiemployer plan increases benefits for service prior to a specific date subject to a plan provision requiring employees to complete a specified amount of service (not to exceed five years) after that date, then benefits are permitted to be determined disregarding the service condition, provided that the condition is applicable to all employees in the multiemployer plan (including collectively bargained employees).

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46785, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–4 Nondiscriminatory availability of benefits, rights, and features.

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides rules for determining whether the benefits, rights, and features provided

under a plan (i.e., all optional forms of benefit, ancillary benefits, and other rights and features available to any employee under the plan) are made available in a nondiscriminatory manner. Benefits, rights, and features provided under a plan are made available to employees in a nondiscriminatory manner only if each benefit, right, or feature satisfies the current availability requirement of paragraph (b) of this section and the effective availability requirement of paragraph (c) of this section. Paragraph (d) of this section provides special rules for applying these requirements. Paragraph (e) of this section defines optional form of benefit, ancillary benefit, and other right or feature.

(b) *Current availability*—(1) *General rule.* The current availability requirement of this paragraph (b) is satisfied if the group of employees to whom a benefit, right, or feature is currently available during the plan year satisfies section 410(b) (without regard to the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5). In determining whether the group of employees satisfies section 410(b), an employee is treated as benefiting only if the benefit, right, or feature is currently available to the employee.

(2) *Determination of current availability*—(i) *General rule.* Whether a benefit, right, or feature that is subject to specified eligibility conditions is currently available to an employee generally is determined based on the current facts and circumstances with respect to the employee (e.g., current compensation, accrued benefit, position, or net worth).

(ii) *Certain conditions disregarded*—(A) *Certain age and service conditions—(1) General rule.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, any specified age or service condition with respect to an optional form of benefit or a social security supplement is disregarded in determining whether the optional form of benefit or the social security supplement is currently available to an employee. Thus, for example, an optional form of benefit that is available to all employees who terminate employment on or after age 55 with at least 10 years of service is treated as currently available to an employee, without regard to the employee's current age or years of service, and without regard to whether the employee could potentially meet the age and service conditions prior to attaining the plan's normal retirement age.

(*2*) *Time-limited age or service conditions not disregarded.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A)(*1*) of this section, an age or service condition is not disregarded in determining the current availability of an optional form of benefit or social security supplement if the condition must be satisfied within a limited period of time. However, in determining the current availability of an optional form of benefit or a social security supplement subject to such an age or service condition, the age and service of employees may be projected to the last date by which the age condition or service condition must be satisfied in order to be eligible for the optional form of benefit or social security supplement under the plan. Thus, for example, an optional form of benefit that is available only to employees who terminate employment between July 1, 1995, and December 31, 1995, after attainment of age 55 with at least 10 years of service is treated as currently available to an employee only if the employee could satisfy those age and service conditions by December 31, 1995.

(B) *Certain other conditions.* Specified conditions on the availability of a benefit, right, or feature requiring a specified percentage of the employee's accrued benefit to be nonforfeitable, termination of employment, death, satisfaction of a specified health condition (or failure to meet such condition), disability, hardship, family status, default on a plan loan secured by a participant's account balance, execution of a covenant not to compete, application for benefits or similar ministerial or mechanical acts, election of a benefit form, execution of a waiver of rights under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act or other federal or state law, or absence from service, are disregarded in determining the employees to whom the benefit, right, or feature is currently available. In addition, if a multiemployer plan includes a reasonable condition that limits eligibility for an ancillary benefit, or other right

or feature, to those employees who have recent service under the plan (e.g., a condition on a death benefit that requires an employee to have a minimum number of hours credited during the last two years) and the condition applies to all employees in the multiemployer plan (including the collectively bargained employees) to whom the ancillary benefit, or other right or feature, is otherwise currently available, then the condition is disregarded in determining the employees to whom the ancillary benefit, or other right or feature, is currently available.

(C) *Certain conditions relating to mandatory cash-outs.* In the case of a plan that provides for mandatory cash-outs of all terminated employees who have a vested accrued benefit with an actuarial present value less than or equal to a specified dollar amount (not to exceed $3,500) as permitted by sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e), the implicit condition on any benefit, right, or feature (other than the mandatory cash-out) that requires the employee to have a vested accrued benefit with an actuarial present value in excess of the specified dollar amount is disregarded in determining the employees to whom the benefit, right, or feature is currently available.

(D) *Other dollar limits.* A condition that the amount of an employee's vested accrued benefit or the actuarial present value of that benefit be less than or equal to a specified dollar amount is disregarded in determining the employees to whom the benefit, right, or feature is currently available.

(E) *Certain conditions on plan loans.* In the case of an employee's right to a loan from the plan, the condition that an employee must have an account balance sufficient to be eligible to receive a minimum loan amount specified in the plan (not to exceed $1,000) is disregarded in determining the employees to whom the right is currently available.

(3) *Benefits, rights, and features that are eliminated prospectively*—(i) *Special testing rule.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, a benefit, right, or feature that is eliminated with respect to benefits accrued after the later of the eliminating amendment's adoption or effective date (the elimination date), but is retained with respect to benefits accrued as of the elimination date, and that satisfies this paragraph (b) as of the elimination date, is treated as satisfying this paragraph (b) for all subsequent periods. This rule does not apply if the terms of the benefit, right, or feature (including the employees to whom it is available) are changed after the elimination date.

(ii) *Elimination of a benefit, right, or feature*—(A) *General rule.* For purposes of this paragraph (b)(3), a benefit, right, or feature provided to an employee is eliminated with respect to benefits accrued after the elimination date if the amount or value of the benefit, right, or feature depends solely on the amount of the employee's accrued benefit (within the meaning of section 411(a)(7)) as of the elimination date, including subsequent income, expenses, gains, and losses with respect to that benefit in the case of a defined contribution plan.

(B) *Special rule for benefits, rights, and features that are not section 411(d)(6)-protected benefits.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(3)(ii)(A) of this section, in the case of a benefit, right, or feature under a defined contribution plan that is not a section 411(d)(6)-protected benefit (within the meaning of § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–1), e.g., the availability of plan loans, for purposes of this paragraph (b)(3)(ii) each employee's accrued benefit as of the elimination date may be treated, on a uniform basis, as consisting exclusively of the dollar amount of the employee's account balance as of the elimination date.

(C) *Special rule for benefits, rights, and features that depend on adjusted accrued benefits.* For purposes of this paragraph (b)(3), a benefit, right, or feature provided to an employee under a plan that has made a fresh start does not fail to be eliminated as of an elimination date that is the fresh-start date merely because it depends solely on the amount of the employee's adjusted accrued benefit (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)).

(c) *Effective availability*—(1) *General rule.* Based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the group of employees to whom a benefit, right, or feature is effectively available must not substantially favor HCEs.

(2) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (c):

Example 1. Employer X maintains Plan A, a defined benefit plan that covers both of its highly compensated nonexcludable employees and nine of its 12 nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees. Plan A provides for a normal retirement benefit payable as an annuity and based on a normal retirement age of 65, and an early retirement benefit payable upon termination in the form of an annuity to employees who terminate from service with the employer on or after age 55 with 30 or more years of service. Both HCEs of Employer X currently meet the age and service requirement, or will have 30 years of service by the time they reach age 55. All but two of the nine NHCEs of Employer X who are covered by Plan A were hired on or after age 35 and, thus, cannot qualify for the early retirement benefit. Even though the group of employees to whom the early retirement benefit is currently available satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) when age and service are disregarded pursuant to paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, absent other facts, the group of employees to whom the early retirement benefit is effectively available substantially favors HCEs.

Example 2. Employer Y maintains Plan B, a defined benefit plan that provides for a normal retirement benefit payable as an annuity and based on a normal retirement age of 65. By a plan amendment first adopted and effective December 1, 1998, Employer Y amends Plan B to provide an early retirement benefit that is available only to employees who terminate employment by December 15, 1998, and who are at least age 55 with 30 or more years of service. Assume that all employees were hired prior to attaining age 25 and that the group of employees who have, or will have, attained age 55 with 30 years of service by December 15, 1998, satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2). Assume, further, that the employer takes no steps to inform all eligible employees of the early retirement option on a timely basis and that the only employees who terminate from employment with the employer during the two-week period in which the early retirement benefit is available are HCEs. Under these facts, the group of employees to whom this early retirement window benefit is effectively available substantially favors HCEs.

Example 3. Employer Z amends Plan C on June 30, 1999, to provide for a single sum optional form of benefit for employees who terminate from employment with Employer Z after June 30, 1999, and before January 1, 2000. The availability of this single sum optional form of benefit is conditioned on the employee's having a particular disability at the time of termination of employment. The only employee of the employer who meets this disability requirement at the time of the amendment and thereafter through December 31, 1999, is a HCE. Under paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section, the disability condition is disregarded in determining the current availability of the single sum optional form of benefit. Nevertheless, under these facts, the group of employees to whom the single sum optional form of benefit is effectively available substantially favors HCEs.

(d) *Special rules*—(1) *Mergers and acquisitions*—(i) *Special testing rule.* A benefit, right, or feature available under a plan solely to an acquired group of employees is treated as satisfying paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section during the period that each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) The benefit, right, or feature must satisfy paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section (determined without regard to the special rule in section 410(b)(6)(C)) on the date that is selected by the employer as the latest date by which an employee must be hired or transferred into the acquired trade or business for an employee to be included in the acquired group of employees. This determination is made with reference to the plan of the current employer and its nonexcludable employees.

(B) The benefit, right, or feature must be available under the plan of the current employer after the transaction on the same terms as it was available under the plan of the prior employer before the transaction. This requirement is not violated merely because of a change made to the benefit, right, or feature that is permitted by section 411(d)(6), provided that—

(*1*) The change is a replacement of the benefit, right, or feature with another benefit, right, or feature that is available to the same employees as the original benefit, right, or feature, and the original benefit, right, or feature is of inherently equal or greater value (within the meaning of paragraph (d)(4)(i)(A) of this section) than the benefit, right, or feature that replaces it; or

(*2*) The change is made before January 12, 1993.

(ii) *Scope of special testing rule.* This paragraph (d)(1) applies only to benefits, rights, and features with respect

to benefits accruing under the plan of the current employer, and not to benefits, rights, and features with respect to benefits accrued under the plan of the prior employer (unless, pursuant to the transaction, the plan of the prior employer becomes the plan of the current employer, or the assets and liabilities with respect to the acquired group of employees under the plan of the prior employer are transferred to the plan of the current employer in a plan merger, consolidation, or other transfer described in section 414(l)).

(iii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules of this paragraph (d)(1):

Example. Employer X maintains Plan A, a defined benefit plan with a single sum optional form of benefit for all employees. Employer Y acquires Employer X and merges Plan A into Plan B, a defined benefit plan maintained by Employer Y that does not otherwise provide a single sum optional form of benefit. Employer Y continues to provide the single sum optional form of benefit under Plan B on the same terms as it was offered under Plan A to all employees who were acquired in the transaction with Employer X (and to no other employees). The optional form of benefit satisfies paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section immediately following the transaction (determined without taking into account section 410(b)(6)(C)) when tested with reference to Plan B and Employer Y's nonexcludable employees. Under these facts, Plan B is treated as satisfying this section with respect to the single sum optional form of benefit for the plan year of the transaction and all subsequent plan years.

(2) *Frozen participants.* A plan must satisfy the nondiscriminatory availability requirement of this section not only with respect to benefits, rights, and features provided to employees who are currently benefiting under the plan, but also separately with respect to benefits, rights, and features provided to nonexcludable employees with accrued benefits who are not currently benefiting under the plan (frozen participants). Thus, each benefit, right, and feature available to any frozen participant under the plan is separately subject to the requirements of this section. A plan satisfies paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section with respect to a benefit, right, or feature available to any frozen participant under the plan only if one or more of the following requirements is satisfied:

(i) The benefit, right, or feature must be one that would satisfy paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section if it were not available to any employee currently benefiting under the plan.

(ii) The benefit, right, or feature must be one that would satisfy paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section if all frozen participants were treated as employees currently benefiting under the plan.

(iii) No change in the availability of the benefit, right, or feature may have been made that is first effective in the current plan year with respect to a frozen participant.

(iv) Any change in the availability of the benefit, right, or feature that is first effective in the current plan year with respect to a frozen participant must be made in a nondiscriminatory manner. Thus, any expansion in the availability of the benefit, right, or feature to any highly compensated frozen participant must be applied on a consistent basis to all nonhighly compensated frozen participants. Similarly, any contraction in the availability of the benefit, right, or feature that affects any nonhighly compensated frozen participant must be applied on a consistent basis to all highly compensated frozen participants.

(3) *Early retirement window benefits.* If a benefit, right, or feature meets the definition of an early retirement window benefit in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(4)(iii) (or would meet that definition if the definition applied to all benefits, rights, and features), the benefit, right, or feature is disregarded for purposes of applying this section with respect to an employee for all plan years other than the first plan year in which the benefit is currently available to the employee.

(4) *Permissive aggregation of certain benefits, rights, or features*—(i) *General rule.* An optional form of benefit, ancillary benefit, or other right or feature may be aggregated with another optional form of benefit, ancillary benefit, or other right or feature, respectively, and the two may be treated as a single optional form of benefit, ancillary benefit, or other right or feature, if both of the following requirements are satisfied:

(A) One of the two optional forms of benefit, ancillary benefit, or other

rights or features must in all cases be of inherently equal or greater value than the other. For this purpose, one benefit, right, or feature is of inherently equal or greater value than another benefit, right, or feature only if, at any time and under any conditions, it is impossible for any employee to receive a smaller amount or a less valuable right under the first benefit, right, or feature than under the second benefit, right, or feature.

(B) The optional form of benefit, ancillary benefit, or other right or feature of inherently equal or greater value must separately satisfy paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section (without regard to this paragraph (d)(4)).

(ii) *Aggregation may be applied more than once.* The aggregation rule in this paragraph (d)(4) may be applied more than once. Thus, for example, an optional form of benefit may be aggregated with another optional form of benefit that itself constitutes two separate optional forms of benefit that are aggregated and treated as a single optional form of benefit under this paragraph (d)(4).

(iii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d)(4):

Example 1. Plan A is a defined benefit plan that provides a single sum optional form of benefit to all employees. The single sum optional form of benefit is available on the same terms to all employees, except that, for employees in Division S, a five-percent discount factor is applied and, for employees of Division T, a seven-percent discount factor is applied. Under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, the single sum optional form of benefit constitutes two separate optional forms of benefit. Assume that the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division S separately satisfies paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section without taking into account this paragraph (d)(4). Because a lower discount factor is applied in determining the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division S than is applied in determining the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division T, the first single sum optional form of benefit is of inherently greater value than the second single sum optional form of benefit. Under these facts, these two single sum optional forms of benefit may be aggregated and treated as a single optional form of benefit for purposes of this section.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that, in order to receive the single sum optional form of benefit, employees of Division S (but not employees of Division T) must have completed at least 20 years of service. The single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division S is not of inherently equal or greater value than the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division T, because an employee of Division S who terminates employment with less than 20 years of service would receive a smaller single sum amount (i.e., zero) than a similarly-situated employee of Division T who terminates employment with less than 20 years of service. Under these facts, the two single sum optional forms of benefit may not be aggregated and treated as a single optional form of benefit for purposes of this section.

(5) *Certain spousal benefits.* In the case of a plan that includes two or more plans that have been permissively aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(d), the aggregated plan satisfies this section with respect to the availability of any nonsubsidized qualified joint and survivor annuities, qualified preretirement survivor annuities, or spousal death benefits described in section 401(a)(11), if each plan that is part of the aggregated plan satisfies section 401(a)(11). Whether a benefit is considered subsidized for this purpose may be determined using any reasonable actuarial assumptions. For purposes of this paragraph (d)(5), a qualified joint and survivor annuity, qualified preretirement survivor annuity, or spousal death benefit is deemed to be nonsubsidized if it is provided under a defined contribution plan.

(6) *Special ESOP rules.* An ESOP does not fail to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section merely because it makes an investment diversification right or feature or a distribution option available solely to all qualified participants (within the meaning of section 401(a)(28)(B)(iii)), or merely because the restrictions of section 409(n) apply to certain individuals.

(7) *Special testing rule for unpredictable contingent event benefits.* A benefit, right, or feature that is contingent on the occurrence of an unpredictable contingent event (within the meaning of section 412(l)(7)(B)(ii)) is tested under this section as if the event had occurred. Thus, the current availability of a benefit that becomes an optional form of benefit upon the occurrence of an unpredictable contingent event is

tested by deeming the event to have occurred and by disregarding age and service conditions on the eligibility for that benefit to the extent permitted for optional forms of benefit under paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(e) *Definitions*—(1) *Optional form of benefit*—(i) *General rule.* The term optional form of benefit means a distribution alternative (including the normal form of benefit) that is available under a plan with respect to benefits described in section 411(d)(6)(A) or a distribution alternative that is an early retirement benefit or retirement-type subsidy described in section 411(d)(6)(B)(i), including a QSUPP. Except as provided in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section, different optional forms of benefit exist if a distribution alternative is not payable on substantially the same terms as another distribution alternative. The relevant terms include all terms affecting the value of the optional form, such as the method of benefit calculation and the actuarial assumptions used to determine the amount distributed. Thus, for example, different optional forms of benefit may result from differences in terms relating to the payment schedule, timing, commencement, medium of distribution (e.g., in cash or in kind), election rights, differences in eligibility requirements, or the portion of the benefit to which the distribution alternative applies.

(ii) *Exceptions*—(A) *Differences in benefit formula or accrual method.* A distribution alternative available under a defined benefit plan does not fail to be a single optional form of benefit merely because the benefit formulas, accrual methods, or other factors (including service-computation methods and definitions of compensation) underlying, or the manner in which employees vest in, the accrued benefit that is paid in the form of the distribution alternative are different for different employees to whom the distribution alternative is available. Notwithstanding the foregoing, differences in the normal retirement ages of employees or in the form in which the accrued benefit of employees is payable at normal retirement age under a plan are taken into account in determining whether a distribution alternative constitutes one or more optional forms of benefit.

(B) *Differences in allocation formula.* A distribution alternative available under a defined contribution plan does not fail to be a single optional form of benefit merely because the allocation formula or other factors (including service-computation methods, definitions of compensation, and the manner in which amounts described in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(iii) are allocated) underlying, or the manner in which employees vest in, the accrued benefit that is paid in the form of the distribution alternative are different for different employees to whom the distribution alternative is available.

(C) *Distributions subject to section 417(e).* A distribution alternative available under a defined benefit plan does not fail to be a single optional form of benefit merely because, in determining the amount of a distribution, the plan applies a lower interest rate to determine the distribution for employees with a vested accrued benefit having an actuarial present value not in excess of $25,000, as required by section 417(e)(3) and § 1.417(e)–1.

(D) *Differences attributable to uniform normal retirement age.* A distribution alternative available under a defined benefit plan does not fail to be a single optional form of benefit, to the extent that the differences are attributable to differences in normal retirement dates among employees, provided that the differences do not prevent the employees from having the same uniform normal retirement age under the definition of uniform normal retirement age in § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(iii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (e)(1):

Example 1. Plan A is a defined benefit plan that benefits all employees of Divisions S and T. The plan offers a qualified joint and 50-percent survivor annuity at normal retirement age, calculated by multiplying an employee's single life annuity payment by a factor. For an employee of Division S whose benefit commences at age 65, the plan provides a factor of 0.90, but for a similarly-situated employee of Division T the plan provides a factor of 0.85. The qualified joint and survivor annuity is not available to employees of Divisions S and T on substantially the

same terms, and thus it constitutes two separate optional forms of benefit.

Example 2. Plan B is a defined benefit plan that benefits all employees of Divisions U and V. The plan offers a single sum distribution alternative available on the same terms and determined using the same actuarial assumptions, to all employees. However, different benefit formulas apply to employees of each division. Under the exception provided in paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(A) of this section, the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division U is not a separate optional form of benefit from the single sum optional form of benefit available to employees of Division V.

Example 3. Defined benefit Plan C provides an early retirement benefit based on a schedule of early retirement factors that is a single optional form of benefit. Plan C is amended to provide an early retirement window benefit that consists of a temporary change in the plan's benefit formula (e.g., the addition of five years of service to an employee's actual service under the benefit formula) applicable in determining the benefits for certain employees who terminate employment within a limited period of time. Under the exception provided in paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(A) of this section, the early retirement optional form of benefit available to window-eligible employees is not a separate optional form of benefit from the early retirement optional form of benefit available to the other employees.

(2) *Ancillary benefit.* The term ancillary benefit means social security supplements (other than QSUPPs), disability benefits not in excess of a qualified disability benefit described in section 411(a)(9), ancillary life insurance and health insurance benefits, death benefits under a defined contribution plan, preretirement death benefits under a defined benefit plan, shut-down benefits not protected under section 411(d)(6), and other similar benefits. Different ancillary benefits exist if an ancillary benefit is not available on substantially the same terms as another ancillary benefit. Principles similar to those in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section apply in making this determination.

(3) *Other right or feature*—(i) *General rule.* The term other right or feature generally means any right or feature applicable to employees under the plan. Different rights or features exist if a right or feature is not available on substantially the same terms as another right or feature.

(ii) *Exceptions to definition of other right or feature.* Notwithstanding paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section, a right or feature is not considered an other right or feature if it—

(A) Is an optional form of benefit or an ancillary benefit under the plan;

(B) Is one of the terms that are taken into account in determining whether separate optional forms of benefit or ancillary benefits exist, or that would be taken into account but for paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section (e.g., benefit formulas or the manner in which benefits vest); or

(C) Cannot reasonably be expected to be of meaningful value to an employee (e.g., administrative details).

(iii) *Examples.* Other rights and features include, but are not limited to—

(A) Plan loan provisions (other than those relating to a distribution of an employee's accrued benefit upon default under a loan);

(B) The right to direct investments;

(C) The right to a particular form of investment, including, for example, a particular class or type of employer securities (taking into account, in determining whether different forms of investment exist, any differences in conversion, dividend, voting, liquidation preference, or other rights conferred under the security);

(D) The right to make each rate of elective contributions described in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(3) (determining the rate based on the plan's definition of the compensation out of which the elective contributions are made (regardless of whether that definition satisfies section 414(s)), but also treating different rates as existing if they are based on definitions of compensation or other requirements or formulas that are not substantially the same);

(E) The right to make after-tax employee contributions to a defined benefit plan that are not allocated to separate accounts;

(F) The right to make each rate of after-tax employee contributions described in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(6) (determining the rate based on the plan's definition of the compensation out of which the after-tax employee contributions are made (regardless of whether that definition satisfies section 414(s)), but also treating different rates as existing if

they are based on definitions of compensation or other requirements or formulas that are not substantially the same);

(G) The right to each rate of allocation of matching contributions described in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(12) (determining the rate using the amount of matching, elective, and after-tax employee contributions determined after any corrections under §§ 1.401(k)–1(f)(1)(i), 1.401(m)–1(e)(1)(i), and 1.401(m)–2(c), but also treating different rates as existing if they are based on definitions of compensation or other requirements or formulas that are not substantially the same);

(H) The right to purchase additional retirement or ancillary benefits under the plan; and

(I) The right to make rollover contributions and transfers to and from the plan.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46796, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–5 Plan amendments and plan terminations.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *Overview.* This paragraph (a) provides rules for determining whether the timing of a plan amendment or series of amendments has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs. For purposes of this section, a plan amendment includes, for example, the establishment or termination of the plan, and any change in the benefits, rights, or features, benefit formulas, or allocation formulas under the plan. Paragraph (b) of this section sets forth additional requirements that must be satisfied in the case of a plan termination.

(2) *Facts-and-circumstances determination.* Whether the timing of a plan amendment or series of plan amendments has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs is determined at the time the plan amendment first becomes effective for purposes of section 401(a), based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances. These include, for example, the relative numbers of current and former HCEs and NHCEs affected by the plan amendment, the relative length of service of current and former HCEs and NHCEs, the length of time the plan or plan provision being amended has been in effect, and the turnover of employees prior to the plan amendment. In addition, the relevant facts and circumstances include the relative accrued benefits of current and former HCEs and NHCEs before and after the plan amendment and any additional benefits provided to current and former HCEs and NHCEs under other plans (including plans of other employers, if relevant). In the case of a plan amendment that provides additional benefits based on an employee's service prior to the amendment, the relevant facts and circumstances also include the benefits that employees and former employees who do not benefit under the amendment would have received had the plan, as amended, been in effect throughout the period on which the additional benefits are based.

(3) *Safe harbor for certain grants of benefits for past periods.* The timing of a plan amendment that credits (or increases benefits attributable to) years of service for a period in the past is deemed not to have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs if the period for which the service credit (or benefit increase) is granted does not exceed the five years immediately preceding the year in which the amendment first becomes effective, the service credit (or benefit increase) is granted on a reasonably uniform basis to all employees, benefits attributable to the period are determined by applying the current plan formula, and the service credited is service (including pre-participation or imputed service) with the employer or a previous employer that may be taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) (without regard to § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(i)(B)). However, this safe harbor is not available if the plan amendment granting the service credit (or increasing benefits) is part of a pattern of amendments that has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (a):

Example 1. Plan A is a defined benefit plan that covered both HCEs and NHCEs for most of its existence. The employer decides to

wind up its business. In the process of ceasing operations, but at a time when the plan covers only HCEs, Plan A is amended to increase benefits and thereafter is terminated. The timing of this plan amendment has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 2. Plan B is a defined benefit plan that provides a social security supplement that is not a QSUPP. After substantially all of the HCEs of the employer have benefited from the supplement, but before a substantial number of NHCEs have become eligible for the supplement, Plan B is amended to reduce significantly the amount of the supplement. The timing of this plan amendment has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 3. Plan C is a defined benefit plan that contains an ancillary life insurance benefit available to all employees. The plan is amended to eliminate this benefit at a time when life insurance payments have been made only to beneficiaries of HCEs. Because all employees received the benefit of life insurance coverage before Plan C was amended, the timing of this plan amendment does not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

Example 4. Plan D provides for a benefit of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service. Ten years after Plan D is adopted, it is amended to provide a benefit of two percent of average annual compensation per year of service, including years of service prior to the amendment. The amendment is effective only for employees currently employed at the time of the amendment. The ratio of HCEs to former HCEs is significantly higher than the ratio of NHCEs to former NHCEs. In the absence of any additional factors, the timing of this plan amendment has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4,* except that, in addition, the years of prior service are equivalent between HCEs and NHCEs who are current employees, and the group of current employees with prior service would satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 in the current and all prior plan years for which past service credit is granted. The timing of this plan amendment does not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

Example 6. Employer V maintains Plan E, an accumulation plan. In 1994, Employer V amends Plan E to provide that the compensation used to determine an employee's benefit for all preceding plan years shall not be less than the employee's average annual compensation as of the close of the 1994 plan year. The years of service and percentage increases in compensation for HCEs are reasonably comparable to those of NHCEs. In addition, the ratio of HCEs to former HCEs is reasonably comparable to the ratio of NHCEs to former NHCEs. The timing of this plan amendment does not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

Example 7. Employer W currently has six nonexcludable employees, two of whom, H1 and H2, are HCEs, and the remaining four of whom, N1 through N4, are NHCEs. The ratio of HCEs to former HCEs is significantly higher than the ratio of NHCEs to former NHCEs. Employer W establishes Plan F, a defined benefit plan providing a benefit of one percent of average annual compensation per year of service, including years of service prior to the establishment of the plan. H1 and H2 each have 15 years of prior service, N1 has nine years of past service, N2 has five years, N3 has three years, and N4 has one year. The timing of this plan establishment has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 8. Assume the same facts as in *Example 7,* except that N1 through N4 were hired in the current year, and Employer W never employed any NHCEs prior to the current year. Thus, no NHCEs would have received additional benefits had Plan F been in existence during the preceding 15 years. The timing of this plan establishment does not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

Example 9. The facts are the same as in *Example 7,* except that Plan F limits the grant of past service credit to five years, and the grant of past service otherwise satisfies the safe harbor in paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The timing of this plan establishment is deemed not to have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs.

Example 10. The facts are the same as in *Example 9,* except that, five years after the establishment of Plan F, Employer W amends the plan to provide a benefit equal to two percent of average annual compensation per year of service, taking into account all years of service since the establishment of the plan. The ratio of HCEs to former HCEs who terminated employment during the five-year period since the establishment of the plan is significantly higher than the ratio of NHCEs to former NHCEs who terminated employment during the five-year period since the establishment of the plan. Although the amendment described in this example might separately satisfy the safe harbor in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, the safe harbor is not available with respect to the amendment because, under these facts, the amendment is part of a pattern of amendments that has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 11. Employer Y maintains Plan G, a defined benefit plan, covering all its employees. In 1995, Employer Y acquires Division S from Employer Z. Some of the employees of Division S had been covered under a defined benefit plan maintained by Employer Z. Soon after the acquisition, Employer Y amends Plan G to cover all employees of Division S and to credit those who were in Division S's defined benefit plan with years of service for years of employment with Employer Z. Because the timing of the plan amendment was determined by the timing of the transaction, the timing of this plan amendment does not have the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs. See also § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) for other rules regarding the crediting of preparticipation service.

Example 12. Plan H is an insurance contract plan within the meaning of section 412(i). For all plan years before 1999, Plan H purchases insurance contracts from Insurance Company J. In 1999, Plan H shifts future purchases of insurance contracts to Insurance Company K. The shift in insurance companies is a plan amendment subject to this paragraph (a).

(b) *Pre-termination restrictions*—(1) *Required provisions in defined benefit plans.* A defined benefit plan has the effect of discriminating significantly in favor of HCEs or former HCEs unless it incorporates provisions restricting benefits and distributions as described in paragraph (b)(2) and (3) of this section at the time the plan is established or, if later, as of the first plan year to which §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 apply to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(a) or (b). This paragraph (b) does not apply if the Commissioner determines that such provisions are not necessary to prevent the prohibited discrimination that may occur in the event of an early termination of the plan. The restrictions in this paragraph (b) apply to a plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7(b) (i.e., a section 414(l) plan). Any plan containing a provision described in this paragraph (b) satisfies section 411(d)(2) and does not fail to satisfy section 411(a) or (d)(3) merely because of the provision.

(2) *Restriction of benefits upon plan termination.* A plan must provide that, in the event of plan termination, the benefit of any HCE (and any former HCE) is limited to a benefit that is nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4).

(3) *Restrictions on distributions*—(i) *General rule.* A plan must provide that, in any year, the payment of benefits to or on behalf of a restricted employee shall not exceed an amount equal to the payments that would be made to or on behalf of the restricted employee in that year under—

(A) A straight life annuity that is the actuarial equivalent of the accrued benefit and other benefits to which the restricted employee is entitled under the plan (other than a social security supplement); and

(B) A social security supplement, if any, that the restricted employee is entitled to receive.

(ii) *Restricted employee defined.* For purposes of this paragraph (b), the term restricted employee generally means any HCE or former HCE. However, an HCE or former HCE need not be treated as a restricted employee in the current year if the HCE or former HCE is not one of the 25 (or a larger number chosen by the employer) nonexcludable employees and former employees of the employer with the largest amount of compensation in the current or any prior year. Plan provisions defining or altering this group can be amended at any time without violating section 411(d)(6).

(iii) *Benefit defined.* For purposes of this paragraph (b), the term benefit includes, among other benefits, loans in excess of the amounts set forth in section 72(p)(2)(A), any periodic income, any withdrawal values payable to a living employee or former employee, and any death benefits not provided for by insurance on the employee's or former employee's life.

(iv) *Nonapplicability in certain cases.* The restrictions in this paragraph (b)(3) do not apply, however, if any one of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) After taking into account payment to or on behalf of the restricted employee of all benefits payable to or on behalf of that restricted employee under the plan, the value of plan assets must equal or exceed 110 percent of the value of current liabilities, as defined in section 412(l)(7).

(B) The value of the benefits payable to or on behalf of the restricted employee must be less than one percent of the value of current liabilities before distribution.

(C) The value of the benefits payable to or on behalf of the restricted employee must not exceed the amount described in section 411(a)(11)(A) (restrictions on certain mandatory distributions).

(v) *Determination of current liabilities.* For purposes of this paragraph (b), any reasonable and consistent method may be used for determining the value of current liabilities and the value of plan assets.

(4) *Operational restrictions on certain money purchase pension plans.* A money purchase pension plan that has an accumulated funding deficiency, within the meaning of section 412(a), or an unamortized funding waiver, within the meaning of section 412(d), must comply in operation with the restrictions on benefits and distributions as described in paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section. Such a plan does not fail to satisfy section 411(d)(6) merely because of restrictions imposed by the requirements of this paragraph (b)(4).

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46800, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–6 Contributory defined benefit plans.

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides rules necessary for determining whether a contributory DB plan satisfies the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2). Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules for determining the amount of benefits derived from employer contributions (employer-provided benefits) under a contributory DB plan for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) with respect to such amounts. Paragraph (c) of this section provides the exclusive rules for determining whether a contributory DB plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) with respect to the amount of benefits derived from employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts (employee-provided benefits). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B) for the exclusive tests applicable to employee contributions allocated to separate accounts under a section 401(m) plan.

(b) *Determination of employer-provided benefit*—(1) *General rule.* An employee's employer-provided benefit under a contributory DB plan for purposes of section 401(a)(4) equals the difference between the employee's total benefit and the employee's employee-provided benefit under the plan. The rules of section 411(c) generally must be used to determine the employee's employer-provided benefit for this purpose. However, paragraphs (b)(2) through (b)(6) of this section provide alternative methods for determining the employee's employer-provided benefit.

(2) *Composition-of-workforce method*—(i) *General rule.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies paragraph (b)(2)(ii) (A) and (B) of this section may determine employees' employer-provided benefit rates under the rules of paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Eligibility requirements*—(A) *Uniform rate of employee contributions.* A contributory DB plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) if all employees make employee contributions at the same rate, expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation (the employee contribution rate). A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) merely because it eliminates employee contributions for all employees with plan year compensation below a specified contribution breakpoint that is either a stated dollar amount or a stated percentage of covered compensation (within the meaning of § 1.401(l)–1(c)(7)); or merely because all employees make employee contributions at the same rate (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) with respect to plan year compensation up to the contribution breakpoint (base employee contribution rate) and at a higher rate (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) that is the same for all employees with respect to plan year compensation above the contribution breakpoint (excess employee contribution rate). A plan described in paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section that satisfies paragraph (c)(4)(iii) of this section is deemed to satisfy this paragraph.

(B) *Demographic requirements*—(*1*) *In general.* A contributory DB plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) if it satisfies either of the demographic tests in paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) (*2*) or (*3*) of this section.

(*2*) *Minimum percentage test.* This test is satisfied only if more than 40 percent of the NHCEs in the plan have attained ages at least equal to the plan's target

age, and more than 20 percent of the NHCEs in the plan have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan. For this purpose, a plan's target age is the lower of age 50 or the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan minus X years, where X equals 20 minus the product of five times the employee contribution rate under the plan. In no case, however, may X years be fewer than zero (0) years. Thus, for example, if the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan is 53 and the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation, the plan's target age is 43 years (i.e., $53 - (20 - (5 \times 2))$).

(*3*) *Ratio test.* This test is satisfied only if the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees, who are in the plan and who have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan, is at least 70 percent of the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees, who are in the plan and who have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan. Attained ages must be determined as of the beginning of the plan year. In lieu of determining the actual distribution of the attained ages of the HCEs, an employer may assume that 50 percent of all HCEs have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs.

(iii) *Determination of employer-provided benefit*—(A) *Safe harbor plans other than section 401(l) plans.* For purposes of applying the exception to the safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)(viii) with respect to employer-provided benefits under a plan other than a section 401(l) plan, the employee's entire accrued benefit is treated as employer-provided.

(B) *Section 401(l) plans*—(*1*) *General rule.* For purposes of applying the exception to the safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)(viii) with respect to employer-provided benefits under a section 401(l) plan, an employee's base benefit percentage and excess benefit percentage are reduced, or an employee's gross benefit percentage is reduced, by subtracting the product of the employee contribution rate and the factor determined under paragraph (b)(2)(iv) of this section from the respective percentages for the plan year. For this purpose, the employee contribution rate is the highest rate of employee contributions applicable to any potential level of plan year compensation for that plan year under the plan.

(*2*) *Excess plans with varying contribution rates.* In the case of a defined benefit excess plan described in the second sentence of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, solely for purposes of reducing an employee's base benefit percentage as required under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(*1*) of this section, it may be assumed that the employee's employee contribution rate equals the weighted average of the base employee contribution rate and the excess employee contribution rate. In determining this weighted average, the weight of the base employee contribution rate is equal to a fraction, the numerator of which is the lesser of the integration level and the contribution breakpoint and the denominator of which is the integration level. The weight of the excess employee contribution rate is equal to the difference between one and the weight of the base employee contribution rate.

(*3*) *Offset plans with varying contribution rates.* In the case of an offset plan described in the second sentence of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, an equivalent adjustment to the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(*2*) of this section may be made to the offset percentage.

(C) *Employer-provided benefits under the general test.* For purposes of applying the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c) with respect to employer-provided benefits, an employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates otherwise determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d) (without applying any of the options under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3) other than the fresh-start alternative of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3)(iii)) are each reduced by subtracting the product of the employee's contributions (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) and the factor determined under paragraph (b)(2)(iv) of this section from the respective accrual rates. A plan may then apply the optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3) (i) and (ii) to this resulting accrual rate.

(D) *Additional limitation.* A plan may not use the composition-of-workforce method provided in this paragraph (b)(2) to determine an employee's base benefit percentage, excess benefit percentage, gross benefit percentage, offset percentage, or accrual rates unless employee contributions have been made at the same rate (or rates) throughout the period after the fresh-start date or throughout the measurement period used to determine accrual rates.

(iv) *Determination of plan factor.* The factor for a plan is determined under the following table based on the average entry age of the employees in the plan and on whether the plan determines benefits based on average compensation. For this purpose, average entry age equals the average attained age of all employees in the plan, minus the average years of participation of all employees in the plan. A plan is treated as determining benefits based on average compensation if it determines benefits based on compensation averaged over a specified period not exceeding five consecutive years (or the employee's entire period of employment with the employer, if shorter).

TABLE OF FACTORS

Average entry age	Factors	
	Average compensation benefit formula	Other formulas
Less than 30	0.5	0.75
30 to 40	0.4	0.6
Over 40	0.2	0.3

(v) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (b)(2):

Example 1. Plan A is a contributory DB plan that is a defined benefit excess plan providing a benefit equal to 2.0 percent of employees' average annual compensation at or below covered compensation, plus 2.5 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, times years of service up to 35. Under the plan, average annual compensation is determined using a five-consecutive-year period for purposes of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(e)(2). The plan requires employee contributions at a rate of four percent of plan year compensation for all employees. Assume that the plan satisfies the demographic requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section. Under these facts, the plan satisfies the eligibility requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. Assume, further, that the average attained age for all employees in the plan is 55, and that the average years of participation of all employees in the plan is 10. The average entry age for the plan is therefore 45, and, accordingly, the appropriate factor under the table is 0.2. Thus, in applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) to this plan for the plan year (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)–3), the employee's base benefit percentage and excess benefit percentage are each reduced by 0.8 percent (4 percent × 0.2) and equal 1.2 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation up to the covered compensation level, and four percent for plan year compensation at or above that contribution breakpoint. The employer elects to apply the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(*2*) of this section to determine the reduction in the base benefit percentage. Because the contribution breakpoint is equal to the integration level, the weight of the employee contribution rate below the contribution breakpoint is 100 percent, and the weight of the employee contribution rate above the contribution breakpoint is zero. Thus, the weighted average of employee contribution rates is two percent. Under the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(*2*) of this section, the reduction in the employee's base benefit percentage is 0.4. In applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) to this plan (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)–3), the employee's base benefit percentage is 1.6 percent, and the employee's excess benefit percentage is 1.7.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation up to 50 percent of the covered compensation level, and four percent for plan year compensation at or above that contribution breakpoint. Because the contribution breakpoint is equal to 50 percent of the integration level, the weight of the employee contribution rate below the contribution breakpoint is 50 percent, and the weight of the employee contribution rate above the contribution breakpoint is 50 percent. Thus, the weighted average of employee contribution rates is three percent. Under the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(*2*) of this section, the reduction in the employee's base benefit percentage is 0.6. In applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) to this plan (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)–3), the employee's base benefit percentage is 1.4 percent, and the employee's excess benefit percentage is 1.7.

Example 4. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the plan is tested using the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c). Assume Employee M benefits under Plan A and has a normal accrual rate for the plan year (calculated with respect to Employee M's total accrued benefit) of 2.2 percent of average annual compensation. In applying the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c) with respect to employer-provided benefits, this rate is reduced by 0.8 to yield a normal accrual rate of 1.4 percent. This rate may then be adjusted using either of the optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3)(i) or (ii).

(3) *Minimum-benefit method*—(i) *Application of uniform factors.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies the uniform rate requirement of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section and the minimum benefit requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section may apply the adjustments provided in paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section as if the average entry age of employees in the plan were within the range of 30 to 40, without regard to the actual demographics of the employees in the plan.

(ii) *Minimum benefit requirement.* This requirement is satisfied if the plan provides that, in plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(a) and (b), each employee will accrue a benefit that equals or exceeds the sum of—

(A) The accrued benefit derived from employee contributions made for plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, determined in accordance with section 411(c); and

(B) Fifty percent of the total benefit accrued in plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as determined under the plan benefit formula without regard to that portion of the formula designed to satisfy the minimum benefit requirement of this paragraph (b)(3)(ii).

(iii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the minimum-benefit method of this paragraph (b)(3):

Example. Plan A is contributory DB plan. For the plan year beginning in 1994, Employee M participates in Plan A and accrues a benefit under the terms of the plan (without regard to the minimum benefit requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section) of $3,000. The portion of Employee M's benefit accrual for the plan year beginning in 1994 derived from employee contributions is $2,000, determined by applying the rules of section 411(c) to such contributions. The requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section is not satisfied for the plan year beginning in 1994 unless the plan provides that Employee M's benefit accrual for the plan year beginning in 1994 is equal to $3,500 ($2,000 + (50 percent × $3,000)).

(4) *Grandfather rule for plans in existence on May 14, 1990.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies paragraph (c)(4) of this section may determine an employee's employer-provided benefit by subtracting from the employee's total benefit the employee-provided benefits determined using any reasonable method set forth in the plan, provided that it is the same method used in determining whether the plan satisfies paragraph (c)(4)(ii)(D) of this section.

(5) *Government-plan method.* A contributory DB plan that is established and maintained for its employees by the government of any state or political subdivision or by any agency or instrumentality thereof may treat an employee's total benefit as entirely employer-provided.

(6) *Cessation of employee contributions.* If a contributory DB plan provides that no employee contributions may be made to the plan after the last day of the first plan year beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) and (b), the plan may treat an employee's total benefit as entirely employer-provided.

(c) *Rules applicable in determining whether employee-provided benefits are nondiscriminatory in amount*—(1) *In general.* A contributory DB plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) with respect to the amount of employee-provided benefits for a plan year only if the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c)(2), (c)(3), or (c)(4) of this section for the plan year. This requirement applies regardless of the method used to determine the amount of employer-provided benefits under paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) *Same rate of contributions.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if the employee contribution rate (within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section) is the same for all employees for the plan year.

(3) *Total-benefits method.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if—

(i) The total benefits (i.e., the sum of employer-provided and employee-provided benefits) under the plan would satisfy §1.401(a)(4)–3 if all benefits were treated as employer-provided benefits; and

(ii) The plan's contribution requirements satisfy paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section.

(4) *Grandfather rules for plans in existence on May 14, 1990*—(i) *In general.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if the plan contained provisions as of May 14, 1990, that meet the requirements of paragraph (c)(4)(ii) or (c)(4)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Graded contribution rates.* The plan's provisions meet the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(ii) if all the following requirements are met:

(A) The provisions require employee contributions at a greater rate (expressed as a percentage of compensation) at higher levels of compensation than at lower levels of compensation.

(B) The required rate of employee contributions is not increased after May 14, 1990, although the level of compensation at which employee contributions are required may be increased or decreased.

(C) All employees are permitted to make employee contributions under the plan at a uniform rate with respect to all compensation, beginning no later than the last day of the first plan year to which these regulations apply, as set forth in §1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) and (b).

(D) The benefits provided on account of employee contributions at lower levels of compensation are comparable to those provided on account of employee contributions at higher levels of compensation.

(iii) *Prior year compensation.* The plan's provisions meet the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(iii) if they are part of a plan maintained by more than one employer that requires employee contributions and the rate of required employee contributions, expressed as a percentage of compensation for the last calendar year ending before the beginning of the plan year, is the same for all employees.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46802, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(4)–7 Imputation of permitted disparity.

(a) *Introduction.* In determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits, section 401(a)(5)(C) allows the disparities permitted under section 401(l) to be taken into account. For purposes of satisfying the safe harbors of §§1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(2) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(b), permitted disparity may be taken into account only by satisfying section 401(l) in form in accordance with §1.401(l)–2 or 1.401(l)–3, respectively. For purposes of the general tests of §§1.401(a)(4)–2(c) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(c), permitted disparity may be taken into account only in accordance with the rules of this section. In general, this section allows permitted disparity to be arithmetically imputed with respect to employer-provided contributions or benefits by determining an adjusted allocation or accrual rate that appropriately accounts for the permitted disparity with respect to each employee. Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules for imputing permitted disparity with respect to employer-provided contributions by adjusting each employee's unadjusted allocation rate. Paragraph (c) of this section provides rules for imputing permitted disparity with respect to employer-provided benefits by adjusting each employee's unadjusted accrual rate. Paragraph (d) of this section provides rules of general application.

(b) *Adjusting allocation rates*—(1) *In general.* The rules in this paragraph (b) produce an adjusted allocation rate for each employee by determining the excess contribution percentage under the hypothetical formula that would yield the allocation actually received by the employee, if the plan took into account the full disparity permitted under section 401(l)(2) and used the taxable wage base as the integration level. This adjusted allocation rate is used to determine whether the amount of contributions under the plan satisfies the general test of §1.401(a)(4)–2(c) and to apply the average benefit percentage test on the basis of contributions under §1.410(b)–5(d). Paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section apply to employees whose plan year compensation does

not exceed and does exceed, respectively, the taxable wage base, and paragraph (b)(4) of this section provides definitions.

(2) *Employees whose plan year compensation does not exceed taxable wage base.* If an employee's plan year compensation does not exceed the taxable wage base, the employee's adjusted allocation rate is the lesser of the A rate and the B rate determined under the formulas below, where the permitted disparity rate and the unadjusted allocation rate are determined under paragraph (b)(4) (ii) and (iv) of this section, respectively.

A Rate=2×unadjusted allocation rate

B Rate=unadjusted allocation rate+permitted disparity rate

(3) *Employees whose plan year compensation exceeds taxable wage base.* If an employee's plan year compensation exceeds the taxable wage base, the employee's adjusted allocation rate is the lesser of the C rate and the D rate determined under the formulas below, where allocations and the permitted disparity rate are determined under paragraph (b)(4) (i) and (ii) of this section, respectively.

$$\text{C Rate} = \frac{\text{allocations}}{\text{plan year compensation} - \frac{1}{2}\ \text{taxable wage base}}$$

$$\text{D Rate} = \frac{\text{allocations} + (\text{permitted disparity rate} \times \text{taxable wage base})}{\text{plan year compensation}}$$

(4) *Definitions.* In applying this paragraph (b), the following definitions govern—

(i) *Allocations.* Allocations means the amount determined by multiplying the employee's plan year compensation by the employee's unadjusted allocation rate.

(ii) *Permitted disparity rate*—(A) *General rule.* Permitted disparity rate means the rate in effect as of the beginning of the plan year under section 401(l)(2)(A)(ii) (e.g., 5.7 percent for plan years beginning in 1990).

(B) *Cumulative permitted disparity limit.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(A) of this section, the permitted disparity rate is zero for an employee who has benefited under a defined benefit plan taken into account under § 1.401(l)–5(a)(3) for a plan year that begins on or after one year from the first day of the first plan year to which these regulations apply, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) and (b), if imputing permitted disparity would result in a cumulative disparity fraction for the employee, as defined in § 1.401(l)–5(c)(2), that exceeds 35. See § 1.401(l)–5(c)(1) for special rules for determining whether an employee has benefited under a defined benefit plan for this purpose.

(iii) *Taxable wage base.* Taxable wage base means the taxable wage base, as defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(32), in effect as of the beginning of the plan year.

(iv) *Unadjusted allocation rate.* Unadjusted allocation rate means the employee's allocation rate determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(i) for the plan year (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation), without imputing permitted disparity under this section.

(5) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules in this paragraph (b):

Example. (a) Employees M and N participate in a defined contribution plan maintained by Employer X. Employee M has plan year compensation of $30,000 in the 1990 plan year and has an unadjusted allocation rate of five percent. Employee N has plan year compensation of $100,000 in the 1990 plan year and has an unadjusted allocation rate of eight percent. The taxable wage base in 1990 is $51,300.

(b) Because Employee M's plan year compensation does not exceed the taxable wage base, Employee M's A rate is 10 percent (2×5 percent), and Employee M's B rate is 10.7 percent (5 percent+5.7 percent). Thus, Employee M's adjusted allocation rate is 10 percent, the lesser of the A rate and the B rate.

(c) Employee N's allocations are $8,000 (8 percent×$100,000). Because Employee N's plan year compensation exceeds the taxable wage base, Employee N's C rate is 10.76 percent ($8,000 divided by ($100,000 − (½×$51,300))), and Employee N's D rate is 10.92 percent (($8,000+ (5.7 percent×$51,300)) divided by $100,000). Thus, Employee N's adjusted allocation rate is 10.76 percent, the lesser of the C rate and the D rate.

(c) *Adjusting accrual rates*—(1) *In general.* The rules in this paragraph (c) produce an adjusted accrual rate for each employee by determining the excess benefit percentage under the hypothetical plan formula that would yield the employer-provided accrual actually received by the employee, if the plan took into account the full permitted disparity under section 401(l)(3)(A) in each of the first 35 years of an employee's testing service under the plan and used the employee's covered compensation as the integration level. This adjusted accrual rate is used to determine whether the amount of employer-provided benefits under the plan satisfies the alternative safe harbor for flat benefit plans under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C)(*3*) or the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c), and to apply the average benefit percentage test on the basis of benefits under § 1.410(b)–5. Paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section apply to employees whose average annual compensation does not exceed and does exceed, respectively, covered compensation, and paragraph (c)(4) of this section provides definitions. Paragraph (c)(5) of this section provides a special rule for employees with negative unadjusted accrual rates.

(2) *Employees whose average annual compensation does not exceed covered compensation.* If an employee's average annual compensation does not exceed the employee's covered compensation, the employee's adjusted accrual rate is the lesser of the A rate and the B rate determined under the formulas below, where the permitted disparity factor and the unadjusted accrual rate are determined under paragraph (c)(4)(iii) and (v) of this section, respectively.

$$\text{A Rate} = 2 \times \text{unadjusted accrual rate}$$

$$\text{B Rate} = \text{unadjusted accrual rate} + \text{permitted disparity factor}$$

(3) *Employees whose average annual compensation exceeds covered compensation.* If an employee's average annual compensation exceeds the employee's covered compensation, the employee's adjusted accrual rate is the lesser of the C rate and D rate determined under the formulas below, where the employer-provided accrual and the permitted disparity factor are determined under paragraph (c)(4)(ii) and (iii) of this section, respectively.

$$\text{C Rate} = \frac{\text{employer-provided accrual}}{\text{average annual compensation} - \frac{1}{2}\ \text{covered compensation}}$$

$$\text{D Rate} = \frac{\text{employer-provided accrual} + (\text{permitted disparity factor} \times \text{covered compensation})}{\text{average annual compensation}}$$

(4) *Definitions.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), the following definitions apply.

(i) *Covered compensation.* Covered compensation means covered compensation as defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(7). Notwithstanding § 1.401(l)–1(c)(7)(iii), an employee's covered compensation must be automatically adjusted each plan year for purposes of applying this paragraph (c).

(ii) *Employer-provided accrual.* Employer-provided accrual means the amount determined by multiplying the

employee's average annual compensation by the employee's unadjusted accrual rate.

(iii) *Permitted disparity factor*—(A) *General rule.* Permitted disparity factor for an employee means the sum of the employee's annual permitted disparity factors determined under paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(B) of this section for each of the years in the measurement period used for determining the employee's accrual rate in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(1), divided by the employee's testing service during that measurement period.

(B) *Annual permitted disparity factor*—(*1*) *Definition.* An employee's annual permitted disparity factor is generally 0.75 percent adjusted, pursuant to § 1.401(l)–3(e), using as the age at which benefits commence the lesser of age 65 or the employee's testing age. No adjustments are made in the annual permitted disparity factor unless an employee's testing age is different from the employee's social security retirement age. An annual permitted disparity factor that is less than the annual permitted disparity factor described in the first sentence of this paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(B)(*1*) may be used if it is a uniform percentage of that factor (e.g., 50 percent of the annual permitted disparity factor) or a fixed percentage (e.g., 0.65 percent) for all employees.

(*2*) *Annual permitted disparity factor after 35 years.* For purposes of determining the sum described in paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(A) of this section, the annual permitted disparity factor for each of the employee's first 35 years of testing service is the amount described in paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(B)(*1*) of this section, and the annual permitted disparity factor in any subsequent year equals zero. This rule applies regardless of whether the end of the measurement period extends beyond an employee's first 35 years of testing service. Thus, for example, if the measurement period is the current plan year and the employee completed 35 years of testing service prior to the beginning of the current plan year, under this paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(B)(*2*) the annual permitted disparity factor in the current plan year (and hence the sum of the annual permitted disparity factors for each year in the measurement period) is zero.

(*3*) *Cumulative permitted disparity limit.* The 35 years used in paragraph (c)(4)(iii)(B)(*2*) of this section must be reduced by the employee's cumulative disparity fraction, as defined in § 1.401(l)–5(c)(2), but determined solely with respect to the employee's total years of service under all plans taken into account under § 1.401(l)–5(a)(3) during the measurement period, other than the plan being tested.

(iv) *Social security retirement age.* Social security retirement age means social security retirement age as defined in section 415(b)(8).

(v) *Unadjusted accrual rate.* Unadjusted accrual rate means the normal or most valuable accrual rate, whichever is being determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d), expressed as a percentage of average annual compensation, without imputing permitted disparity under this section.

(5) *Employees with negative unadjusted accrual rates.* Notwithstanding the formulas in paragraph (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section, if an employee's unadjusted accrual rate is less than zero, the employee's adjusted accrual rate is deemed to be the employee's unadjusted accrual rate.

(6) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules in this paragraph (c):

Example. (a) Employees M and N participate in a defined benefit plan that uses a normal retirement age of 65. The plan is being tested for the plan year under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c), using unadjusted accrual rates determined using a plan year measurement period under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(1)(iii)(A). Employee M has an unadjusted normal accrual rate of 1.48 percent, average annual compensation of $21,000, and an employer-provided accrual of $311 (1.48 percent×$21,000). Employee N has an unadjusted normal accrual rate of 1.7 percent, average annual compensation of $106,000, and an employer-provided accrual of $1,802 (1.7 percent×$106,000). The covered compensation of both Employees M and N is $25,000, and social security retirement age for both employees is 65. Neither employee has testing service of more than 35 years and neither has ever participated in another plan.

(b) Because Employee M's average annual compensation does not exceed covered compensation, Employee M's A rate is 2.96 percent (2.0×1.48 percent), and Employee M's B rate is 2.23 percent (1.48 percent+0.75 percent). Thus, Employee M's adjusted accrual

rate is 2.23 percent, the lesser of the A rate and the B rate.

(c) Because Employee N's average annual compensation exceeds covered compensation, Employee N's C rate is 1.93 percent ($1,802/($106,000−(0.5×$25,000))), and Employee N's D rate is 1.88 percent (($1,802+(0.75 percent×$25,000))/$106,000). Thus, Employee N's adjusted accrual rate is 1.88 percent, the lesser of the C rate and the D rate.

(d) *Rules of general application*—(1) *Eligible plans.* The rules in this section may be used only for those plans to which the permitted disparity rules of section 401(l) are available. See §1.401(l)–1(a)(3).

(2) *Exceptions from consistency requirements.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the consistency requirements of §1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(vi) or §1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(2)(i) merely because the plan does not impute disparity for some employees to the extent required to comply with paragraph (d)(3) of this section, or because the plan does not impute disparity for any employees (including self-employed individuals within the meaning of section 401(c)(1)) who are not covered by any of the taxes under section 3111(a), section 3221, or section 1401.

(3) *Overall permitted disparity.* The annual overall permitted disparity limits of §1.401(l)–5(b) apply to the employer-provided contributions and benefits for an employee under all plans taken into account under §1.401(l)–5(a)(3). Thus, if an employee who benefits under the plan for the current plan year also benefits under a section 401(l) plan for the plan year ending with or within the current plan year, permitted disparity may not be imputed for that employee for the plan year. See §1.401(l)–5(b)(9), *Example 4.* Similarly, if an employee who benefits under the plan for the current plan year also benefits under another plan of the employer for the plan year ending with or within the current plan year, disparity may be imputed for that employee under only one of the plans.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46804, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(4)–8 Cross-testing.

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides rules for testing defined benefit plans on the basis of equivalent employer-provided contributions and defined contribution plans on the basis of equivalent employer-provided benefits under §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2). Paragraphs (b)(1) and (c)(1) of this section provide general tests for nondiscrimination based on individual equivalent accrual or allocation rates determined under paragraphs (b)(2) and (c)(2) of this section, respectively. Paragraphs (b)(3), (c)(3), and (d) of this section provide additional safe-harbor testing methods for target benefit plans, cash balance plans, and defined benefit plans that are part of floor-offset arrangements, respectively, that generally may be satisfied on a design basis.

(b) *Nondiscrimination in amount of benefits provided under a defined contribution plan*—(1) *General rule.* Equivalent benefits under a defined contribution plan (other than an ESOP) are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if the plan would satisfy §1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(1) for the plan year if an equivalent accrual rate, as determined under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, were substituted for each employee's allocation rate in the determination of rate groups. A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(1) merely because allocations are made at the same rate for employees who are older than their testing age (determined without regard to the current-age rule in paragraph (4) of the definition of *Testing age* in §1.401(a)(4)–(12) as they are made for employees who are at that age.

(2) *Determination of equivalent accrual rates*—(i) *Basic definition.* An employee's equivalent accrual rate for a plan year is the annual benefit that is the result of normalizing the increase in the employee's account balance during the measurement period, divided by the number of years in which the employee benefited under the plan during the measurement period, and expressed either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the employee's average annual compensation. A measurement period that includes future years may not be used for this purpose.

(ii) *Rules of application*—(A) *Determination of account balance.* The increase in the account balance during the measurement period taken into account under paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this

section does not include income, expenses, gains, or losses allocated during the measurement period that are attributable to the account balance as of the beginning of the measurement period, but does include any additional amounts that would have been included in the increase in the account balance but for the fact that they were previously distributed (including a reasonable adjustment for interest). In the case of a measurement period that is the current plan year, an employer may also elect to disregard the income, expenses, gains, and losses allocated during the current plan year that are attributable to the increase in account balance since the beginning of the year, and thus, determine the increase in account balance during the plan year taking into account only the allocations described in §1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(ii). In addition, an employer may disregard distributions made to a NHCE as well as distributions made to any employee in plan years beginning before a selected date no later than January 1, 1986.

(B) *Normalization.* The account balances determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section are normalized by treating them as single-sum benefits that are immediately and unconditionally payable to the employee. A standard interest rate, and a straight life annuity factor that is based on the same or a different standard interest rate and on a standard mortality table, must be used in normalizing these benefits. In addition, no mortality may be assumed prior to the employee's testing age.

(iii) *Options.* Any of the optional rules in §1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3) (e.g., imputation of permitted disparity) may be applied in determining an employee's equivalent accrual rate by substituting the employee's equivalent accrual rate (determined without regard to the option) for the employee's normal accrual rate (i.e., not most valuable accrual rate) in that section where appropriate. For this purpose, however, the last sentence of the fresh-start alternative in §1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3)(iii)(A) (dealing with compensation adjustments to the frozen accrued benefit) is not applicable. No other options are available in determining an employee's equivalent accrual rate except those (e.g., selection of alternative measurement periods) specifically provided in this paragraph (b)(2). Thus, for example, none of the optional special rules in §1.401(a)(4)–3(f) (e.g., determination of benefits on other than a plan year basis under §1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(6)) is available.

(iv) *Consistency rule.* Equivalent accrual rates must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees for the plan year. Thus, for example, the same measurement periods and standard interest rates must be used, and any available options must be applied consistently if at all.

(3) *Safe-harbor testing method for target benefit plans*—(i) *General rule.* A target benefit plan is a money purchase pension plan under which contributions to an employee's account are determined by reference to the amounts necessary to fund the employee's stated benefit under the plan. Whether a target benefit plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to an equivalent amount of benefits is generally determined under paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section. A target benefit plan is deemed to satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to an equivalent amount of benefits, however, if each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) *Stated benefit formula.* Each employee's stated benefit must be determined as the straight life annuity commencing at the employee's normal retirement age under a formula that would satisfy the requirements of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C) (*1*) or (*2*), and that would satisfy each of the uniformity requirements in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2) (taking into account the relevant exceptions provided in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)), if the plan were a defined benefit plan with the same benefit formula. In determining whether these requirements are satisfied, the rules of §1.401(a)(4)–3(f) do not apply, and, in addition, except as provided in paragraph (b)(3)(vii) of this section, an employee's stated benefit at normal retirement age under the stated benefit formula is deemed to accrue ratably over the period ending with the plan year in which the employee is projected to reach normal retirement age and beginning with the latest of: the first plan year in

which the employee benefited under the plan, the first plan year taken into account in the stated benefit formula, and any plan year immediately following a plan year in which the plan did not satisfy this paragraph (b)(3). Thus, except as provided in paragraph (b)(3)(vii) of this section, under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(v) an employee's stated benefit may not take into account service in years prior to the first plan year that the employee benefited under the plan, and an employee's stated benefit may not take into account service in plan years prior to the current plan year unless the plan satisfied this paragraph (b)(3) in all of those prior plan years.

(B) *Employer and employee contributions.* Employer contributions with respect to each employee must be based exclusively on the employee's stated benefit using the method provided in paragraph (b)(3)(iv) of this section, and forfeitures and any other amounts under the plan taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(ii) (other than employer contributions) are used exclusively to reduce employer contributions. Employee contributions (if any) may not be used to fund the stated benefit.

(C) *Permitted disparity.* If permitted disparity is taken into account, the stated benefit formula must satisfy § 1.401(l)–3. For this purpose, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance in § 1.401(l)–3(b)(2)(i) or (b)(3)(i), respectively, as adjusted in accordance with § 1.401(l)–3(d)(9) (and, if the employee's normal retirement age is not the employee's social security retirement age, § 1.401(l)–3(e)), is further reduced by multiplying the factor by 0.80.

(ii) *Changes in stated benefit formula.* A plan does not fail to satisfy paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section merely because the plan determines each employee's stated benefit in the current plan year under a stated benefit formula that differs from the stated benefit formula used to determine the employee's stated benefit in prior plan years.

(iii) *Stated benefits after normal retirement age.* A target benefit plan may limit increases in the stated benefit after normal retirement age consistent with the requirements applicable to defined benefit plans under section 411(b)(1)(H) (without regard to section 411(b)(1)(H)(iii)), provided that the limitation applies on the same terms to all employees. Thus, post-normal retirement benefits required under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(ii) must be provided under the stated benefit formula, subject to any uniformly applicable service cap under the formula.

(iv) *Method for determining required employer contributions*—(A) *General rule.* An employer's required contribution to the account of an employee for a plan year is determined based on the employee's stated benefit and the amount of the employee's theoretical reserve as of the date the employer's required contribution is determined for the plan year (the determination date). Paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(B) of this section provides rules for determining an employee's theoretical reserve. Paragraph (b)(3)(iv) (C) and (D) of this section provides rules for determining an employer's required contributions.

(B) *Theoretical reserve*—(*1*) *Initial theoretical reserve.* An employee's theoretical reserve as of the determination date for the first plan year in which the employee benefits under the plan, the first plan year taken into account under the stated benefit formula (if that is the current plan year), or the first plan year immediately following any plan year in which the plan did not satisfy this paragraph (b)(3), is zero.

(*2*) *Theoretical reserve in subsequent plan years.* An employee's theoretical reserve as of the determination date for a plan year (other than a plan year described in paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(B)(*1*) of this section) is the employee's theoretical reserve as of the determination date for the prior plan year, plus the employer's required contribution for the prior plan year (as limited by section 415, but without regard to the additional contributions described in paragraph (b)(3)(v) of this section) both increased by interest from the determination date for the prior plan year through the determination date for the current plan year, but not beyond the determination date for the plan year that includes the employee's normal retirement date. (Thus, an employee's

theoretical reserve as of the determination date for a plan year does not include the amount of the employer's required contribution for the plan year.) The interest rate for determining employer contributions that was in effect on the determination date in the prior plan year must be applied to determine the required interest adjustment for this period. For plan years beginning after the effective date applicable to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(a) or (b), a standard interest rate must be used, and may not be changed except on the determination date for a plan year.

(C) *Required contributions for employees under normal retirement age.* The required employer contributions with respect to an employee whose attained age is less than the employee's normal retirement age must be determined for each plan year as follows:

(*1*) Determine the employee's fractional rule benefit (within the meaning of § 1.411(b)–1(b)(3)(ii)(A)) under the plan's stated benefit formula as if the plan were a defined benefit plan with the same benefit formula.

(*2*) Determine the actuarial present value of the fractional rule benefit determined in paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(C)(*1*) of this section as of the determination date for the current plan year, using a standard interest rate and a standard mortality table that are set forth in the plan and that are the same for all employees, and assuming no mortality before the employee's normal retirement age.

(*3*) Determine the excess, if any, of the amount determined in paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(C)(*2*) of this section over the employee's theoretical reserve for the current plan year determined under paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(B) of this section.

(*4*) Determine the required employer contribution for the current plan year by amortizing on a level annual basis, using the same interest rate used for paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(C)(*2*) of this section, the result in paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(C)(*3*) of this section over the period beginning with the determination date for the current plan year and ending with the determination date for the plan year in which the employee is projected to reach normal retirement age.

(D) *Required contributions for employees over normal retirement age.* The required employer contributions with respect to an employee whose attained age equals or exceeds the employee's normal retirement age is the excess, if any, of the actuarial present value, as of the determination date for the current plan year, of the employee's stated benefit for the current plan year (determined using an immediate straight life annuity factor based on a standard interest rate and a standard mortality table, for an employee whose attained age equals the employee's normal retirement age) over the employee's theoretical reserve as of the determination date.

(v) *Effect of section 415 and 416 requirements.* A target benefit plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(3) merely because required contributions under the plan are limited by section 415 in a plan year. Similarly, a target benefit plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(3) merely because additional contributions are made consistent with the requirements of section 416(c)(2) (regardless of whether the plan is top-heavy).

(vi) *Certain conditions on allocations.* A target benefit plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(3) merely because required contributions under the plan are subject to the conditions on allocations permitted under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(4)(iii).

(vii) *Special rules for target benefit plans qualified under prior law*—(A) *Service taken into account prior to satisfaction of this paragraph.* For purposes of determining whether the stated benefit formula satisfies paragraph (b)(3)(i)(A) of this section (e.g., whether the period over which an employee's stated benefit is deemed to accrue is the same as the period taken into account under the stated benefit formula as required by paragraph (b)(3)(i)(A) of this section), a target benefit plan that was adopted and in effect on September 19, 1991, is deemed to have satisfied this paragraph (b)(3), and an employee is treated as benefiting under the plan, in any year prior to the effective date applicable to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) or (b) that was taken into account in the stated benefit formula under the plan on September 19, 1991, if

the plan satisfied the applicable nondiscrimination requirements for target benefit plans for that prior year.

(B) *Initial theoretical reserve.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(3)(iv)(B)(1) of this section, a target benefit plan under which the stated benefit formula takes into account service for an employee for plan years prior to the first plan year in which the plan satisfied this paragraph (b)(3), as permitted under paragraph (b)(3)(vii)(A) of this section, must determine an initial theoretical reserve for the employee as of the determination date for the last plan year beginning before such plan year under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(e).

(C) *Satisfaction of prior law.* In determining whether a plan satisfied the applicable nondiscrimination requirements for target benefit plans for any period prior to the effective date applicable to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) or (b), no amendments after September 19, 1991, other than amendments necessary to satisfy section 401(l), are taken into account.

(viii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b)(3):

Example 1. (a) Employer X maintains a target benefit plan with a calendar plan year that bases contributions on a stated benefit equal to 40 percent of each employee's average annual compensation, reduced pro rata for years of participation less than 25, payable annually as a straight life annuity commencing at normal retirement age. The UP–84 mortality table and an interest rate of 7.5 percent are used to calculate the contributions necessary to fund the stated benefit. Required contributions are determined on the last day of each plan year. The normal retirement age under the plan is 65. Employee M is 39 years old in 1994, has participated in the plan for six years, and has average annual compensation equal to $60,000 for the 1994 plan year. Assume that Employee M's theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1993 plan year is $13,909, determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(e), and that required employer contributions for 1993 were determined using an interest rate of six percent.

(b) Under these facts, Employer X's 1994 required contribution to fund Employee M's stated benefit is $1,318, calculated as follows:

(1) Employee M's fractional rule benefit is $24,000 (40 percent of Employee M's average annual compensation of $60,000).

(2) The actuarial present value of Employee M's fractional rule benefit as of the last day of the 1994 plan year is $30,960 (Employee M's fractional rule benefit of $24,000 multiplied by 1.290, the actuarial present value factor for an annual straight life annuity commencing at age 65 applicable to a 39-year-old employee, determined using the stated interest rate of 7.5 percent and the UP–84 mortality table, and assuming no mortality before normal retirement age).

(3) The actuarial present value of Employee M's fractional rule benefit ($30,960) is reduced by Employee M's theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1994 plan year. The theoretical reserve on that day is $14,744—the $13,909 theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1993 plan year, increased by interest for one year at the rate of six percent. Because the required contribution for the 1993 plan year is taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(e)(2) in determining the theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1993 plan year, it is not added to the theoretical reserve again in this paragraph (b)(3) of this *Example 1.* The resulting difference is $16,216 ($30,960 − $14,744).

(4) The $16,216 excess of the actuarial present value of Employee M's fractional rule benefit over Employee M's theoretical reserve is multiplied by 0.0813, the amortization factor applicable to a 39-year-old employee determined using the stated interest rate of 7.5 percent. The product of $1,318 is the amount of the required employer contribution for Employee M for the 1994 plan year.

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that as of January 1, 1995, the plan's stated benefit formula is amended to provide for a stated benefit equal to 45 percent of average annual compensation, reduced pro rata for years of participation less than 25, payable annually as a straight life annuity commencing at normal retirement age. For the 1995 plan year, Employee M's average annual compensation continues to be $60,000. The mortality table used for the calculation of the employer's required contributions remains the same as in the prior plan year, but the plan's stated interest rate is changed to 8.0 percent effective as of December 31, 1995.

(b) Under these facts, Employer X's required contribution for Employee M is $1,290, calculated as follows:

(1) Employee M's fractional rule benefit is $27,000 (45 percent of $60,000).

(2) The actuarial present value of Employee M's fractional rule benefit as of the last day of the 1995 plan year is $32,319 ($27,000 multiplied by 1.197, the actuarial present value factor for an annuity commencing at age 65 applicable to a 40-year-old employee, determined using the stated interest rate of 8.0 percent and the UP–84 mortality table, and assuming no mortality before normal retirement age).

(3) The actuarial present value of Employee M's fractional rule benefit ($32,319) is reduced by Employee M's theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1995 plan year. The theoretical reserve as of that day is $17,267—the $14,744 theoretical reserve as of the last day of the 1994 plan year plus the $1,318 required contribution for the 1994 plan year, both increased by interest for one year at the rate of 7.5 percent. The resulting difference is $15,052 ($32,319 − $17,267).

(4) The result in paragraph (b)(3) of this *Example 2* is multiplied by 0.0857, the amortization factor applicable to a 40-year-old employee determined using the stated interest rate of 8.0 percent. The product, $1,290, is the amount of the required employer contribution for Employee M for the 1995 plan year.

(c) *Nondiscrimination in amount of contributions under a defined benefit plan*—(1) *General rule.* Equivalent allocations under a defined benefit plan are nondiscriminatory in amount for a plan year if the plan would satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)(1) (taking into account § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)(3)) for the plan year if an equivalent normal and most valuable allocation rate, as determined under paragraph (c)(2) of this section, were substituted for each employee's normal and most valuable accrual rate, respectively, in the determination of rate groups.

(2) *Determination of equivalent allocation rates*—(i) *Basic definitions.* An employee's equivalent normal and most valuable allocation rates for a plan year are, respectively, the actuarial present value of the increase over the plan year in the benefit that would be taken into account in determining the employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates for the plan year, expressed either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the employee's plan year compensation. In the case of a contributory DB plan, the rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b)(1), (b)(5), or (b)(6) must be used to determine the amount of each employee's employer-provided benefit that would be taken into account for this purpose.

(ii) *Rules for determining actuarial present value.* The actuarial present value of the increase in an employee's benefit must be determined using a standard interest rate and a standard mortality table, and no mortality may be assumed prior to the employee's testing age.

(iii) *Options.* The optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(iv) (imputation of permitted disparity) and (v) (grouping of rates) may be applied to determine an employee's equivalent normal and most valuable allocation rates by substituting those rates (determined without regard to the option) for the employee's allocation rate in that section where appropriate. In addition, the limitations under section 415 may be taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(2)(ii)(B), and qualified disability benefits may be taken into account as accrued benefits under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(2), in determining the increase in an employee's accrued benefit during a plan year for purposes of paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section, if those rules would otherwise be available. No other options are available in determining an employee's equivalent normal and most valuable allocations rate except those (e.g., selection of alternative standard interest rates) specifically provided in this paragraph (c)(2). Thus, while all of the mandatory rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d) and (f) for determining the amount of benefits used to determine an employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates (e.g., the treatment of early retirement window benefits in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(4)) are applicable in determining an employee's equivalent normal and most valuable allocation rates, none of the optional rules under § 1.401(a)(4)–3 is available (except the options relating to the section 415 limits and qualified disability benefits noted above).

(iv) *Consistency rule.* Equivalent allocation rates must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees for the plan year. Thus, for example, the same standard interest rates must be used, and any available options must be applied consistently if at all.

(3) *Safe harbor testing method for cash balance plans*—(i) *General rule.* A cash balance plan is a defined benefit plan that defines benefits for each employee by reference to the employee's hypothetical account. An employee's hypothetical account is determined by reference to hypothetical allocations and interest adjustments that are analogous to actual allocations of contributions and earnings to an employee's account under a defined contribution

plan. Because a cash balance plan is a defined benefit plan, whether it satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the equivalent amount of contributions is generally determined under paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this section. However, a cash balance plan that satisfies each of the requirements in paragraphs (c)(3)(ii) through (xi) of this section is deemed to satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to an equivalent amount of contributions.

(ii) *Plan requirements in general.* The plan must be an accumulation plan. The benefit formula under the plan must provide for hypothetical allocations for each employee in the plan that satisfy paragraph (c)(3)(iii) of this section, and interest adjustments to these hypothetical allocations that satisfy paragraph (c)(3)(iv) of this section. The benefit formula under the plan must provide that these hypothetical allocations and interest adjustments are accumulated as a hypothetical account for each employee, determined in accordance with paragraph (c)(3)(v) of this section. The plan must provide that an employee's accrued benefit under the plan as of any date is an annuity that is the actuarial equivalent of the employee's projected hypothetical account as of normal retirement age, determined in accordance with paragraph (c)(3)(vi) of this section. In addition, the plan must satisfy paragraphs (c)(3)(vii) through (xi) of this section (to the extent applicable) regarding optional forms of benefit, past service credits, post-normal retirement age benefits, certain uniformity requirements, and changes in the plan's benefit formula, respectively.

(iii) *Hypothetical allocations*—(A) *In general.* The hypothetical allocations provided under the plan's benefit formula must satisfy either paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B) or (C) of this section. Paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B) of this section provides a design-based safe harbor that does not require the annual comparison of hypothetical allocations under the plan. Paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(C) of this section requires the annual comparison of hypothetical allocations.

(B) *Uniform hypothetical allocation formula.* To satisfy this paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B), the plan's benefit formula must provide for hypothetical allocations for all employees in the plan for all plan years of amounts that would satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(3) for each such plan year if the hypothetical allocations were the only allocations under a defined contribution plan for the employees for those plan years. Thus, the plan's benefit formula must provide for hypothetical allocations for all employees in the plan for all plan years that are the same percentage of plan year compensation or the same dollar amount. In determining whether the hypothetical allocations satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(3), the only provisions of § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(5) that apply are § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(5)(ii) (section 401(l) permitted disparity, (iii) (entry dates), (vi) (certain limits on allocations), and (vii) (dollar allocation per uniform unit of service). Thus, for example, the plan's benefit formula may take permitted disparity into account in a manner allowed under § 1.401(l)–2 for defined contribution plans.

(C) *Modified general test.* To satisfy this paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(C), the plan's benefit formula must provide for hypothetical allocations for all employees in the plan for the plan year that would satisfy the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c) for the plan year, if the hypothetical allocations were the only allocations for the employees taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(ii) under a defined contribution plan for the plan year. In determining whether the hypothetical allocations satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c), the provisions of § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(iii) through (v) apply. Thus, for example, permitted disparity may be imputed under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(iv) in accordance with the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–7(b) applicable to defined contribution plans.

(iv) *Interest adjustments to hypothetical allocations*—(A) *General rule.* The plan benefit formula must provide that the dollar amount of the hypothetical allocation for each employee for a plan year is automatically adjusted using an interest rate that satisfies paragraph (c)(3)(iv)(B) of this section, compounded no less frequently than annually, for the period that begins with a date in the plan year and that ends at normal retirement age. This requirement is not satisfied if any portion of the interest adjustments to a

hypothetical allocation are contingent on the employee's satisfaction of any requirement. Thus, for example, the interest adjustments to a hypothetical allocation must be provided through normal retirement age, even though the employee terminates employment or commences benefits before that age.

(B) *Requirements with respect to interest rates.* The interest rate must be a single interest rate specified in the plan that is the same for all employees in the plan for all plan years. The interest rate must be either a standard interest rate or a variable interest rate. If the interest rate is a variable interest rate, it must satisfy paragraph (c)(3)(iv)(C) of this section.

(C) *Variable interest rates*—(*1*) *General rule.* The plan must specify the variable interest rate, the method for determining the current value of the variable interest rate, and the period (not to exceed 1 year) for which the current value of the variable interest rate applies. Permissible variable interest rates are listed in paragraph (c)(3)(iv)(C)(*2*) of this section. Permissible methods for determining the current value of the variable interest rate are provided in paragraph (c)(3)(iv)(C)(*3*) of this section.

(*2*) *Permissible variable interest rates.* The variable interest rate specified in the plan must be one of the following—

(*i*) The rate on 3-month Treasury Bills,

(*ii*) The rate on 6-month Treasury Bills,

(*iii*) The rate on 1-year Treasury Bills,

(*iv*) The yield on 1-year Treasury Constant Maturities,

(*v*) The yield on 2-year Treasury Constant Maturities,

(*vi*) The yield on 5-year Treasury Constant Maturities,

(*vii*) The yield on 10-year Treasury Constant Maturities,

(*viii*) The yield on 30-year Treasury Constant Maturities, or

(*ix*) The single interest rate such that, as of a single age specified in the plan, the actuarial present value of a deferred straight life annuity of an amount commencing at the normal retirement age under the plan, calculated using that interest rate and a standard mortality table but assuming no mortality before normal retirement age, is equal to the actuarial present value, as of the single age specified in the plan, of the same annuity calculated using the section 417(e) rates applicable to distributions in excess of $25,000 (determined under § 1.417(e)–1(d)), and the same mortality assumptions.

(*3*) *Current value of variable interest rate.* The current value of the variable interest rate that applies for a period must be either the value of the variable interest rate determined as of a specified date in the period or the immediately preceding period, or the average of the values of the variable interest rate as of two or more specified dates during the current period or the immediately preceding period. The value as of a date of the rate on a Treasury Bill is the average auction rate for the week or month in which the date falls, as reported in the Federal Reserve Bulletin. The value as of a date of the yield on a Treasury Constant Maturity is the average yield for the week, month, or year in which the date falls, as reported in the Federal Reserve Bulletin. (The Federal Reserve Bulletin is published by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and is available from Publication Services, Mail Stop 138, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Washington DC 20551.) The plan may limit the current value of the variable interest rate to a maximum (not less than the highest standard interest rate), or a minimum (not more than the lowest standard interest rate), or both.

(v) *Hypothetical account*—(A) *Current value of hypothetical account.* As of any date, the current value of an employee's hypothetical account must equal the sum of all hypothetical allocations and the respective interest adjustments to each such hypothetical allocation provided through that date for the employee under the plan's benefit formula (without regard to any interest adjustments provided under the plan's benefit formula for periods after that date).

(B) *Value of hypothetical account as of normal retirement age.* Under paragraph (c)(3)(vi) of this section, the value of an employee's hypothetical account must be determined as of normal retirement

age in order to determine the employee's accrued benefit as of any date at or before normal retirement age. As of any date at or before normal retirement age, the value of an employee's hypothetical account as of normal retirement age must equal the sum of each hypothetical allocation provided through that date for the employee under the plan's benefit formula, plus the interest adjustments provided through normal retirement age on each of those hypothetical allocations for the employee under the plan's benefit formula (without regard to any hypothetical allocations that might be provided after that date under the plan's benefit formula). If the interest rate specified in the plan is a variable interest rate, the plan must specify that the determination in the preceding sentence is made by assuming that the current value of the variable interest rate for all future periods is either the current value of the variable interest rate for the current period or the average of the current values of the variable interest rate for the current period and one or more periods immediately preceding the current period (not to exceed 5 years in the aggregate).

(vi) *Determination of accrued benefit*—(A) *Definition of accrued benefit.* The plan must provide that at any date at or before normal retirement age the accrued benefit (within the meaning of section 411(a)(7)(A)(i)) of each employee in the plan is an annuity commencing at normal retirement age that is the actuarial equivalent of the employee's hypothetical account as of normal retirement age (as determined under paragraph (c)(3)(v)(B) of this section). The separate benefit that each employee accrues for a plan year is an annuity that is the actuarial equivalent of the employee's hypothetical allocation for that plan year, including the automatic adjustments for interest through normal retirement age required under paragraph (c)(3)(iv) of this section.

(B) *Normal form of benefit.* The annuity specified in paragraph (c)(3)(vi)(A) of this section must provide an annual benefit payable in the same form at the same uniform normal retirement age for all employees in the plan. The annual benefit must be the normal retirement benefit under the plan (within the meaning of section 411(a)(9)) under the plan.

(C) *Determination of actuarial equivalence.* For purposes of this paragraph (c)(3)(vi) and paragraph (c)(3)(ix) of this section, actuarial equivalence must be determined using a standard mortality table and either a standard interest rate or the interest rate specified in the plan for making interest adjustments to hypothetical allocations. If the interest rate used is the interest rate specified in the plan, and that rate is a variable interest rate, the assumed value of the variable interest rate for all future periods must be the same value that would be assumed for purposes of paragraph (c)(3)(v)(B) of this section. The same actuarial assumptions must be used for all employees in the plan.

(D) *Effect of section 415 and 416 requirements.* A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (c)(3)(vi) merely because the accrued benefits under the plan are limited by section 415, or merely because the accrued benefits under the plan are the greater of the accrued benefits otherwise determined under the plan and the minimum benefit described in section 416(c)(1) (regardless of whether the plan is top-heavy).

(vii) *Optional forms of benefit*—(A) *In general.* The plan must satisfy the uniform subsidies requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(iv) with respect to all subsidized optional forms of benefit.

(B) *Limitation on subsidies.* Unless hypothetical allocations are determined under a uniform hypothetical allocation formula that satisfies paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B) of this section, the actuarial present value of any QJSA provided under the plan must not be greater than the single sum distribution to the employee that would satisfy paragraph (c)(3)(vii)(C) of this section assuming that it was distributed to the employee on the date of commencement of the QJSA.

(C) *Distributions subject to section 417(e).* Except as otherwise required under section 415(b), if the plan provides for a distribution alternative that is subject to the interest rate restrictions under section 417(e), the actuarial present value of the benefit

paid to an employee under the distribution alternative must equal the nonforfeitable percentage (determined under the plan's vesting schedule) of the greater of the following two amounts—

(*1*) The current value of the employee's hypothetical account as of the date the distribution commences, calculated in accordance with paragraph (c)(3)(v)(A) of this section.

(*2*) The actuarial present value (calculated in accordance with § 1.417(e)–1(d)) of the employee's accrued benefit.

(D) *Determination of actuarial present value.* For purposes of this paragraph (c)(3)(vii), actuarial present value must be determined using a reasonable interest rate and mortality table. A standard interest rate and a standard mortality table are considered reasonable for this purpose.

(viii) *Past service credit.* The benefit formula under the plan may not provide for hypothetical allocations in the curent plan year that are attributable to years of service before the current plan year, unless each of the following requirements is satisfied—

(A) The years of past service credit are granted on a uniform basis to all current employees in the plan.

(B) Hypothetical allocations for the current plan year are determined under a uniform hypothetical allocation formula that satisfies paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B) of this section.

(C) The hypothetical allocations attributable to the years of past service would have satisfied the uniform hypothetical allocation formula requirement of paragraph (c)(3)(iii)(B) of this section, and the interest adjustments to those hypothetical allocations would have satisfied paragraph (c)(3)(iv)(A) of this section, if the plan provision granting past service had been in effect for the entire period for which years of past service are granted to any employee. In order to satisfy this requirement, the hypothetical allocation attributable to a year of past service must be adjusted for interest in accordance with paragraph (c)(3)(iv) of this section for the period (including the retroactive period) beginning with the year of past service to which the hypothetical allocation is attributable and ending at normal retirement age. If the interest rate specified in the plan is a variable interest rate, the interest adjustments for the period prior to the current plan year either must be based on the current value of the variable interest rate for the period in which the grant of past service first becomes effective or must be reconstructed based on the then current value of the variable interest rate that would have applied during each prior period.

(ix) *Employees beyond normal retirement age.* In the case of an employee who commences receipt of benefits after normal retirement age, the plan must provide that interest adjustments continue to be made to an employee's hypothetical account until the employee's benefit commencement date. In the case of an employee described in the previous sentence, the employee's accrued benefit is defined as an annuity that is the actuarial equivalent of the employee's hypothetical account determined in accordance with paragraph (c)(3)(v)(A) of this section as of the date of benefit commencement.

(x) *Additional uniformity requirements.* In addition to any uniformity requirements provided elsewhere in this paragraph (c)(3), the plan must satisfy the uniformity requirements in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(v) (uniform vesting and service requirements) and (vi) (no employee contributions). A plan does not fail to satisfy the uniformity requirements of this paragraph (c)(3)(x) or any other uniformity requirement provided in this paragraph (c)(3) merely because the plan contains one or more of the provisions described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(8)(iv) (prior vesting schedules), (v) (certain conditions on accruals), or (xi) (multiple definitions of service).

(xi) *Changes in benefit formula, allocation formula, or interest rates.* A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (c)(3) merely because the plan is amended to change the benefit formula, hypothetical allocation formula, or the interest rate used to adjust hypothetical allocations for plan years after a fresh-start date, provided that the accrued benefits for plan years beginning after the fresh-start date are determined in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c), as modified by § 1.401(a)(4)–13(f).

(d) *Safe-harbor testing method for defined benefit plans that are part of a floor-offset arrangement*—(1) *General rule.* A defined benefit plan that is part of a floor-offset arrangement is deemed to satisfy the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) if all of the following requirements are satisfied:

(i) Under the floor-offset arrangement, the accrued benefit (as defined in section 411(a)(7)(A)(i)) that would otherwise be provided to an employee under the defined benefit plan must be reduced solely by the actuarial equivalent of all or part of the employee's account balance attributable to employer contributions under a defined contribution plan maintained by the same employer (plus the actuarial equivalent of all or part of any prior distributions from that portion of the account balance). If any portion of the benefit that is being offset is nonforfeitable, that portion may be offset only by a benefit (or portion of a benefit) that is also nonforfeitable. In determining the actuarial equivalent of amounts provided under the defined contribution plan, an interest rate no higher than the highest standard interest rate must be used, and no mortality may be assumed in determining the actuarial equivalent of any prior distributions from the defined contribution plan or for periods prior to the benefit commencement date under the defined benefit plan.

(ii) The defined benefit plan may not be a contributory DB plan (unless it satisfies §1.401(a)(4)–6(b)(6)), and benefits under the defined benefit plan may not be reduced by any portion of the employee's account balance under the defined contribution plan (or prior distributions from that account) that are attributable to employee contributions.

(iii) The defined benefit plan and the defined contribution plan must benefit the same employees.

(iv) The offset under the defined benefit plan must be applied to all employees on the same terms.

(v) All employees must have available to them under the defined contribution plan the same investment options and the same options with respect to the timing of preretirement distributions.

(vi) The defined benefit plan must satisfy the uniformity requirements of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2) and the unit credit safe harbor in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(3) without taking into account the offset described in paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section (i.e., on a gross-benefit basis), and the defined contribution plan must satisfy any of the tests in §1.401(a)(4)–2(b) or (c). Alternatively, the defined benefit plan must satisfy any of the tests in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b) or (c) without taking into account the offset described in paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section, and the defined contribution plan must satisfy the uniform allocation safe harbor in §1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(2).

(vii) The defined contribution plan may not be a section 401(k) plan or a section 401(m) plan.

(2) *Application of safe-harbor testing method to qualified offset arrangements.* A defined benefit plan that is part of a qualified offset arrangement as defined in section 1116(f)(5) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, Public Law No. 99–514, is deemed to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(vi) and (vii) of this section, if the only defined contribution plans included in the qualified offset arrangement are section 401(k) plans, section 401(m) plans, or both, and the defined benefit plan would satisfy the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(vi) of this section assuming the elective contributions for each employee under the defined contribution plan were the same (either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of compensation) for all plan years since the establishment of the plan.

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§1.401(a)(4)–9 Plan aggregation and restructuring.

(a) *Introduction.* Two or more plans that are permissively aggregated and treated as a single plan under §§1.410(b)–7(d) must also be treated as a single plan for purposes of section 401(a)(4). See §1.401(a)(4)–12 (definition of plan). An aggregated plan is generally tested under the same rules applicable to single plans. Paragraph (b) of this section, however, provides special rules for determining whether a

plan that consists of one or more defined contribution plans and one or more defined benefit plans (a DB/DC plan) satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of employer-provided benefits and the availability of benefits, rights, and features. Paragraph (c) of this section provides rules allowing a plan to be treated as consisting of separate component plans and allowing the component plans to be tested separately under section 401(a)(4).

(b) *Application of nondiscrimination requirements to DB/DC plans*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, whether a DB/DC plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) is determined using the same rules applicable to a single plan. In addition, paragraph (b)(3) of this section provides an optional rule for demonstrating nondiscrimination in availability of benefits, rights, and features provided under a DB/DC plan.

(2) *Special rules for demonstrating nondiscrimination in amount of contributions or benefits*—(i) *Application of general tests.* A DB/DC plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits for a plan year if it would satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)(1) (without regard to the special rule in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)(3)) for the plan year if an employee's aggregate normal and most valuable allocation rates, as determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, or an employee's aggregate normal and most valuable accrual rates, as determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section, were substituted for each employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates, respectively, in the determination of rate groups.

(ii) *Determination of aggregate rates*—(A) *Aggregate allocation rates.* An employee's aggregate normal and most valuable allocation rates are determined by treating all defined contribution plans that are part of the DB/DC plan as a single plan, and all defined benefit plans that are part of the DB/DC plan as a separate single plan; and determining an allocation rate and equivalent normal and most valuable allocation rates for the employee under each plan under §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2) and 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(2), respectively. The employee's aggregate normal allocation rate is the sum of the employee's allocation rate and equivalent normal allocation rate determined in this manner, and the employee's aggregate most valuable allocation rate is the sum of the employee's allocation rate and equivalent most valuable allocation rate determined in this manner.

(B) *Aggregate accrual rates.* An employee's aggregate normal and most valuable accrual rates are determined by treating all defined contribution plans that are part of the DB/DC plan as a single plan, and all defined benefit plans that are part of the DB/DC plan as a separate single plan; and determining an equivalent accrual rate and normal and most valuable accrual rates for the employee under each plan under §§ 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(2) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(d), respectively. The employee's aggregate normal accrual rate is the sum of the employee's equivalent accrual rate and the normal accrual rate determined in this manner, and the employee's aggregate most valuable accrual rate is the sum of the employee's equivalent accrual rate and most valuable accrual rate determined in this manner.

(iii) *Options applied on an aggregate basis.* The optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(iv) (imputation of permitted disparity) and (v) (grouping of rates) may not be used to determine an employee's allocation or equivalent allocation rate, but may be applied to determine an employee's aggregate normal and most valuable allocation rates by substituting those rates (determined without regard to the option) for the employee's allocation rate in that section where appropriate. The optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3) (e.g., imputation of permitted disparity) may not be used to determine an employee's accrual or equivalent accrual rate, but may be applied to determine an employee's aggregate normal and most valuable accrual rate by substituting those rates (determined without regard to the option) for the employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates, respectively, in that section where appropriate.

(iv) *Consistency rule*—(A) *General rule.* Aggregate normal and most valuable allocation rates and aggregate normal

and most valuable accrual rates must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees for the plan year. Thus, for example, the same measurement periods and interest rates must be used, and any available options must be applied consistently, if at all, for the entire DB/DC plan. Consequently, options that are not permitted to be used under § 1.401(a)(4)–8 in cross-testing a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan (such as measurement periods that include future periods, non-standard interest rates, the option to disregard compensation adjustments described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d), or the option to disregard plan provisions providing for actuarial increases after normal retirement age under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(3)) may not be used in testing a DB/DC plan on either a benefits or contributions basis, because their use would inevitably result in inconsistent determinations under the defined contribution and defined benefit portions of the plan.

(B) *Exception for section 415 alternative.* A DB/DC plan does not fail to satisfy the consistency rule in paragraph (b)(2)(iv)(A) of this section merely because the limitations under section 415 are not taken into account, or may not be taken into account, under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(2)(ii)(B) in determining employees' accrual or equivalent allocation rates under the defined benefit portion of the plan, even though those limitations are applied in determining employees' allocation and equivalent accrual rates under the defined contribution portion of the plan.

(3) *Optional rules for demonstrating nondiscrimination in availability of certain benefits, rights, and features*—(i) *Current availability.* A DB/DC plan is deemed to satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)(1) with respect to the current availability of a benefit, right, or feature other than a single sum benefit, loan, ancillary benefit, or benefit commencement date (including the availability of in-service withdrawals), that is provided under only one type of plan (defined benefit or defined contribution) included in the DB/DC plan, if the benefit, right, or feature is currently available to all NHCEs in all plans of the same type as the plan under which it is provided.

(ii) *Effective availability.* The fact that it may be difficult or impossible to provide a benefit, right, or feature described in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section under a plan of a different type than the plan or plans under which it is provided is one of the factors taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies the effective availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(c)(1).

(c) *Plan restructuring*—(1) *General rule.* A plan may be treated, in accordance with this paragraph (c), as consisting of two or more component plans for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies section 401(a)(4). If each of the component plans of a plan satisfies all of the requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) as if it were a separate plan, then the plan is treated as satisfying section 401(a)(4).

(2) *Identification of component plans.* A plan may be restructured into component plans, each consisting of all the allocations, accruals, and other benefits, rights, and features provided to a selected group of employees. The employer may select the group of employees used for this purpose in any manner, and the composition of the groups may be changed from plan year to plan year. Every employee must be included in one and only one component plan under the same plan for a plan year.

(3) *Satisfaction of section 401(a)(4) by a component plan*—(i) *General rule.* The rules applicable in determining whether a component plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) are the same as those applicable to a plan. Thus, for this purpose, any reference to a plan in section 401(a)(4) and the regulations thereunder (other than this paragraph (c)) is interpreted as a reference to a component plan. As is true for a plan, whether a component plan satisfies the uniformity and other requirements applicable to safe harbor plans under §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2(b) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) is determined on a design basis. Thus, for example, plan provisions are not disregarded merely because they do not currently apply to employees in the component plan if they will apply to those employees as a result of the mere passage of time.

(ii) *Certain testing rules involving averaging.* The safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)–

2(b)(3) for plans with uniform points allocation formulas are not available in testing (and thus cannot be satisfied by) contributions under a component plan. See §§1.401(k)–1(b)(3)(iii) and 1.401(m)–1(b)(3)(iii) for rules regarding the inapplicability of restructuring to section 401(k) plans and section 401(m) plans.

(4) *Satisfaction of section 410(b) by a component plan*—(i) *General rule.* The rules applicable in determining whether a component plan satisfies section 410(b) are generally the same as those applicable to a plan. However, a component plan is deemed to satisfy the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5 if the plan of which it is a part satisfies §1.410(b)–5 (without regard to §1.410(b)–5(f)). In the case of a component plan that is part of a plan that relies on §1.410(b)–5(f) to satisfy the average benefit percentage test, the component plan is deemed to satisfy the average benefit percentage test only if the component plan separately satisfies §1.410(b)–5(f). In addition, all component plans of a plan are deemed to satisfy the average benefit percentage test if the plan makes an early retirement window benefit (within the meaning of §1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(4)(iii)) currently available (within the meaning of §1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(4)(ii)(A)) to a group of employees that satisfies section 410(b) (without regard to the average benefit percentage test), and if it would not be necessary for the plan or any rate group or component plan of the plan to satisfy that test in order for the plan to satisfy sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) in the absence of the early retirement window benefit.

(ii) *Relationship to satisfaction of section 410(b) by the plan.* Satisfaction of section 410(b) by a component plan is relevant solely for purposes of determining whether the plan of which it is a part satisfies section 401(a)(4), and not for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies section 410(b) itself. The plan must still independently satisfy section 410(b) in order to be a qualified plan. Similarly, satisfaction of section 410(b) by a plan is relevant solely for purposes of determining whether the plan, and not the component plan, satisfies section 410(b). Thus, for example, a component plan that does not satisfy the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) must still satisfy the average benefit test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(3), even though the plan of which it is a part satisfies the ratio percentage test.

(5) *Effect of restructuring under other sections.* The restructuring rules provided in this paragraph (c) apply solely for purposes of sections 401(a)(4) and 401(l), and those portions of sections 410(b), 414(s), and any other provisions that are specifically applicable in determining whether the requirements of section 401(a)(4) are satisfied. Thus, for example, a component plan is not treated as a separate plan under section 401(a)(26).

(6) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (c):

Example 1. Employer X maintains a defined benefit plan. The plan provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 1.0 percent of average annual compensation times years of service to employees at Plant S, and 1.5 percent of average annual compensation times years of service to employees at Plant T. Under paragraph (c)(2) of this section, the plan may be treated as consisting of two component defined benefit plans, one providing retirement benefits equal to 1.0 percent of average annual compensation times years of service to the employees at Plant S, and another providing benefits equal to 1.5 percent of average annual compensation times years of service to employees at Plant T. If each component plan satisfies sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) as if it were a separate plan under the rules of this paragraph (c), then the entire plan satisfies section 401(a)(4).

Example 2. (a) Employer Y maintains Plan A, a defined benefit plan, for its Employees M, N, O, P, Q, and R. Plan A provides benefits under a uniform formula that satisfies the requirements of §1.401(a)(4)–3 (b)(2) and (b)(3) before it is amended on February 14, 1994. The amendment provides an early retirement window benefit that is a subsidized optional form of benefit under §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(iii) and that is available on the same terms to all employees who satisfy the eligibility requirements for the window. The early retirement window benefit is available only to employees who retire between June 1, 1994, and November 30, 1994.

(b) Assume that Employees M, N, and O will be eligible to receive the window benefit

by the end of the window period and Employees P, Q, and R will not. Because substantially all employees will not satisfy the eligibility requirements for the early retirement window benefit by the close of the early retirement window benefit period, Plan A fails to satisfy the uniform subsidies requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(iii). See §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(vi), *Example 6*.

(c) Under paragraph (c)(2) of this section, Employees M, N, O, P, Q, and R may be grouped into two component plans, one consisting of Employees M, N, and O, and all their accruals and other benefits, rights, and features under the plan (including the early retirement window benefit), and another consisting of Employees P, Q, and R, and all their accruals and other benefits, rights, and features under the plan. Each of the component plans identified in this manner satisfies the uniform subsidies requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(iii), and thus satisfies §1.401(a)(4)–3(b). The entire plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) under the rules of this paragraph (c), if each of these component plans also satisfies section 410(b) as if it were a separate plan (including, if applicable, the reasonable classification requirement of §1.410(b)–4(b), and taking into account the special rule of paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section that forgives the average benefit percentage test in certain situations in which the average benefit percentage test would be required solely as a result of the early retirement window benefit).

Example 3. (a) Employer Z maintains Plan B, a defined benefit plan with a benefit formula that provides two percent of average annual compensation for each year of service up to 20 to each employee. Assume that Plan B would satisfy the fractional accrual rule safe harbor in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4), except that some employees accrue a portion of their normal retirement benefit in the current plan year that is more than one-third larger than the portion of the same benefit accrued by other employees for the current plan year, and the plan therefore fails to satisfy the one-third-larger requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C)(*1*).

(b) Employer Z restructures Plan B into two plans, one covering employees with 30 years or less of service at normal retirement age, and the other covering all other employees. Each component plan would separately satisfy the one-third-larger requirement of §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C)(*1*) if the only employees taken into account were those employees included in the component plan in the current plan year. Under paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section and §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C)(*1*), however, the component plans do not satisfy the one-third-larger requirement because the safe harbor determination is made taking into account the effect of the plan benefit formula on any potential employee in the component plan (other than employees with more than 33 years of service at normal retirement age), and not just those employees included in the component plan in the current plan year.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46810, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(4)–10 Testing of former employees.

(a) *Introduction*. This section provides rules for determining whether a plan satisfies the nondiscriminatory amount and nondiscriminatory availability requirements of §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) and (3), respectively, with respect to former employees. Generally, this section is relevant only in the case of benefits provided through an amendment to the plan effective in the current plan year. See the definitions of employee and former employee in §1.401(a)(4)–12.

(b) *Nondiscrimination in amount of contributions or benefits*—(1) *General rule*. A plan satisfies §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits provided to former employees if, under all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the amount of contributions or benefits provided to former employees does not discriminate significantly in favor of former HCEs. For this purpose, contributions or benefits provided to former employees includes all contributions or benefits provided to former employees or, at the employer's option, only those contributions or benefits arising out of the amendment providing the contributions or benefits. A plan under which no former employee currently benefits (within the meaning of §1.410(b)–3(b)) is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (b).

(2) *Permitted disparity*. Section 401(l) and §1.401(a)(4)–7 generally apply to benefits provided to former employees in the same manner as those provisions apply to employees. Thus, for example, for purposes of determining a former employee's cumulative permitted disparity limit, the sum of the former employee's total annual disparity fractions (within the meaning of §1.401(l)–5) as an employee continues to be taken into account. However, the permitted disparity rate applicable to a former employee is determined under §1.401(l)–3(e) as of the age the former employee commenced receipt of benefits, not as

of the date the employee receives the accrual for the current plan year.

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b):

Example 1. Employer X maintains a section 401(l) plan, Plan A, that uses maximum permitted disparity. Plan A is amended to increase the benefits of all former employees in pay status. The percentage increase for each former employee is reasonably comparable to the adjustment in social security benefits under section 215(i)(2)(A) of the Social Security Act since the former employee commenced receipt of benefits. Plan A does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b) merely because of the amendment.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the amendment provides an across-the-board 20 percent increase in benefits for all former employees in pay status. The cost of living has increased at an average rate of three percent in the two years preceding the amendment, and some HCEs have retired and become former HCEs during that period. Because this amendment increases the disparity in the plan formula beyond the maximum permitted disparity adjusted for any reasonable approximation of the increase in the cost of living since the HCEs retired, Plan A discriminates significantly in favor of former HCEs, and thus does not satisfy this paragraph (b).

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan A is only amended to increase the benefits of former employees in pay status who terminated employment with Employer X after attaining early retirement age. The determination of whether the amendment causes Plan A to fail to satisfy this paragraph (b) must take into account the relative numbers of former HCEs and former NHCEs who have terminated employment with Employer X after attaining early retirement age.

(c) *Nondiscrimination in availability of benefits, rights, or features.* A plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the availability of benefits, rights, and features provided to former employees if any change in the availability of any benefit, right, or feature to any former employee is applied in a manner that, under all of the relevant facts and circumstances, does not discriminate significantly in favor of former HCEs. For purposes of demonstrating that a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the availability of loans provided to former employees, an employer may treat former employees who are parties in interest within the meaning of section 3(14) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 as employees.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46812, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–11 Additional rules.

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides additional rules for determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4). Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules for the treatment of the portion of an employee's accrued benefit or account balance that is attributable to rollovers, transfers between plans, and employee buybacks. Paragraph (c) of this section provides rules regarding vesting. Paragraph (d) of this section provides rules regarding service crediting. Paragraph (e) of this section, regarding family aggregation, and paragraph (f) of this section, regarding governmental plans, are reserved. Paragraph (g) of this section provides rules regarding the extent to which corrective amendments may be made for purposes of section 401(a).

(b) *Rollovers, transfers, and buybacks*—(1) *Rollovers and elective transfers.* The portion of an employee's accrued benefit or account balance under a plan that is attributable to rollover (including direct rollover) contributions to the plan that are described in section 402(c), 402(e)(6), 403(a)(4), 403(a)(5), or 408(d)(3), or elective transfers to the plan that are described in § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–3(b), is not taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2).

(2) *Other transfers.* [Reserved]

(3) *Employee buybacks*—(i) *Rehired employee buyback of previous service.* An employee's repayment to a plan of a prior distribution from the plan (including reasonable interest from the time of the distribution) that results in the restoration of the employee's accrued benefit under the plan (or the service associated with that accrued benefit) that would otherwise be disregarded in determining the employee's accrued benefit in accordance with section 411 on account of the distribution is not treated as an employee contribution for purposes of §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(ii) *Make-up of missed employee contributions.* If a contributory DB plan gives all employees who did not make

employee contributions for a prior period the right to make the missed contributions at a later date (including reasonable interest from the time of the missed contributions) and, once the contributions have been made, determines benefits under the plan by treating the employee contributions (excluding the interest) as if they were actually made during that prior period, then those contributions must satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–6(c) as if they were employee contributions actually made during that prior period. Thus, for example, § 1.401(a)(4)–6(c)(2) is not satisfied for the current plan year if the employee contribution rate (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b)(2)(ii)(A) but determined without regard to the interest) for the employees making up missed contributions is different than the employee contribution rate applicable to other employees during the prior period. The rule in this paragraph (b)(3)(ii) may be extended to employees who did not make employee contributions for a period of service that is or would otherwise have been credited under the plan and that preceded their participation in the plan.

(c) *Vesting*—(1) *General rule.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (c) if the manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under the plan does not discriminate in favor of HCEs. Whether the manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under a plan discriminates in favor of HCEs is determined under this paragraph (c) based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, taking into account any relevant provisions of sections 401(a)(5)(E), 411(a)(10), 411(d)(1), 411(d)(2), 411(d)(3), 411(e), and 420(c)(2), and taking into account any plan provisions that affect the nonforfeitability of employees' accrued benefits (e.g., plan provisions regarding suspension of benefits permitted under section 411(a)(3)(B)), other than the method of crediting years of service for purposes of applying the vesting schedule provided in the plan.

(2) *Deemed equivalence of statutory vesting schedules.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), the manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under the vesting schedules in section 411(a)(2) (A) and (B) are treated as equivalent to one another, and the manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under the vesting schedules in section 416(b)(1) (A) and (B) are treated as equivalent to one another.

(3) *Safe harbor for vesting schedules.* The manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under a plan is deemed not to discriminate in favor of HCEs if each combination of plan provisions that affect the nonforfeitability of any employee's accrued benefit would satisfy the nondiscriminatory availability requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–4 if that combination were an other right or feature.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (c):

Example 1. Plan A provides the six-year graded vesting schedule described in section 416(b)(1)(B). In 1996, Plan A is amended to provide the five-year vesting schedule described in section 411(a)(2)(A). To comply with section 411(a)(10)(B), the plan amendment also provides that all employees with at least three years of service may elect to retain the prior vesting schedule. The manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under Plan A does not discriminate in favor of HCEs merely because the prior vesting schedule continues to apply to the accrued benefits of electing employees, even if, at the time of the election or in future years, the prior vesting schedule applies only to a group of employees that does not satisfy section 410(b).

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that, for administrative convenience in complying with section 411(a)(10)(B), the plan amendment automatically provides all employees employed on the date of the amendment with the higher of the nonforfeitable percentages determined under either schedule. The manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under Plan A does not discriminate in favor of HCEs merely because, for administrative convenience in complying with section 411(a)(10), the amendment exceeds the requirements of section 411(a)(10). The result would be the same if the plan amendment automatically provided the higher of the nonforfeitable percentages only to those employees with at least three years of service.

Example 3. (a) Employer Y maintains Plan B covering all of its employees. On January 1, 1996, Employer Y sells Division M to Employer Z, and all of the employees in Division M become employees of Employer Z. Employer Y obtains a determination letter that the resulting cessation of participation by these employees in Plan B constitutes a

partial termination. Therefore, in order to satisfy section 411(d)(3), Plan B fully vests the accrued benefit of each of the employees of Division M whose participation in Plan B ceased as a result of the sale on January 1, 1996.

(b) The manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under Plan B does not discriminate in favor of HCEs merely because, in order to satisfy section 411(d)(3), the accrued benefits of all employees affected by the partial termination become fully vested. This is true even if the affected group of employees does not satisfy section 410(b).

Example 4. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 3*, except that Employer Y does not obtain a determination letter that the sale of Division M to Employer Z will cause a partial termination. Instead, based on its reasonable belief that the sale will cause a partial termination, and in order to ensure that Plan B will satisfy section 411(d)(3), Employer Y amends Plan B to vest fully the accrued benefit on January 1, 1996 of each of the employees it reasonably believes to be an affected employee.

(b) The manner in which employees vest in their accrued benefits under Plan B does not discriminate in favor of HCEs merely because, based on Employer Y's reasonable belief that the sale will cause a partial termination, Plan B is amended to vest fully the accrued benefits of each of the employees it reasonably believes to be an affected employee.

(d) *Service-crediting rules*—(1) *Overview*—(i) *In general.* A defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan does not satisfy this paragraph (d) with respect to the manner in which service is credited under the plan unless the plan satisfies paragraph (d)(2) of this section. Paragraph (d)(3) of this section provides rules for determining whether service other than actual service with the employer may be taken into account in determining whether a defined benefit plan or a defined contribution plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) or (b)(3). (However, for purposes of cross-testing a defined contribution plan, only years in which the employee benefited under the plan may be taken into account in determining equivalent accrual rates. See § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(2)(i).) The rules of this paragraph (d) apply separately to service credited under a plan for each different purpose under the plan, including, but not limited to: application of the benefit formula (benefit service), application of the accrual method (accrual service), application of the vesting schedule (vesting service), entitlement to benefits, rights, and features (entitlement service), application of the requirements for eligibility to participate in the plan (eligibility service).

(ii) *Special rule for pre-effective date service.* A plan is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (d) with respect to service credited for periods prior to the effective date applicable to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) or (b) under a plan provision adopted and in effect as of February 11, 1993 (and any such service may be taken into account for purposes of satisfying § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) or (b)(3)), if the plan satisfied the applicable nondiscrimination requirements with respect to the service that were in effect for all relevant periods prior to the applicable effective date.

(2) *Manner of crediting service*—(i) *General rule.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (d)(2) if, on the basis of all of the relevant facts and circumstances, the manner in which employees' service is credited for all purposes under the plan does not discriminate in favor of HCEs.

(ii) *Equivalent service-crediting methods.* For purposes of this paragraph (d)(2), a service-crediting method used for a specified purpose that is based on hours of service, as provided in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2, and a service-crediting method used for the same purpose that is based on one of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3, are treated as equivalent if the service-crediting methods are otherwise the same.

(iii) *Safe harbor for service-crediting.* The manner in which service is credited under a plan for a specified purpose is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (d)(2) if each combination of service-crediting provisions applied for that purpose would satisfy the nondiscriminatory availability requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–4 if that combination were an other right or feature.

(iv) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d)(2):

Example 1. (a) Plan A covers both salaried employees and hourly employees. All of the HCEs in Plan A are salaried employees. For administrative convenience, salaried employees in Plan A (none of whom are part-time) have their years of service calculated in accordance with the elapsed time provisions in § 1.410(a)–7. Hourly employees in

Plan A (most of whom are scheduled to work 2,000 hours in a year) have their hours of service calculated in accordance with 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 and are credited with a year of service for each plan year in which they complete 1,000 hours of service.

(b) Plan A does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (d)(2) merely because different service-crediting provisions are applied to salaried and hourly employees for administrative convenience. The service-crediting provisions for hourly employees in Plan A are reasonably comparable to the service-crediting provisions for salaried employees. This is because the amount of service credited to hourly employees who complete fewer than 1,000 hours of service before termination of employment (i.e., quit, retirement, discharge, or death) during the plan year (and are treated less favorably than the salaried employees with the same period of employment during the plan year) is balanced by the amount of service credited to hourly employees who complete more than 1,000 hours of service before termination of employment during the plan year (who are treated more favorably than the salaried employees with the same period of employment during the plan year).

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except Plan A requires hourly employees to complete 2,000 hours of service in order to be credited with a full year of service, with a pro rata reduction for hourly employees who complete fewer than 2,000 hours of service.

(b) Plan A does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (d)(2) merely because different service-crediting provisions are applied to salaried and hourly employees for administrative convenience. The service-crediting provisions for hourly employees in Plan A are reasonably comparable to the service-crediting provisions for salaried employees. This is because the amount of service credited to hourly employees whose employment terminates (i.e., quit, retire, are discharged, or die) during the plan year is reasonably comparable to the amount of service credited to salaried employees whose employment is terminated during the plan year with the same period of employment during the plan year.

(3) *Service-crediting period*—(i) *Limitation on service taken into account*—(A) *General rule.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (d)(3), service for periods in which an employee does not perform services as an employee of the employer or in which the employee did not participate in the plan may not be taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) and (b)(3). In addition, in determining whether a plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) and (b)(3), no more than one year of service may be taken into account with respect to any 12-consecutive-month period (with adjustments for shorter periods, if appropriate) unless the additional service is required to be credited under section 410 or 411, whichever is applicable.

(B) *Past service.* Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(3)(i)(A) of this section, service for periods in which an employee performed services as an employee of the employer and did not participate in a plan, but in which the employee would have participated in the plan but for the fact that the plan (or the plan amendment extending coverage to the employee) was not in existence during that period, may be taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) and (b)(3). This is because service for such periods generally would have been credited for the employee but for the timing of the plan establishment or amendment, and the timing of the plan establishment or amendment must satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–5(a).

(C) *Pre-participation and imputed service.* Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(3)(i)(A) of this section, to the extent that a plan treats pre-participation service and imputed service as actual service with the employer, such service may be taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) and (b)(3) if the service satisfies each of the requirements in paragraph (d)(3)(iii) of this section taking into account, in the case of imputed service, the additional rules in paragraph (d)(3)(iv) of this section.

(D) *Additional limitations on service-crediting in the case of certain offsets.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (d)(3)(i) (B) and (C) of this section, if a plan credits benefit service or accrual service under paragraph (d)(3)(i) (B) or (C) of this section for a period before an employee becomes a participant in the plan, but offsets the benefits determined under the plan by benefits under another plan (whether or not qualified or terminated) that are attributable to the same period for which that service is credited, then that service may not be taken into account for purposes of

determining whether the first plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) or (b)(3) unless the offset provision applies on the same basis to all similarly-situated employees (within the meaning of paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(A) of this section).

(ii) *Definitions*—(A) *Pre-participation service.* For purposes of this section, pre-participation service includes all years of service credited under a plan for years of service with the employer or a prior employer for periods before the employee commenced or recommenced participation in the plan (other than past service described in paragraph (d)(3)(i)(B) of this section).

(B) *Imputed service.* For purposes of this section, imputed service includes any service credited for periods after an employee has commenced participation in a plan while the employee is not performing services as an employee for the employer (including a period in which the employee performs services for another employer, e.g., a joint venture), or while the employee has a reduced work schedule and would not otherwise be credited with service at the level being credited under the general terms of the plan.

(iii) *Requirements for pre-participation and imputed service*—(A) *Provision applied to all similarly-situated employees*—(*1*) *General rule.* A plan provision crediting pre-participation service or imputed service to any HCE must apply on the same terms to all similarly-situated NHCEs. Whether two employees are similarly situated for this purpose must be determined based on reasonable business criteria, generally taking into account only the circumstances resulting in the employees being covered under the plan or being granted imputed service and on the situation of the employees (e.g., the plan in which the employees benefit or the employer by which they are employed) during the period for which the pre-participation service or imputed service is credited. For example, employees who enter a plan as a result of a particular merger and who participated in the same plan of a prior employer are generally similarly situated. As another example, employees who are transferred to different joint ventures or different spun-off divisions are generally not similarly situated.

(*2*) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(A):

Example 1. Employer X maintains defined benefit Plans A and B and defined contribution Plan C. Plan A covers all employees who work at the headquarters of Employer X. Plan B covers some employees in Division M of Employer X, and Plan C covers the other employees of Division M. Plans B and C have not been aggregated for purposes of satisfying section 401(a)(4) or 410(b) for the period for which service is being credited. Plan A provides that, whenever an employee covered by Plan B transfers from Division M to the headquarters, the employee's service credited under Plan B is credited under Plan A, and the employee's benefit under Plan A is offset by the employee's benefit under Plan B. However, Plan A provides for no similar recognition of service or offset for employees covered by Plan C who transfer from Division M to the headquarters. Plan A does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(A) merely because it credits service for employees transferring from Plan B but not from Plan C, because it is reasonable to treat employees participating in different plans that have not been aggregated as not being similarly situated.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1*, except that Employer X acquires two trades or businesses from different employers. Employees of the acquired trades or businesses become employees of Division M and become covered by Plan B. In addition, Plan B is amended to credit service with one of the trades or businesses but not the other. Plan B does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(A) merely because it credits service for one acquired trade or business but not another, because it is reasonable to treat employees of one acquired trade or business as not similarly situated to employees of another acquired trade or business.

(B) *Legitimate business reason*—(*1*) *General rule.* There must be a legitimate business reason, based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, for a plan to credit imputed service or for a plan to credit pre-participation service for a period of service with another employer.

(*2*) *Relevant facts and circumstances when crediting service with another employer.* The following are examples of relevant facts and circumstances for determining whether a legitimate business reason exists for a plan to credit pre-participation or imputed service for a period of service with another employer as service with the employer: whether one employer has a significant

ownership, control, or similar interest in, or relationship with, the other employer (though not enough to cause the two employers to be treated as a single employer under section 414); whether the two employers share interrelated business operations; whether the employers maintain the same multiple-employer plan; whether the employers share similar attributes, such as operation in the same industry or the same geographic area; and whether the employees are an acquired group of employees or the employees became employed by the other employer in a transaction between the two employers that was a stock or asset acquisition, merger, or other similar transaction involving a change in the employer of the employees of a trade or business. Other factors may also be relevant for this purpose, such as the plan's treatment of service with other employers with which the employer has a similar relationship and the type of service being credited (e.g., vesting service as compared to benefit service or accrual service). A legitimate business reason is deemed to exist for a plan to credit military service as service with the employer.

(*3*) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(B):

Example 1. Twenty unrelated employers jointly sponsor a multiple-employer plan that covers all employees of the employers. From time to time, employees transfer employment among the employers. There is a legitimate business reason for a disaggregated portion of the plan that benefits the employees of one of the employers to treat service with any of the other employers as service with the employer.

Example 2. Employer X owns 20 percent of the outstanding stock of Employer Y. From time to time, employees transfer from Employer X to Employer Y at the request of Employer X. Employer X maintains defined benefit Plan A. Plan A provides that years of service include an employee's years of service with Employer Y. There is a legitimate business reason for Plan A to credit service with Employer Y because Employer X, through its 20-percent ownership interest, benefits from the service that the transferred employees provide to Employer Y.

Example 3. Employer Z manufactures widgets and belongs to the National Widget Manufacturers' Association. From time to time, Employer Z hires employees from other widget manufacturers. Employer Z maintains a defined benefit plan, Plan B, which credits pre-participation service for periods of service with all other members of the Association located in the western half of the United States as service with Employer Z. There is a legitimate business reason for Plan B to treat service with other members of the Association as service with Employer Z.

(C) *No significant discrimination*—(*1*) *General rule.* Based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, a plan provision crediting pre-participation or imputed service must not by design or in operation discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs.

(*2*) *Relevant facts and circumstances.* The following are examples of relevant facts and circumstances for determining whether a plan provision crediting pre-participation service or imputed service discriminates significantly in favor of HCEs: whether the service credit does not duplicate benefits but merely makes an employee whole (i.e., prevents the employee from being disadvantaged with respect to benefits by a change in job or employer or provides the employee with benefits comparable to those of other employees); the degree of business ties between the current employer and the prior employer, such as the degree of ownership interest or other affiliation; the degree of excess coverage under section 410(b) of NHCEs for the plan crediting the service, taking into account employees who are credited with pre-participation service; whether the other employer maintains a qualified plan for its employees; the existence of reciprocal service credit under other plans of the employer or the prior employer; the circumstances underlying the employee's transfer into the group of employees covered by the plan; the type of service being credited; and the relative number of employees other than five-percent owners or the most highly-paid HCEs of the employer (determined without regard to the one officer rule of section 414(q)(5)(B)) who are being credited with pre-participation service or imputed service. The relative number referred to in the last factor is determined taking into account all employees who have been over time, or are reasonably expected to be in the future, credited with such service.

(*3*) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(C). It is assumed that facts not described in an example do not, in the aggregate, suggest that the relevant plan provision either does or does not discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 1. (a) Employer U maintains defined benefit Plans A and B. Plan A covers all employees who work at the headquarters of Employer U. Plan B covers all employees of Division M of Employer U. Plan A provides that, whenever an employee transfers from Division M to the headquarters, the employee's service credited under Plan B is credited under Plan A, and the employee's benefit under Plan A is offset by the employee's benefit under Plan B. Employees, including a meaningful number of NHCEs, are periodically transferred from Division M to the headquarters of Employer U for bona fide business reasons.

(b) The Plan A provision crediting service under Plan B does not discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs. The provision is designed only to prevent employees from being disadvantaged by being transferred from Division M to the headquarters, and a meaningful number of NHCEs can be expected to benefit from it.

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the only employees transferred from Division M to the headquarters of Employer U are HCEs (but not the most highly-paid HCEs of Employer U).

(b) Employer U determines that Plan A would have satisfied sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) for the period for which the transferred employees are being credited with pre-participation service had the employees participated in Plan A during that period. This determination is based on test results under sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) for the current year, taking into account significant demographic changes over this period.

(c) The Plan A provision crediting service under Plan B does not significantly discriminate in favor of HCEs in the current year. This conclusion is based on the fact that the circumstances underlying the transfers indicate that they were made for bona fide business reasons, that Plan A would have satisfied sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) had the transferred employees participated in Plan A during the period for which the pre-participation service is credited, and that the transferred employees are not the most highly-paid HCEs of Employer U.

Example 3. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the only employee who is transferred from Division M to the headquarters of Employer U is Employee P, who is among the most highly-paid HCEs of Employer U. Plan A provides an unreduced early retirement benefit at age 55 for employees with 20 years of service, but Plan B's early retirement benefits are not subsidized. Employee P is transferred to the headquarters with 20 years of service credited under Plan B and shortly before attainment of age 55. Employee P is expected to retire upon reaching age 55.

(b) The Plan A provision crediting service under Plan B discriminates significantly in favor of HCEs in the year of the transfer. This is because the circumstances underlying this transfer (i.e., its occurrence shortly before Employee P's expected retirement and the fact that the transfer significantly increased Employee P's early retirement benefits) indicate that Employee P was transferred to the headquarters primarily to obtain the higher pension benefits provided under Plan A.

(c) Because of this conclusion, the pre-participation service credited to Employee P cannot be taken into account in determining whether Plan A satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–1 (b)(2) and (b)(3). Thus, if Plan A credits the service, it cannot be a safe harbor plan because the benefit formula will take into account service that may not be taken into account under this paragraph (d)(3). In addition, Employee P's accrual rates under the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c) are likely to be higher than those of other employees because, while the pre-participation service may be used to determine Employee P's benefits under Plan A, the service must be disregarded in determining Employee P's testing service. Also, if Employee P's pre-participation service is used in determining Employee P's entitlement to a benefit, right, or feature under Plan A, the fact that the service must be disregarded in determining Employee P's entitlement service for purposes of § 1.401(a)(4)–4 may cause the benefit, right, or feature to be treated as a separate benefit, right, or feature that is currently available only to Employee P.

Example 4. (a) Employer V manufactures widgets and belongs to the National Widget Manufacturers' Association. Each member of the Association maintains a defined benefit plan that credits pre-participation service for periods of service with other members and offsets benefits under the plan by benefits under the plans of the other members. Employer V maintains defined benefit Plan C. Employer V periodically hires employees from other widget manufacturers who are not among its most highly-paid HCEs. In 1997, however, the only employee hired by Employer V from another member of the Association is Employee Q, who is among Employer V's most highly-paid HCEs. Employee Q receives pre-participation service credit in accordance with the terms of Plan C. Some of the plans maintained by other members of the Association credited pre-participation service to NHCEs for the same period for

which the pre-participation service is credited to Employee Q.

(b) The provision of Plan C crediting pre-participation service with other members of the Association does not discriminate significantly in 1997, despite the fact that the only employee who received pre-participation service credit under the provision in that year was among the most highly-paid HCEs of Employer V. This conclusion is based on the relative number of employees other than Employer V's most highly-paid HCEs who have been credited in the past, or are reasonably expected to be credited in the future, with pre-participation service for periods of service with other members of the Association, and the fact that other employees who are NHCEs are being credited with pre-participation service under a reciprocal agreement.

Example 5. Employer W owns 79 percent of the outstanding stock of Employer X. From time to time, employees transfer from Employer W to Employer X at the request of Employer W. The only employees who have ever been transferred are HCEs. Employer W maintains a defined benefit plan, Plan D, which credits employees transferred to Employer X with imputed benefit and accrual service while employed by Employer X. Employer X maintains no qualified plan. Plan D would fail either section 401(a)(4) or section 410(b) in the current plan year if the individuals employed by Employer X were treated as employed by Employer W. In addition, Plan D would fail either section 401(a)(4) or section 410(b) in the current plan year if the portion of Plan D covering the transferred employees were treated as maintained by Employer X. The Plan D provision crediting imputed benefit and accrual service to employees transferred to Employer X significantly discriminates in favor of HCEs in the current plan year.

Example 6. The facts are the same as in Example 5, except that Plan D credits the individuals who transfer to Employer X only with imputed vesting and entitlement service. The Plan D provision crediting imputed vesting and entitlement service to individuals transferred to Employer X does not significantly discriminate in favor of HCEs in the current plan year, because there is less potential for discrimination when the only types of service being imputed are vesting and entitlement service.

(iv) *Additional rules for imputed service*—(A) *Legitimate business reasons for crediting imputed service*—(*1*) *General rule.* A legitimate business reason does not exist for a plan to impute service after an individual has permanently ceased to perform services as an employee (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9) for the employer maintaining the plan, i.e., is not expected to resume performing services as an employee for the employer. The preceding sentence does not apply in the case of an individual who is not performing services for the employer because of disability or is performing services for another employer under an arrangement (such as a transfer of the employee to another employer) that provides some ongoing business benefit to the original employer. The first sentence in this paragraph (d)(3)(iv)(A)(*1*) also does not apply in the case of vesting and entitlement service if the employee is performing services for another employer that is being treated under the plan as actual service with the original employer.

(*2*) *Certain presumptions applicable.* Whether an individual has permanently ceased to perform services as an employee for an employer is determined taking into account all of the relevant facts and circumstances. There is a rebuttable presumption for a period of up to two years that an individual who has ceased to perform services as an employee for an employer is nonetheless expected to resume performing services as an employee for the employer, if the employer continues to treat the individual as an employee for significant purposes unrelated to the plan. After two years, there is a rebuttable presumption that an individual who has ceased to perform services as an employee for the employer is not expected to resume performing services as an employee for the employer. The fact that an individual is absent to perform jury duty or military service automatically rebuts the latter presumption. Other evidence, such as the employer's layoff policy, the terms of an employment contract, or specific leave to pursue a degree requiring more than two years of study, may also rebut this presumption.

(*3*) *Imputed service for part-time employees.* Rules similar to the rules in paragraph (d)(3)(iv)(A) (*1*) and (*2*) of this section apply in the case of an employee whose work hours are temporarily reduced and who therefore would normally be credited with service at a reduced rate, but who continues to be credited with service at the same rate

as before the reduction (e.g., an employee who continues to be credited with service as if the employee were a full-time employee during a temporary change from a full-time to a part-time work schedule).

(B) *Additional factors for determining whether a provision crediting imputed service discriminates significantly.* In addition to the factors described in paragraph (d)(3)(iii)(C)(*2*) of this section, relevant facts and circumstances for determining whether a plan provision crediting imputed service during a leave of absence or a period of reduced services discriminates significantly include any employer policies or practices that restrict the ability of employees to take leaves of absence or work temporarily on a part-time basis, respectively.

(v) *Satisfaction of other service-crediting rules.* A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (d)(3) merely because it credits service to the extent necessary to satisfy the service-crediting rules in section 410(a), 411(a), 413, or 414(a), § 1.410(a)–7 (elapsed-time method of service-crediting) or 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 (regarding hours of service to be credited), whichever is applicable, or 29 CFR § 2530.204–2(d) (regarding double proration of service and compensation).

(e) *Family aggregation rules.* [Reserved]

(f) *Governmental plans.* [Reserved]

(g) *Corrective amendments*—(1) *In general.* A corrective amendment that satisfies the rules of this paragraph (g) is taken into account for purposes of satisfying certain section 401(a) requirements for a plan year, by treating the corrective amendment as if it were adopted and effective as of the first day of the plan year. These rules apply in addition to the rules of section 401(b). Paragraph (g)(2) of this section describes the scope of the corrective amendments that are permitted to be made. Paragraph (g)(3) of this section specifies the conditions under which a corrective amendment may be made. Paragraph (g)(4) of this section provides a rule prohibiting a corrective amendment from being taken into account to the extent that it does not have substance. Paragraph (g)(5) of this section discusses the effect of the corrective amendments permitted under this paragraph (g) under provisions other than section 401(a).

(2) *Scope of corrective amendments.* For purposes of satisfying the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b), the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2), or the nondiscriminatory plan amendment requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(4), a corrective amendment may retroactively increase accruals or allocations for employees who benefited under the plan during the plan year being corrected, or may grant accruals or allocations to individuals who did not benefit under the plan during the plan year being corrected. In addition, for purposes of satisfying the nondiscriminatory current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) for benefits, rights, or features, a corrective amendment may make a benefit, right, or feature available to employees to whom it was previously not available. A corrective amendment may not, however, correct for a failure to incorporate the pre-termination restrictions of § 1.401(a)(4)–5(b).

(3) *Conditions for corrective amendments*—(i) *In general.* A corrective amendment is not taken into account prior to its adoption under this paragraph (g) unless it satisfies each of the requirements of paragraph (g)(3) (ii) through (vii) of this section, whichever are applicable. Thus, for example, if any of the applicable requirements are not satisfied, any additional accruals arising from an amendment adopted after the end of a plan year are not given retroactive effect and, thus, are tested in the plan year in which the amendment is adopted.

(ii) *Benefits not reduced.* Except as permitted under paragraph (g)(3)(vi)(C)(*2*) of this section, the corrective amendment may not result in a reduction of an employee's benefits (including any benefit, right, or feature), determined based on the terms of the plan in effect immediately before the amendment.

(iii) *Amendment effective for all purposes.* For purposes of determining an employee's rights and benefits under the plan, the corrective amendment must generally be effective as if the amendment had been made on the first

day of the plan year being corrected. Thus, if the corrective amendment is made after the close of the plan year being corrected, an employee's allocations or accruals, along with the associated benefits, rights, and features, must be increased to the level at which they would have been had the amendment been in effect for the entire preceding plan year. Accordingly, such increases are taken into account for testing purposes as if the increases had actually occurred in the prior plan year. However, to the extent that an amendment makes a benefit, right, or feature available to a group of employees, the amendment does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (g)(3)(iii) merely because it is not effective prior to the date of adoption and, therefore, the benefit, right, or feature is not made currently available to those employees before that date.

(iv) *Time when amendment must be adopted and put into effect*—(A) *General rule.* Any corrective amendment intended to apply to the preceding plan year must be adopted and implemented on or before the 15th day of the 10th month after the close of the plan year in order to be taken into account for the preceding plan year.

(B) *Determination letter requested by employer or plan administrator.* If, on or before the end of the period set forth in paragraph (g)(3)(iv)(A) of this section, the employer or plan administrator files a request pursuant to § 601.201(o) of this chapter (Statement of Procedural Rules) for a determination letter on the amendment, the initial or continuing qualification of the plan, or the trust that is part of the plan, the period set forth in paragraph (g)(3)(iv)(A) of this section is extended in the same manner as provided for an extension of the remedial amendment period under § 1.401(b)–1(d)(3).

(v) *Corrective amendment for coverage or amounts testing*—(A) *Retroactive benefits must be provided to nondiscriminatory group.* Except as provided in paragraph (g)(3)(v)(B) of this section, if the corrective amendment is adopted after the close of the plan year, the additional allocations or accruals for the preceding year resulting from the corrective amendment must separately satisfy section 401(a)(4) for the preceding plan year and must benefit a group of employees that separately satisfies section 410(b) (determined by applying the same rules as are applied in determining whether a component plan separately satisfies section 410(b) under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c)(4)). Thus, for example, in applying the rules of this paragraph (g)(3)(v), an employer may not aggregate the additional accruals or allocations for the preceding plan year resulting from the corrective amendment with the other accruals or allocations already provided under the terms of the plan as in effect during the preceding plan year without regard to the corrective amendment.

(B) *Corrective amendment to conform to safe harbor.* The requirements of paragraph (g)(3)(v)(A) of this section need not be met if the corrective amendment is for purposes of conforming the plan to one of the safe harbors in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b) or § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) (including for purposes of applying the requirements of those safe harbors under the optional testing methods in § 1.401(a)(4)–8 (b)(3) or (c)(3)), or ensuring that the plan continues to meet one of those safe harbors.

(vi) *Conditions for corrective amendment of the availability of benefits, rights, and features.* A corrective amendment may not be taken into account under this paragraph (g) for purposes of satisfying § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) for a given plan year unless—

(A) The corrective amendment is not part of a pattern of amendments being used to correct repeated failures with respect to a particular benefit, right, or feature;

(B) The relevant provisions of the plan immediately after the corrective amendment with respect to the benefit, right, or feature (including a corrective amendment eliminating the benefit, right, or feature) remain in effect until the end of the first plan year beginning after the date of the amendment; and

(C) The corrective amendment either—

(*1*) Expands the group of employees to whom the benefit, right, or feature is currently available so that for each plan year in which the corrective amendment is taken into account in determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b), the group of employees

to whom the benefit, right, or feature is currently available, after taking into account the amendment, satisfies the nondiscriminatory classification requirement of § 1.410(b)–4 (and thus the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b)) with a ratio percentage greater than or equal to the lesser of—

(*i*) The safe harbor percentage applicable to the plan; and

(*ii*) The ratio percentage of the plan; or

(*2*) Eliminates the benefit, right, or feature (to the extent permitted under section 411(d)(6)) on or before the last day of the plan year for which the corrective amendment is taken into account.

(vii) *Special rules for section 401(k) plans and section 401(m) plans*—(A) *Minimum coverage requirements.* In the case of a section 401(k) plan, a corrective amendment may only be taken into account for purposes of satisfying § 1.410(b)–3(a)(2)(i) under this paragraph (g) for a given plan year to the extent that the corrective amendment grants qualified nonelective contributions within the meaning of § 1.401(k)–1(g)(13)(ii) (QNECs) to nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who were not eligible employees within the meaning of § 1.401(k)–1(g)(4) for the given plan year, and the amount of the QNECs granted to each nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employee equals the product of the nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employee's plan year compensation and the actual deferral percentage (within the meaning of section 401(k)(3)(B)) for the given plan year for the group of NHCEs who are eligible employees. Similarly, in the case of a section 401(m) plan, a corrective amendment may only be taken into account for purposes of satisfying § 1.410(b)–3(a)(2)(i) under this paragraph (g) for a given plan year to the extent that the corrective amendment grants qualified nonelective contributions (QNECs) to nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees who were not eligible employees within the meaning of § 1.401(m)–1(f)(4) for the given plan year, and the amount of the QNECs granted to each nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employee equals the product of the nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employee's plan year compensation and the actual contribution percentage (within the meaning of section 401(m)(3)) for the given plan year for the group of NHCEs who are eligible employees.

(B) *Correction of rate of match.* In the case of a section 401(m) plan, allocations for a given plan year granted under a corrective amendment to NHCEs who made contributions for the plan year eligible for a matching contribution may be treated as matching contributions. These allocations treated as matching contributions may be taken into account for purposes of satisfying the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) with respect to the right to a rate of match, but may not be taken into account for satisfying other amounts testing.

(4) *Corrective amendments must have substance.* A corrective amendment is not taken into account in determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) or 410(b) to the extent the amendment affects nonvested employees whose employment with the employer terminated on or before the close of the preceding year, and who therefore would not have received any economic benefit from the amendment if it had been made in the prior year. Similarly, in determining whether the requirements of paragraph (g)(3)(vi)(C)(*1*) of this section are satisfied, a corrective amendment making a benefit, right, or feature available to employees is not taken into account to the extent the benefit, right, or feature is not currently available to any of those employees immediately after the amendment. However, a plan will not fail to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (g)(3)(vi)(C)(*1*) of this section by operation of the provisions in this paragraph (g)(4) if the benefit, right, or feature is made available to all employees in the plan as of the date of the amendment.

(5) *Effect under other statutory requirements.* A corrective amendment under this paragraph (g) is treated as if it were adopted and effective as of the first day of the plan year only for the specific purposes described in this paragraph (g). Thus, for example, the corrective amendment is taken into account not only for purposes of sections

401(a)(4) and 410(b), but also for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies sections 401(l). By contrast, the amendment is not given retroactive effect for purposes of section 404 (deductions for employer contributions) or section 412 (minimum funding standards), unless otherwise provided for in rules applicable to those sections.

(6) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (g):

Example 1. Employer U maintains a calendar year defined benefit plan that in 1994 is tested using the safe harbor for flat benefit plans in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4). In 1996, Employer U is concerned that the plan will not satisfy the demographic requirement in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(C)(*3*) for the 1995 plan year because the average of the normal accrual rates for all NHCEs is less than 70 percent of the average of the normal accrual rates for all HCEs. Provided the corrective amendment would otherwise satisfy this paragraph (g), Employer U may make a corrective amendment to the plan to increase the number of NHCEs so that the amended plan satisfies the safe harbor for the 1995 plan year. The corrective amendment need not satisfy paragraph (g)(3)(v)(A) of this section because Employer U is retroactively amending the plan to conform to a safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b). See paragraph (g)(3)(v)(B) of this section.

Example 2. (a) Employer V maintains a calendar year defined contribution plan covering all the employees in Division M and Division N. Under the plan, only employees in Division M have the right to direct the investments in their account. For plan years prior to 1996, the plan met the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) because the employees in Division M were a group of employees that satisfied the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4. Because of attrition in the employee population in Division M in 1996, the group of employees to whom the right to direct investments is available during that plan year no longer meets the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4. Thus, the right to direct investments under the plan does not meet the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) during the 1996 plan year.

(b) Employer V may amend the plan in 1997 (but on or before October 15) to make the right to direct investments available from the date of the corrective amendment to a larger group of employees and the corrective amendment may be taken into account for purposes of satisfying the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) for 1996 if the amendment satisfies this paragraph (g). Thus, for example, the group of employees to whom the right to direct investments is currently available, after taking into account the corrective amendment, must satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 for 1996 using a safe harbor percentage (or if lower, the ratio percentage of the plan for 1996). In addition, the corrective amendment making the right to direct investments available to a larger group of employees must remain in effect through the end of the 1998 plan year.

(c) In order for Employer V to take the corrective amendment into account for purposes of satisfying the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) for the portion of the 1997 plan year before the amendment, the group of employees to whom the right to direct investments is currently available, taking into account the amendment, must satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 for 1997 using a safe harbor percentage (or if lower, the ratio percentage of the plan for 1997).

(d) Alternatively, if Employer V adopts the corrective amendment before the end of the 1996 plan year, the corrective amendment need only remain in force through the end of the 1997 plan year, or the corrective amendment may eliminate the right to direct investments (provided that the elimination remains in effect through the end of the 1997 plan year).

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 2.* In 1997, Employer V makes a corrective amendment to extend the plan to employees of Division O as well as Divisions M and N. Assume that the corrective amendment satisfies paragraph (g)(3)(v)(A) of this section, and thus, may be taken into account for purposes of satisfying the nondiscriminatory amounts requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) or the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b). However, the employees in Division O will not be taken into account in determining whether the right to direct investments meets the current availability requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) unless the corrective amendment meets the requirements of paragraph (g)(3)(vi) of this section. Thus, for example, the group of employees to whom the right to direct investments is made available as a result of the expansion of coverage, after taking into account the corrective amendment, must satisfy the nondiscriminatory clarification test of § 1.410(b)–4 for 1996 using a safe harbor percentage (or if lower, the ratio percentage of the plan for 1996). In addition, the amendment making the right to direct investments available to a larger group of employees must remain in effect though the end of the 1998 plan year.

Example 4. Employer W maintains a defined benefit plan that covers all employees and that offsets an employee's benefit by the employee's projected primary insurance amount. The plan is not eligible to use the

safe harbors under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) because the plan does not satisfy section 401(l). Under the plan, the accrual rates for all HCEs (determined under the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)) for 1998 are less than 1.5 percent of average annual compensation, and the accrual rates for all NHCEs (determined under the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)) for 1998 are two percent of average annual compensation. If Employer W adopts a corrective amendment adopted in 1999 that retroactively increases HCEs' benefits under the plan so that their accrual rates equal those of the NHCEs, the corrective amendment may not be taken into account in testing the 1998 plan year (i.e., the accruals that result from the corrective amendment are treated as 1999 accruals), because the accruals for the 1998 plan year resulting from the corrective amendment would not separately satisfy sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4). This is the case even if, after taking the amendment into account, the plan would satisfy sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) for the 1998 plan year.

Example 5. Employer X maintains two plans—Plan A and Plan B. Plan A satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2), but Plan B does not. Thus, in order to satisfy section 410(b), Plan B must satisfy the average benefits test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(3). The average benefit percentage of Plan B is 60 percent. Employer X may take into account a corrective amendment that increases the accruals under either Plan A or Plan B so that the average benefit percentage meets the 70 percent requirement of the average benefits test, if the amendment satisfies paragraph (g)(3)(v) of this section.

Example 6. Employer Y maintains Plan C, which does not satisfy section 401(a)(4) in a plan year. Under the terms of paragraph (g)(2) of this section, Employer Y amends Plan C to increase the benefits of certain employees retroactively. In designing the amendment, Employer Y identifies those employees who have terminated without vested benefits during the period after the end of the prior plan year and before the adoption date of the amendment, and the amendment provides increases in benefits primarily to those employees. It would be inconsistent with the purpose of preventing discrimination in favor of HCEs for Plan C to treat the amendment as retroactively effective under this paragraph (g). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(2).

Example 7. Employer Z maintains both a section 401(k) plan and a section 401(m) plan that provides matching contributions at a rate of 50 percent with respect to elective contributions under the section 401(k) plan. In plan year 1995, the section 401(k) plan fails to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3). In order to satisfy section 401(k)(3), Employer Z makes corrective distributions to HCEs H1 through H10 of their excess contributions as provided under § 1.401(k)–1(f). The matching contributions that H1 through H10 had received on account of their excess contributions are not forfeited, however. Thus, the effective rate of matching contributions provided to H1 through H10 is increased as a result of the corrective distributions. See § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(3)(iii)(G). Since no NHCE in the section 401(m) plan is provided with an equivalent rate of matching contributions, the rate of matching contributions provided to H1 through H10 does not satisfy the nondiscriminatory availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4 in plan year 1995. Employer Z makes a corrective amendment by October 15, 1996, that grants allocations to NHCEs who made contributions for the 1995 plan year eligible for a matching contribution. Employer Z may treat the allocations granted under the corrective amendment to those NHCEs as matching contributions for the 1995 plan year and, as a result, take them into account in determining whether the availability of the rate of matching contributions provided to H1 through H10 satisfies the current availability requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b) for the 1995 plan year.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46813, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–12 Definitions.

Unless otherwise provided, the definitions in this section govern in applying the provisions of §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

Accumulation plan. Accumulation plan means a defined benefit plan under which the benefit of every employee for each plan year is separately determined, using plan year compensation (if benefits are determined as a percentage of compensation rather as than a dollar amount) separately calculated for the plan year, and each employee's total accrued benefit as of the end of a plan year is the sum of the separately determined benefit for that plan year and the total accrued benefit as of the end of the preceding plan year.

Acquired group of employees. Acquired group of employees means employees of a prior employer who become employed by the employer in a transaction between the employer and the prior employer that is a stock or asset acquisition, merger, or other similar transaction involving a change in the employer of the employees of a trade or business, plus employees hired by or transferred into the acquired trade or business on or before a date selected by the employer that is within the transition period defined in section

410(b)(6)(C)(ii). In addition, in the case of a transaction prior to the effective date of these regulations, the date by which employees must be hired by or transferred into the acquired trade or business in order to be included in the acquired group of employees may be any date prior to February 11, 1993, without regard to whether it is later than the end of the transition period defined in section 410(b)(6)(C)(ii).

Actuarial equivalent. An amount or benefit is the actuarial equivalent of, or is actuarially equivalent to, another amount or benefit at a given time if the actuarial present value of the two amounts or benefits (calculated using the same actuarial assumptions) at that time is the same.

Actuarial present value. Actuarial present value means the value as of a specified date of an amount or series of amounts due thereafter, where each amount is—

(1) Multiplied by the probability that the condition or conditions on which payment of the amount is contingent will be satisfied; and

(2) Discounted according to an assumed rate of interest to reflect the time value of money.

Ancillary benefit. Ancillary benefit is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(2).

Average annual compensation. Average annual compensation is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(e)(2).

Base benefit percentage. Base benefit percentage is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(3).

Benefit formula. Benefit formula means the formula a defined benefit plan applies to determine the accrued benefit (within the meaning of section 411(a)(7)(A)(i)) in the form of an annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age of an employee who continues in service until normal retirement age. Thus, for example, the benefit formula does not include the accrual method the plan applies (in conjunction with the benefit formula) to determine the accrued benefit of an employee who terminates employment before normal retirement age. For purposes of this definition, a change in plan provisions that applies only to certain employees who terminate within a limited period of time (e.g., an early retirement window benefit) is treated as a change in the plan's benefit formula for the employees to whom the change is potentially applicable during the period that the change is potentially applicable to them. The preceding sentence applies only to the extent that the change in plan provisions would result in a change in the benefit formula if it were permanent and applied without regard to when the employees' employment was terminated.

Benefit, right, or feature. Benefit, right, or feature means an optional form of benefit, an ancillary benefit, or an other right or feature within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e).

Contributory DB plan. Contributory DB plan means a defined benefit plan that includes employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts.

Defined benefit excess plan. Defined benefit excess plan is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(16)(i).

Defined benefit plan. Defined benefit plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Defined contribution plan. Defined contribution plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Determination date. Determination date is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3)(iv)(A).

Employee. With respect to a plan for a given plan year, employee means an employee (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9) who benefits as an employee under the plan for the plan year (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–3).

Employer. Employer is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

ESOP. ESOP is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Excess benefit percentage. Excess benefit percentage is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(14).

Former employee. With respect to a plan for a given plan year, former employee means a former employee (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9).

Former HCE. Former HCE means a highly compensated former employee as defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Former NHCE. Former NHCE means a former employee who is not a former HCE.

Fresh-start date. Fresh-start date is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(5)(iii).

Fresh-start group. Fresh-start group is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(5)(ii).

Gross benefit percentage. Gross benefit percentage is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(18).

HCE. HCE means a highly compensated employee as defined in § 1.410(b)–9 who benefits under the plan for the plan year (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–3).

Integration level. Integration level is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(20).

Measurement period. Measurement period is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(1)(iii).

Multiemployer plan. Multiemployer plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

NHCE. NHCE means an employee who is not an HCE.

Nonexcludable employee. Nonexcludable employee means an employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9, other than an excludable employee with respect to the plan as determined under § 1.410(b)–6. A nonexcludable employee may be either a highly or nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employee, depending on the nonexcludable employee's status under section 414(q).

Normalize. With respect to a benefit payable to an employee in a particular form, normalize means to convert the benefit to an actuarially equivalent straight life annuity commencing at the employee's testing age. The actuarial assumptions used in normalizing a benefit must be reasonable and must be applied on a gender-neutral basis. A standard interest rate and a standard mortality table are among the assumptions considered reasonable for this purpose.

Offset plan. Offset plan is defined in § 1.401(l)–1(c)(24).

Optional form of benefit. Optional form of benefit is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(1).

Other right or feature. Other right or feature is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(3).

Plan. Plan means a plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7 (a) and (b), after application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c) and the permissive aggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(d).

Plan year. Plan year is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Plan year compensation—(1) *In general.* Plan year compensation means section 414(s) compensation for the plan year determined by measuring section 414(s) compensation during one of the periods described in paragraphs (2) through (4) of this definition. Whichever period is selected must be applied uniformly to determine the plan year compensation of every employee.

(2) *Plan year.* This period consists of the plan year.

(3) *Twelve-month period ending in the plan year.* This period consists of a specified 12-month period ending with or within the plan year, such as the calendar year or the period for determining benefit accruals described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(6).

(4) *Period of plan participation during the plan year.* This period consists of the portion of the plan year during which the employee is a participant in the plan. This period may be used to determine plan year compensation for the plan year in which participation begins, the plan year in which participation ends, or both. This period may be used to determine plan year compensation when substituted for average annual compensation in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(e)(2)(ii)(A) only if the plan year is also the period for determining benefit accruals under the plan rather than another period as permitted under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(6). Further, selection of this period must be made on a reasonably consistent basis from plan year to plan year in a manner that does not discriminate in favor of HCEs.

(5) *Special rule for new employees.* Notwithstanding the uniformity requirement of paragraph (1) of this definition, if employees' plan year compensation for a plan year is determined based on a 12-month period ending within the plan year under paragraph (3) of this definition, then the plan year compensation of any employees whose date of hire was less than 12 months before the end of that 12-month period must be determined uniformly based either on the plan year or on the employees' periods of participation during the plan year, as provided in paragraphs (2) and (4), respectively, of this definition.

QJSA. QJSA means a qualified joint and survivor annuity as defined in section 417(b).

QSUPP—(1) *In general.* QSUPP or qualified social security supplement means a social security supplement that meets each of the requirements in

paragraphs (2) through (6) of this definition.

(2) *Accrual*—(i) *General rule.* The amount of the social security supplement payable at any age for which the employee is eligible for the social security supplement must be equal to the lesser of—

(A) The employee's old-age insurance benefit, unreduced on account of age, under title II of the Social Security Act; and

(B) The accrued social security supplement, determined under one of the methods in paragraph (2) (ii) through (iv) of this definition.

(ii) *Section 401(l) plans.* In the case of a section 401(l) plan that is a defined benefit excess plan, each employee's accrued social security supplement equals the employee's average annual compensation up to the integration level, multiplied by the disparity provided by the plan for the employee's years of service used in determining the employee's accrued benefit under the plan. In the case of a section 401(l) plan that is an offset plan, each employee's accrued social security supplement equals the dollar amount of the offset accrued for the employee under the plan.

(iii) *PIA offset plan.* In the case of a PIA offset plan, each employee's accrued social security supplement equals the dollar amount of the offset accrued for the employee under the plan. For this purpose, a PIA offset plan is a plan that reduces an employee's benefit by an offset based on a stated percentage of the employee's primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act.

(iv) *Other plans.* In the case of any other plan, each employee's social security supplement accrues ratably over the period beginning with the later of the employee's commencement of participation in the plan or the effective date of the social security supplement and ending with the earliest age at which the social security supplement is payable to the employee. The effective date of the social security supplement is the later of the effective date of the amendment adding the social security supplement or the effective date of the amendment modifying an existing social security supplement to comply with the requirements of this definition. If, by the end of the first plan year to which these regulations apply, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) and (b), an amendment is made to a social security supplement in existence on September 19, 1991, the employer may treat the accrued portion of the social security supplement, as determined under the plan without regard to amendments made after September 19, 1991, as included in the employee's accrued social security supplement, provided that the remainder of the social security supplement is accrued under the otherwise-applicable method.

(3) *Vesting.* The plan must provide that an employee's right to the accrued social security supplement becomes nonforfeitable within the meaning of section 411 as if it were an early retirement benefit.

(4) *Eligibility.* The plan must impose the same eligibility conditions on receipt of the social security supplement as on receipt of the early retirement benefit in conjunction with which the social security supplement is payable. Furthermore, if the service required for an employee to become eligible for the social security supplement exceeds 15 years, then the ratio percentage of the group of employees who actually satisfy the eligibility conditions on receipt of the QSUPP in the current plan year must equal or exceed the unsafe harbor percentage applicable to the plan under § 1.410(b)–4(c)(4)(ii).

(5) *QJSA.* At each age, the most valuable QSUPP commencing at that age must be payable in conjunction with the QJSA commencing at that age. In addition, the plan must provide that, in the case of a social security supplement payable in conjunction with a QJSA, the social security supplement will be paid after the employee's death on the same terms as the QJSA, but in no event for a period longer than the period for which the social security supplement would have been paid to the employee had the employee not died. For example, if the QJSA is in the form of a joint annuity with a 50-percent survivor's benefit, the social security supplement must provide a 50-percent survivor's benefit. When section 417(c) requires the determination of a QJSA for purposes of determining a

qualified pre-retirement survivor's annuity as defined in section 417(c) (QPSA), the social security supplement payable in conjunction with that QJSA must be paid in conjunction with the QPSA.

(6) *Protection*. The plan must specifically provide that the social security supplement is treated as an early retirement benefit that is protected under section 411(d)(6) (other than for purposes of sections 401(a)(11) and 417). Thus, the accrued social security supplement must continue to be payable notwithstanding subsequent amendment of the plan (including the plan's termination), and an employee may meet the eligibility requirements for the social security supplement after plan termination.

Qualified plan. Qualified plan means a plan that satisfies section 401(a). For this purpose, a qualified plan includes an annuity plan described in section 403(a).

Rate group. Rate group is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(1) or is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c)(1).

Ratio percentage. Ratio percentage is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Section 401(a)(17) employee. Section 401(a)(17) employee is defined in § 1.401(a)(17)–1(e)(2)(ii).

Section 401(k) plan. Section 401(k) plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Section 401(l) plan. Section 401(l) plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Section 401(m) plan. Section 401(m) plan is defined in § 1.410(b)–9.

Section 414(s) compensation—(1) *General rule*. When used with reference to compensation for a plan year, 12-month period, or other specified period, section 414(s) compensation means compensation measured using an underlying definition that satisfies section 414(s) for the applicable plan year. Whether an underlying definition of compensation satisfies section 414(s) is determined on a year-by-year basis, based on the provisions of section 414(s) in effect for the applicable plan year and, if relevant, the employer's HCEs and NHCEs for that plan year. See § 1.414(s)–1(i) for transition rules for plan years beginning before the effective date applicable to the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–13 (a) or (b). For a plan year or 12-month period beginning before January 1, 1988, any underlying definition of compensation may be used to measure the amount of employees' compensation for purposes of this definition, provided that the definition was nondiscriminatory based on the facts and circumstances in existence for that plan year or for the plan year in which that 12-month period ends.

(2) *Determination period for section 414(s) nondiscrimination requirement*—(i) *General rule*. If an underlying definition of compensation must satisfy the nondiscrimination requirement in § 1.414(s)–1(d)(3) in order to satisfy section 414(s) for a plan year, any one of the following determination periods may be used to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirement—

(A) The plan year;

(B) The calendar year ending in the plan year; or

(C) The 12-month period ending in the plan year that is used to determine the underlying definition of compensation.

(ii) *Exception for partial plan year compensation*. Notwithstanding the general rule in paragraph (2)(i) of this definition, if the period for measuring the underlying compensation is the portion of the plan year during which each employee is a participant in the plan (as provided in paragraph (4) of the definition of plan year compensation in this section), that period must be used as the determination period.

(3) *Plans using permitted disparity*. In the case of a section 401(l) plan or a plan that imputes permitted disparity in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)–7, an underlying definition of compensation is not section 414(s) compensation if the definition results in significant underinclusion of compensation for employees.

(4) *Double proration of service and compensation*. If a defined benefit plan prorates benefit accruals as permitted under section 411(b)(4)(B) by crediting less than full years of participation, then compensation for a plan year, 12-month period, or other specified period that is used to determine the amount of an employee's benefits under the plan will not fail to be section 414(s) compensation, merely because the amount of compensation for that period is adjusted to reflect the equivalent of full-time compensation to the

extent necessary to satisfy the requirements of 29 CFR 2530.204–2(d) (regarding double proration of service and compensation). This adjustment is disregarded in determining whether the underlying definition of compensation used satisfies the requirements of section 414(s). Thus, for example, if the underlying definition of compensation is an alternative definition that must satisfy the nondiscrimination requirement of § 1.414(s)–1(d)(3), in determining whether that requirement is satisfied with regard to the underlying definition, the compensation included for any employee is determined without any adjustment to reflect the equivalent of full-time compensation required by 29 CFR 2530.204–2(d).

Social security supplement. Social security supplement is defined in § 1.411(a)–7(c)(4)(ii).

Standard interest rate. Standard interest rate means an interest rate that is neither less than 7.5 percent nor greater than 8.5 percent, compounded annually. The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability, change the definition of standard interest rate.

Standard mortality table. Standard mortality table means one of the following tables: the UP–1984 Mortality Table (Unisex); the 1983 Group Annuity Mortality Table (1983 GAM) (Female); the 1983 Group Annuity Mortality Table (1983 GAM) (Male); the 1983 Individual Annuity Mortality Table (1983 IAM) (Female); the 1983 Individual Annuity Mortality Table (1983 IAM) (Male); the 1971 Group Annuity Mortality Table (1971 GAM) (Female); the 1971 Group Annuity Mortality Table (1971 GAM) (Male); the 1971 Individual Annuity Mortality Table (1971 IAM) (Female); or the 1971 Individual Annuity Mortality Table (1971 IAM) (Male). These standard mortality tables are available from the Society of Actuaries, 475 N. Martingale Road, Suite 800, Schaumberg, Illinois 60173. The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability, change the definition of standard mortality table. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this Chapter.

Straight life annuity. Straight life annuity means an annuity payable in equal installments for the life of the employee that terminates upon the employee's death.

Testing age. With respect to an employee, testing age means the age determined for the employee under the following rules:

(1) If the plan provides the same uniform normal retirement age for all employees, the employee's testing age is the employee's normal retirement age under the plan.

(2) If a plan provides different uniform normal retirement ages for different employees or different groups of employees, the employee's testing age is the employee's latest normal retirement age under any uniform normal retirement age under the plan, regardless of whether that particular uniform normal retirement age actually applies to the employee under the plan.

(3) If the plan does not provide a uniform normal retirement age, the employee's testing age is 65.

(4) If an employee is beyond the testing age otherwise determined for the employee under paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition, the employee's testing age is the employee's current age. The rule in the preceding sentence does not apply in the case of a defined benefit plan that fails to satisfy the requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(3)(i) (permitting certain increases in benefits that commence after normal retirement age to be disregarded).

Testing service. Testing service is defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(1)(iv).

Uniform normal retirement age—(1) *General rule.* Uniform normal retirement age means a single normal retirement age under the plan that does not exceed the maximum age in paragraph (2) of this definition and that is the same for all of the employees in a given group. A group of employees does not fail to have a uniform normal retirement age merely because the plan contains provisions described in paragraphs (3) and (4) of this definition.

(2) *Maximum age.* The maximum age is generally 65. However, if all employees have the same social security retirement age (within the meaning of section 415(b)(8)), the maximum age is

the employees' social security retirement age. Thus, for example, a component plan has a uniform normal retirement age of 67 if it defines normal retirement age as social security retirement age and all employees in the component plan have a social security retirement age of 67.

(3) *Stated anniversary date*—(i) *General rule.* A group of employees does not fail to have a uniform normal retirement age merely because the plan provides that the normal retirement age of all employees in the group is the later of a stated age (not exceeding the maximum age in paragraph (2) of this definition) or a stated anniversary no later than the fifth anniversary of the time each employee commenced participation in the plan. For employees who commenced participation in the plan before the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1988, the stated anniversary date may be later than the anniversary described in the preceding sentence if it is no later than the earlier of the tenth anniversary of the date the employee commenced participation in the plan (or such earlier anniversary selected by the employer, if less than 10) or the fifth anniversary of the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1988.

(ii) *Use of service other than anniversary of commencement of participation.* In lieu of using a stated anniversary date as permitted under paragraph (3)(i) of this definition, a plan may use a stated number of years of service measured on another basis, provided that the determination is made on a basis that satisfies section 411(a)(8) and that the stated number of years of service does not exceed the number of anniversaries permitted under paragraph (3)(i) of this definition. For example, a uniform normal retirement age could be based on the earlier of the fifth anniversary of the commencement of participation and the completion of five years of vesting service.

(4) *Conversion of normal retirement age to normal retirement date.* A group of employees does not fail to have a uniform normal retirement age merely because a defined benefit plan provides for the commencement of normal retirement benefits on different retirement dates for different employees if each employee's normal retirement date is determined on a reasonable basis with reference to an otherwise uniform normal retirement age and the difference between the normal retirement date and the uniform normal retirement age cannot exceed six months for any employee. Thus, for example, benefits under a plan do not fail to commence at a uniform normal retirement age of age 62 for purposes of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(2)(i), merely because the plan's normal retirement date is defined as the last day of the plan year nearest attainment of age 62.

Year of service. Year of service means a year of service as defined in the plan for a specific purpose, including the method of crediting service for that purpose under the plan.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46820, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(4)–13 Effective dates and fresh-start rules.

(a) *General effective dates*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

(3) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraph (a)(1) and (2) of this section, and on or after the first day of the first plan year to which the amendments made to section 410(b) by section 1112(a) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA '86) apply, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(4), taking into account pre-existing guidance and the amendments made by TRA '86 to related provisions of the Code (including, for example, sections 401(l), 401(a)(17), and 410(b)). Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(4) will generally be determined on the basis of

all the relevant facts and circumstances, including the extent to which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(4) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13.

(b) *Effective date for governmental plans.* In the case of governmental plans described in section 414(d), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1 through 1.401(a)(4)–13 apply to plan years beginning on or after the later of January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously. Such plans are deemed to satisfy section 401(a)(4) for plan years before that effective date. For purposes of this paragraph (b), the governing body with authority to amend the plan is the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan.

(c) *Fresh-start rules for defined benefit plans*—(1) *Introduction.* This paragraph (c) provides rules that must be satisfied in order to use the fresh-start testing options for defined benefit plans in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)(vii) and (d)(3)(iii), relating to the safe harbors and the general test, respectively. Those fresh-start options are designed to allow a plan to be tested without regard to benefits accrued before a selected fresh-start date. To the extent provided in paragraph (d) of this section, those options also may be used to disregard certain increases in benefits attributable to compensation increases after a fresh-start date. Although this paragraph (c) generally requires a plan to be amended to freeze employees' accrued benefits as of a fresh-start date and to provide any additional accrued benefits after the fresh-start date solely in accordance with certain specified formulas, certain of these requirements do not apply to a plan that is tested under the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c). See § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)(vii) and (d)(3)(iii).

(2) *General rule.* A defined benefit plan satisfies this paragraph (c) if—

(i) Accrued benefits of employees in the fresh-start group are frozen as of the fresh-start date in accordance with paragraph (c)(3) of this section;

(ii) Accrued benefits after the fresh-start date for employees in the fresh-start group are determined under one of the fresh-start formulas in paragraph (c)(4) of this section; and

(iii) Paragraph (c)(5) of this section is satisfied.

(3) *Definition of frozen*—(i) *General rule.* An employee's accrued benefit under a plan is frozen as of the fresh-start date if it is determined as if the employee terminated employment with the employer as of the fresh-start date (or the date the employee actually terminated employment with the employer, if earlier), and without regard to any amendment to the plan adopted after that date, other than amendments recognized as effective as of or before that date under section 401(b) or § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g). The assumption that an employee has terminated employment applies solely for purposes of this paragraph (c)(3). Thus, for example, the fresh start has no effect on the service taken into account for purposes of determining vesting and eligibility for benefits, rights, and features under the plan.

(ii) *Permitted compensation adjustments.* An employee's accrued benefit under a plan that satisfies paragraph (d) of this section does not fail to be frozen as of the fresh-start date merely because the plan makes the adjustments described in paragraph (d)(7) and (8) of this section with regard to the fresh-start date. In addition, if the frozen accrued benefit of an employee under the plan includes top-heavy minimum benefits, an employee's accrued benefit under a plan does not fail to be frozen as of the fresh-start date merely because the plan increases the frozen accrued benefit of each employee in the fresh-start group solely to the extent necessary to comply with the average compensation requirement of section 416(c)(1)(D)(i).

(iii) *Permitted changes in optional forms.* An employee's accrued benefit under a plan does not fail to be frozen

as of the fresh-start date merely because the plan provides a new optional form of benefit with respect to the frozen accrued benefit, if—

(A) The optional form is provided with respect to each employee's entire accrued benefit (i.e., accrued both before and after the fresh-start date);

(B) The plan provided meaningful coverage as of the fresh-start date, as described in paragraph (d)(4) of this section; and

(C) The plan provides meaningful current benefit accruals as described in paragraph (d)(6) of this section.

(iv) *Floor-offset plans.* In the case of a plan that was a floor-offset plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–8(d) prior to the fresh-start date, an employee's accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date does not fail to be frozen merely because the actuarial equivalent of the account balance in the defined contribution plan that is offset against the defined benefit plan varies as a result of investment return that is different from the assumed interest rate used to determine the actuarial equivalent of the account balance.

(4) *Fresh-start formulas*—(i) *Formula without wear-away.* An employee's accrued benefit under the plan is equal to the sum of—

(A) The employee's frozen accrued benefit; and

(B) The employee's accrued benefit determined under the formula applicable to benefit accruals in the current plan year (current formula) as applied to the employee's years of service after the fresh-start date.

(ii) *Formula with wear-away.* An employee's accrued benefit under the plan is equal to the greater of—

(A) The employee's frozen accrued benefit; or

(B) The employee's accrued benefit determined under the current formula as applied to the employee's total years of service (before and after the fresh-start date) taken into account under the current formula.

(iii) *Formula with extended wear-away.* An employee's accrued benefit under the plan is equal to the greater of—

(A) The amount determined under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section; or

(B) The amount determined under paragraph (c)(4)(ii)(B) of this section.

(5) *Rules of application*—(i) *Consistency requirement.* This paragraph (c)(5) is not satisfied unless the fresh-start rules in this paragraph (c) (and paragraph (d) of this section, if applicable) are applied consistently to all employees in the fresh-start group. Thus, for example, the same fresh-start date and fresh-start formula (within the meaning of paragraph (c)(4) of this section) must apply to all employees in the fresh-start group. Similarly, if a plan makes a fresh start for all employees with accrued benefits on the fresh-start date and, for a later plan year, is aggregated for purposes of section 401(a)(4) with another plan that did not make the same fresh start, the aggregated plan must make a new fresh start in order to use the fresh-start rules for that later plan year or any subsequent plan year.

(ii) *Definition of fresh-start group.* Generally, the fresh-start group with respect to a fresh start consists of all employees who have accrued benefits as of the fresh-start date and have at least one hour of service with the employer after that date. However, a fresh-start group with respect to a fresh start may consist exclusively of all employees who have accrued benefits as of the fresh-start date, have at least one hour of service with the employer after that date, and are—

(A) Section 401(a)(17) employees;

(B) Members of an acquired group of employees (provided the fresh-start date is the date determined under paragraph (c)(5)(iii)(B) of this section); or

(C) Employees with a frozen accrued benefit that is attributable to assets and liabilities transferred to the plan as of a fresh-start date in connection with the transfer (provided the fresh-start date is the date determined under paragraph (c)(5)(iii)(C) of this section) and for whom the current formula is different from the formula used to determine the frozen accrued benefit.

(iii) *Definition of fresh-start date.* Generally, the fresh-start date is the last day of a plan year. However, a plan may use a fresh-start date other than the last day of the plan year if—

(A) The plan satisfied the safe harbor rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) for the period from the beginning of the plan year through the fresh-start date;

(B) The fresh-start group is an acquired group of employees, and the fresh-start date is the latest date of hire or transfer into an acquired trade or business selected by the employer for any employees to be included in the acquired group of employees; or

(C) The fresh-start group is the group of employees with a frozen accrued benefit that is attributable to assets and liabilities transferred to the plan and the fresh-start date is the date as of which the employees begin accruing benefits under the plan.

(6) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (c):

Example 1. (a) Employer X maintains a defined benefit plan with a calendar plan year. The plan formula provides an employee with a normal retirement benefit at age 65 of one percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation multiplied by the employee's years of service for Employer X, plus 1.5 percent of average annual compensation in excess of covered compensation, multiplied by the employee's years of service for Employer X up to 40.

(b) For plan years beginning after 1994, Employer X amends the plan formula to provide a normal retirement benefit of 0.75 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation multiplied by the employee's total years of service for Employer X up to 35, plus 1.4 percent of average annual compensation in excess of covered compensation multiplied by the employee's years of service for Employer X up to 35. For plan years after 1994, each employee's accrued benefit is determined under the fresh-start formula in paragraph (c)(4)(iii) of this section (formula with extended wear-away), using December 31, 1994, as the fresh-start date.

(c) As of December 31, 1994, Employee M has 10 years of service for Employer X, has average annual compensation of $38,000, and has covered compensation of $30,000. Employee M's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1994, is therefore $4,200 ((1 percent×$30,000×10 years)+(1.5 percent×$8,000×10 years)). As of December 31, 1995, Employee M has 11 years of service for Employer X, has average annual compensation of $40,000 (determined by taking into account compensation before and after the fresh-start date), and has covered compensation of $32,000. Employee M's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1995, is $4,552, the greater of—

(1) $4,552, the sum of Employee M's accrued benefit frozen as of December 31, 1994, ($4,200) and the amended formula applied to Employee M's years of service after 1994 ((0.75 percent×$32,000×1 year)+(1.4 percent×$8,000×1 year), or $352); or

(2) $3,872, the amended formula applied to Employee M's total years of service ((0.75 percent×$32,000×11 years)+(1.4 percent×$8,000×11 years)).

Example 2. (a) Employer Y maintains a defined benefit plan, Plan A, that has a calendar plan year. For the 1995 plan year, Plan A satisfies the requirements for a safe harbor plan in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b). Employer Y selects a date in 1995 for all the employees, freezes the employees' accrued benefits as of that date under the rules of paragraph (c)(3) of this section, and, in accordance with the rules of this paragraph (c), amends Plan A to determine benefits for all employees after that date using the formula with wear-away described in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section. The new benefit formula would satisfy the requirements for a safe harbor plan in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) if all accrued benefits were determined under it.

(b) Because Plan A satisfied the requirements for a safe harbor plan for the period from the beginning of the plan year through the selected date, paragraph (c)(5)(iii)(A) of this section permits the selected date to be a fresh-start date, even if it is not the last day of the plan year. Thus, Plan A satisfies the requirements in this paragraph (c) for a fresh start as of the fresh-start date.

(c) Under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6)(vii), a plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b), merely because of benefits accrued under a different formula prior to a fresh-start date. Thus, Plan A still satisfies the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) after the amendment to the benefit formula. Because Plan A satisfied the requirements for a safe harbor plan for the period from the beginning of the plan year, taking the amendment into account, Employer Y may select any date within the plan year (which may be the same date as the first fresh-start date) and apply the fresh-start rules in this paragraph (c) a second time as of that date.

(d) *Compensation adjustments to frozen accrued benefits*—(1) *Introduction.* In addition to the fresh-start rules in paragraph (c) of this section, this paragraph (d) sets forth requirements that must be satisfied in order for a plan to disregard increases in benefits accrued as of a fresh-start date that are attributable to increases in employees' compensation after the fresh-start date.

(2) *In general.* In the case of a defined benefit plan that is tested under the safe harbors in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b) or § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3), an employee's adjusted accrued benefit (determined under the rules in paragraph (d)(8) of

this section) may be substituted for the employee's frozen accrued benefit in applying the formulas in paragraph (c)(4) of this section (or paragraph (f)(2) of this section, if applicable) if paragraphs (d)(3) through (d)(7) of this section are satisfied. Thus, for example, in determining whether such a plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b), any compensation adjustments to the employee's frozen accrued benefit described in paragraph (d)(8) of this section are disregarded. Similarly, in the case of a defined benefit plan tested under the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c), the compensation adjustments described in paragraph (d)(8) of this section may be disregarded under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(3)(iii) if paragraphs (d)(3) through (d)(7) of this section are satisfied. Of course, any increases in accrued benefits exceeding these adjustments must be taken into account under the general test, and a plan providing such excess increases generally will fail to satisfy the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b). Where paragraphs (d)(3) through (d)(7) of this section are satisfied with respect to a plan as of the fresh-start date, but one or more of those paragraphs fail to be satisfied for a later plan year, further compensation adjustments described in paragraph (d)(8) of this section may not be disregarded in testing the plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–3.

(3) *Plan requirements*—(i) *Pre-fresh-start date.* As of the fresh-start date, the plan must have contained a benefit formula under which benefits of each employee in the fresh-start group that are accrued as of the fresh-start date and are attributable to service before the fresh-start date would be affected by the employee's compensation after the fresh-start date. A plan satisfies this requirement, for example, if it based benefits on an employee's highest average pay over a fixed period of years or on an employee's average pay over the employee's entire career with the employer. A plan does not satisfy this paragraph (d)(3)(i) if the Commissioner determines, based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, that the plan provision described in the first sentence of this paragraph (d)(3) was added primarily in order to provide additional benefits to HCEs that are disregarded under the special testing rules described in this paragraph (d).

(ii) *Post-fresh-start date.* The plan by its terms must provide that the accrued benefits of each employee in the fresh-start group after the fresh-start date be at least equal to the employee's adjusted accrued benefit (i.e., the frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date, adjusted as provided under paragraph (d)(7) of this section, plus the compensation adjustments described in paragraph (d)(8) of this section).

(4) *Meaningful coverage as of fresh-start date.* The plan must have provided meaningful coverage as of the fresh-start date. A plan provided meaningful coverage as of the fresh-start date if the group of employees with accrued benefits under the plan as of the fresh-start date satisfied the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b) as in effect on that date (determined without regard to section 410(b)(6)(C)). In order to satisfy the requirement in the preceding sentence, an employer may amend the plan to grant past service credit under the formula in effect as of the fresh-start date to NHCEs, if the amount of past service granted them is reasonably comparable, on average, to the amount of past service HCEs have under the plan. Any benefit increase that results from the grant of past service credit to a NHCE under this paragraph (d)(4) is included in the employee's frozen accrued benefit.

(5) *Meaningful ongoing coverage*—(i) *General rule.* The fresh-start group must have satisfied the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b) for all plan years from the first plan year beginning after the fresh-start date through the current plan year. Thus, if a fresh-start group fails to satisfy the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b) for any plan year, this paragraph (d)(5) is not satisfied for that plan year or any subsequent plan year; however, such a failure is not taken into account in determining whether this paragraph (d)(5) is satisfied for any previous plan year.

(ii) *Alternative rules.* Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(5)(i) of this section, a fresh-start group is deemed to satisfy this paragraph (d)(5) for all plan years following the fresh-start date if any

one of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) *Section 410(b) coverage for first five years.* The fresh-start group must have satisfied the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b) for the first five plan years beginning after the fresh-start date.

(B) *Ratio percentage coverage as of fresh-start date.* The fresh-start group must have satisfied the ratio percentage test of §1.410(b)–2(b)(2) as of the fresh-start date.

(C) *Fresh start for acquired group of employees.* The fresh-start group must consist of an acquired group of employees that satisfied the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b) (determined without regard to section 410(b)(6)(C)) as of the fresh-start date.

(D) *Fresh start before applicable effective date.* The fresh-start date with respect to the fresh-start group must have been on or before the effective date applicable to the plan under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section.

(6) *Meaningful current benefit accruals.* The benefit formula and accrual method under the plan that applies to the fresh-start group in the aggregate must provide benefit accruals in the current plan year (other than increases in benefits accrued as of the fresh-start date) at a rate that is meaningful in comparison to the rate at which benefits accrued for the fresh-start group in plan years beginning before the fresh-start date. Whether this requirement is satisfied with respect to a fresh-start group that does not include all employees in the plan with an hour of service after the fresh-start date may be determined taking into account the rate at which benefits are provided to other employees in the plan.

(7) *Minimum benefit adjustment*—(i) *In general.* In the case of a section 401(l) plan or a plan that imputes disparity under §1.401(a)(4)–7, the plan must make the minimum benefit adjustment described in paragraph (d)(7)(ii) or (iii) of this section.

(ii) *Excess or offset plans.* In the case of a plan that is a defined benefit excess plan as of the fresh-start date, each employee's frozen accrued benefit is adjusted so that the base benefit percentage is not less than 50 percent of the excess benefit percentage. In the case of a plan that is a PIA offset plan (as defined in paragraph (2)(iii) of the definition of QSUPP in §1.401(a)(4)–12) as of the fresh-start date, each employee's offset as applied to determine the frozen accrued benefit is adjusted so that it does not exceed 50 percent of the benefit determined without applying the offset.

(iii) *Other plans.* In the case of a plan that is not described in paragraph (d)(7)(ii) of this section, each employee's frozen accrued benefit is adjusted in a manner that is economically equivalent to the adjustment required under that paragraph, taking into account the plan's benefit formula, accrual rate, and relevant employee factors, such as period of service.

(8) *Adjusted accrued benefit*—(i) *General rule.* The term adjusted accrued benefit means an employee's frozen accrued benefit that is adjusted as provided in paragraph (d)(7) of this section and then multiplied by a fraction (not less than one), the numerator of which is the employee's compensation for the current plan year and the denominator of which is the employee's compensation as of the fresh-start date determined under the same definition. For purposes of this adjustment, the compensation definition must be either the same compensation definition and formula used to determine the frozen accrued benefit or average annual compensation (determined without regard to §1.401(a)(4)–3(e)(2)(ii)(A) (use of plan year compensation)).

(ii) *Alternative formula for pre-effective-date fresh starts.* In the case of a fresh-start date before the effective date that applies to the plan under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section, the adjusted accrued benefit may be determined by multiplying the frozen accrued benefit by a fraction (not less than one) determined under this paragraph (d)(8)(ii). The numerator of the fraction is the employee's average annual compensation for the current plan year. The denominator of the fraction is the employee's reconstructed average annual compensation as of the fresh-start date. An employee's reconstructed average annual compensation is determined by—

(A) Selecting a single plan year beginning after the fresh-start date but

beginning not later than the last day of the first plan year to which these regulations apply under paragraph (a) or (b) of this section;

(B) Determining the employee's average annual compensation for the selected plan year under the same method used to determine the employee's average annual compensation for the current plan year under this paragraph (d)(8)(ii); and

(C) Multiplying the employee's average annual compensation for the selected plan year by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's compensation as of the fresh-start date determined under the same compensation definition and formula used to determine the employee's frozen accrued benefit and the denominator of which is the employee's compensation for the selected plan year determined under the compensation definition and formula used to determine the employee's frozen accrued benefit.

(iii) *Effect of section 401(a)(17).* In determining the numerators and the denominators of the fractions described in this paragraph (d)(8), the annual compensation limit under section 401(a)(17) generally applies. See, however, § 1.401(a)(17)–1(e)(4) for special rules applicable to section 401(a)(17) employees.

(iv) *Option to make less than the full permitted adjustment.* A plan may limit the increase in an employee's frozen accrued benefit for the current and all future years to a percentage (not more than 100 percent) of the increase otherwise provided under this paragraph (d)(8). Furthermore, the plan may, at any time, terminate all future adjustments permitted under this paragraph (d).

(v) *Alternative determination of adjusted accrued benefit.* In lieu of applying the fractions in paragraph (d)(8)(i) or (ii) of this section, a plan may determine an employee's adjusted accrued benefit by substituting the employee's compensation for the current plan year (determined under the same compensation formula and underlying definition of compensation used to determine the employee's frozen accrued benefit) in the benefit formula used to determine the frozen accrued benefit. For this purpose, insignificant changes in the underlying definition of compensation to reflect current compensation practices will not be treated as a change in the definition of compensation. A plan may apply the alternative in this paragraph (d)(8)(v), only if it is reasonable to expect as of the fresh-start date that, over time, the use of this method instead of the general rule of paragraph (d)(8)(i) will not discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs.

(9) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (d).

Example 1. (a) Employer X maintains a defined benefit plan that is an excess plan with a calendar plan year. For plan years before 1989, the plan is integrated with benefits provided under the Social Security Act, providing each employee with a normal retirement benefit equal to one percent of the employee's average annual compensation in excess of the employee's covered compensation, multiplied by the employee's years of service for Employer X. The benefit formula thus provides no benefit with respect to average annual compensation up to covered compensation.

(b) As of December 31, 1988, Employee M has 10 years of service for Employer X and has covered compensation of $25,000 and average annual compensation of $20,000. Employee M's average annual compensation has never exceeded $20,000. Therefore, as of December 31, 1988, Employee M's accrued benefit under the plan is zero.

(c) Effective with the 1989 plan year, the plan is amended to provide each employee with a normal retirement benefit of 0.6 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation plus 1.2 percent of average annual compensation in excess of covered compensation, multiplied by the employee's years of service up to 35. The plan also provides that, for plan years after 1988, each employee's accrued benefit is determined under the formula in paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section (formula without wear-away) and, in applying the fresh-start formula, each employee's frozen accrued benefit under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section will be adjusted under this paragraph (d), using the same compensation definition and formula used to determine the frozen accrued benefit under paragraph (d)(8)(i) of this section.

(d) The plan uses the permitted disparity of section 401(l) and thus must also make the minimum benefit adjustment under paragraph (d)(7) of this section. Because the excess benefit percentage under the plan for years before 1989 was one percent, the plan must provide a base benefit percentage for those years of at least 0.5 percent. After the

minimum benefit adjustment, Employee M's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1988, is $1,000 (0.5 percent×$20,000×10 years).

(e) As of December 31, 1992, Employee M has 14 years of service and has covered compensation of $30,000 and average annual compensation of $35,000. Employee M's adjusted accrued benefit as of December 31, 1992, is $1,750 ($1,000×$35,000/$20,000), and Employee M's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1992, is $2,710 (the sum of $1,750 plus $960 ((0.6 percent×$30,000×4 years) plus (1.2 percent×$5,000×4 years))).

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that in determining adjusted accrued benefits, the plan specifies the alternative method of paragraph (d)(8)(v) of this section. This method may be used because it is reasonable to expect as of the fresh-start date that, over time, the use of this method instead of the general rule of paragraph (d)(8)(i) will not discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs.

(b) As of December 31, 1992, Employee M's adjusted accrued benefit is $2,000 (10 years of service prior to the fresh-start date×(0.5 percent of $30,000+1.0 percent of the excess of $35,000 over $30,000)).

(c) Alternatively, Employer X may choose to use the method of paragraph (d)(8)(v) of this section but freezes the covered compensation level at the dollar level in place as of the fresh-start date. In such case, Employee M's adjusted accrued benefit as of December 31, 1992, would have been $2,250 (10 years of service prior to the fresh-start date×(0.5 percent of $25,000+1.0 percent of the excess of $35,000 over $25,000)). This method may be used because it is reasonable to expect as of the fresh-start date that, over time, the use of this method instead of the general rule of paragraph (d)(8)(i) will not discriminate significantly in favor of HCEs.

Example 3. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that for plan years before 1989, the plan provided a minimum benefit to certain employees equal to $120 per year of service. Employee M is entitled to the minimum benefit, and thus, Employee M's frozen accrued benefit as of December 31, 1988 was $1,200 (the greater of 10 years of service×$120 and $1,000, Employee M's benefit under the underlying formula, after the minimum benefit adjustment of paragraph (d)(7) of this section).

(b) Employer X's plan specifies instead the alternative method of adjusting accrued benefits described in paragraph (d)(8)(v) of this section. (The fact that a minimum benefit applying to certain employees is not adjusted under the alternative method of paragraph (d)(8)(v) of this section, but would be adjusted under the general rule of paragraph (d)(8)(i) of this section does not change the conclusion in *Example 2,* that the plan may apply the alternative method).

(e) *Determination of initial theoretical reserve for target benefit plans*—(1) *General rule.* In the case of a target benefit plan the stated benefit formula under which takes into account service for years in which the plan did not satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3), as permitted under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3)(vii), the theoretical reserve as of the determination date for the last plan year beginning before the first day of the first plan year in which the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3) of an employee who was a participant in the plan on that determination date, is determined as follows:

(i) Determine the actuarial present value, as of that determination date, of the stated benefit that the employee is projected to have at the employee's normal retirement age, using the actuarial assumptions, the provisions of the plan, and the employee's compensation as of that determination date. For an employee whose attained age equals or exceeds the employee's normal retirement age, determine the actuarial present value of the employee's stated benefit at the employee's current age, but using an immediate straight life annuity factor for an employee whose attained age equals the employee's normal retirement age.

(ii) Calculate the actuarial present value of future required employer contributions (without regard to limitations under section 415 or additional contributions described in § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3)(v)) as of that determination date (i.e., the actuarial present value of the level contributions due for each plan year through the end of the plan year in which the employee attains normal retirement age). This calculation is made assuming that the required contribution in each future year will be equal to the required contribution for the plan year that includes that determination date, and applying the interest rate that was used in determining that required contribution.

(iii) Determine the excess, if any, of the amount determined in paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section over the amount determined in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section. This excess is the employee's theoretical reserve on that determination date.

(2) *Example.* The following example illustrates the determination of an employee's theoretical reserve.

Example. (a) A target benefit plan was adopted and in effect before September 19, 1991, and satisfied the requirements of Rev. Rul. 76–464, 1976–2 C.B. 115, with respect to all years credited under the stated benefit formula through 1993. The plan provides a stated benefit equal to 40 percent of compensation, payable annually as a straight life annuity beginning at normal retirement age. Normal retirement age under the plan is 65. The stated interest rate under the plan is six percent. The determination date for required contributions under the plan is the last day of the plan year. Employee M is 38 years old on the determination date for the 1993 plan year, has participated in the plan for five years, and has compensation equal to $60,000 in 1993. The amount of employer contribution to Employee M's account for 1993 was $2,468.

(b) Under these facts, Employee M's theoretical reserve is equal to $13,909, calculated as follows:

(1) The actuarial present value of Employee M's stated benefit is calculated using the actuarial assumptions, provisions of the plan and Employee M's compensation as of the determination date for the 1993 plan year. This amount is equal to $46,512, Employee M's stated benefit of $24,000 ($60,000 multiplied by 40 percent), multiplied by 1.938, the actuarial present value factor applicable to a participant who is 38 years old using a stated interest rate of six percent.

(2) The actuarial present value of future employer contributions is calculated assuming that the required contribution in each future year will be equal to the required contribution for the 1993 plan year and assuming the same interest rate as was used in determining that contribution. This amount is equal to $32,603, which is equal to the amount of the level annual employer contribution ($2,468) multiplied by a factor of 13.2105 (the temporary annuity factor for a period of 27 years, assuming the six percent interest rate that was used to determine the required employer contribution).

(3) Employee M's theoretical reserve is $13,909, the excess of the amount determined in paragraph (b)(1) of this *Example* over the amount determined in paragraph (b)(2) of this *Example.*

(f) *Special fresh-start rules for cash balance plans*—(1) *In general.* In order to satisfy the optional testing method of § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3) after a fresh-start date, a cash balance plan must apply the rules of paragraph (c) of this section as modified under this paragraph (f). Paragraph (f)(2) of this section provides an alternative formula that may be used in addition to the formulas in paragraphs (c)(2) through (c)(4) of this section. Paragraph (f)(3) of this section sets forth certain limitations on use of the formulas in paragraph (c) or (f)(2) of this section.

(2) *Alternative formula*—(i) *In general.* An employee's accrued benefit under the plan is equal to the greater of—

(A) The employee's frozen accrued benefit, or

(B) The employee's accrued benefit determined under the plan's benefit formula applicable to benefit accruals in the current plan year as applied to years of service after the fresh-start date, modified in accordance with paragraph (f)(2)(ii) of this section.

(ii) *Addition of opening hypothetical account.* As of the first day after the fresh-start date, the plan must credit each employee's hypothetical account with an amount equal to the employee's opening hypothetical account (determined under paragraph (f)(2)(iii) of this section), adjusted for interest for the period that begins on the first day after the fresh-start date and that ends at normal retirement age. The interest adjustment in the preceding sentence must be made using the same interest rate applied to the hypothetical allocation for the first plan year beginning after the fresh-start date.

(iii) *Determination of opening hypothetical account*—(A) *General rule.* An employee's opening hypothetical account equals the actuarial present value of the employee's frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date. For this purpose, if the plan provides for a single sum distribution as of the fresh-start date, the actuarial present value of the employee's frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date equals the amount of a single sum distribution payable under the plan on that date, assuming that the employee terminated employment on the fresh-start date, the employee's accrued benefit was 100-percent vested, and the employee satisfied all eligibility requirements under the plan for the single sum distribution. If the plan does not offer a single sum distribution as of the fresh-start date, the actuarial present value of the employee's frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date must

be determined using a standard mortality table and the applicable section 417(e) rates, as defined in § 1.417(e)–1(d).

(B) *Alternative opening hypothetical account.* Alternatively, the employee's opening hypothetical account is the greater of the opening hypothetical account determined under paragraph (f)(2)(ii)(A) of this section and the employee's hypothetical account as of the fresh-start date determined in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(v)(A) calculated under the plan's benefit formula applicable to benefit accruals in the current plan year as applied to the employee's total years of service through the fresh-start date in a manner that satisfies the past service credit rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(viii).

(3) *Limitations on formulas*—(i) *Past service restriction.* If the plan does not satisfy the uniform hypothetical allocation formula requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(iii)(B) as of the fresh-start date, under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(viii) the plan may not provide for past service credits, and thus may not use the formula in paragraph (c)(3) of this section (formula with wear-away), the formula in paragraph (c)(4) of this section (formula with extended wear-away), or the alternative determination of the opening hypothetical account in paragraph (f)(2)(iii)(B) of this section.

(ii) *Change in interest rate.* If the interest rate used to adjust employees' hypothetical allocations under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(iv) for the plan year is different from the interest rate used for this purpose in the immediately preceding plan year, the plan must use the formula in paragraph (c)(2) of this section (formula without wear-away).

(iii) *Meaningful benefit requirement.* A plan is permitted to use the formula provided in paragraph (f)(2) of this section only if the plan satisfies paragraphs (d)(3) through (d)(5) of this section (regarding coverage as of fresh-start date, current benefit accruals, and minimum benefit adjustment, respectively).

[T.D. 8360, 56 FR 47598, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 4721, Feb. 7, 1992; 57 FR 10953, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46823, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(5)–1 Special rules relating to nondiscrimination requirements.

(a) *In general.* Section 401(a)(5) sets out certain provisions that will not of themselves be discriminatory within the meaning of section 410(b)(2)(A)(i) or section 401(a)(4). The exceptions specified in section 401(a)(5) are not an exclusive enumeration, but are merely a recital of provisions frequently encountered that will not of themselves constitute prohibited discrimination in contributions or benefits. See section 401(a)(4) and the regulations thereunder for the basic nondiscrimination rules. See § 1.410(b)–4 for the rule of section 410(b)(2)(A)(i) (relating to the nondiscriminatory classification test that is part of the minimum coverage requirements) referred to in section 401(a)(5)(A). See paragraphs (b) through (f) of this section for special rules used in applying the section 401(a)(4) nondiscrimination requirements under the remaining provisions of section 401(a)(5).

(b) *Salaried or clerical employees.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) merely because contributions or benefits provided under the plan are limited to salaried or clerical employees.

(c) *Uniform relationship to compensation.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) merely because the contributions or benefits of, or on behalf of, the employees under the plan bear a uniform relationship to the compensation (within the meaning of section 414(s)) of those employees.

(d) *Certain disparity permitted.* Under section 401(a)(5)(C), a plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees (as defined in section 414(q)), within the meaning of section 401(a)(4), in the amount of employer-provided contributions or benefits solely because—

(1) In the case of a defined contribution plan, employer contributions allocated to the accounts of employees favor highly compensated employees in a manner permitted by section 401(l) (relating to permitted disparity in plan contributions and benefits), and

(2) In the case of a defined benefit plan, employer-provided benefits favor

highly compensated employees in a manner permitted by section 401(l) (relating to permitted disparity in plan contributions and benefits).

See §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6 for rules under which a plan may satisfy section 401(l) for purposes of the safe harbors of §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(3) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(b).

(e) *Defined benefit plans integrated with social security*—(1) *In general.* Under section 401(a)(5)(D), a defined benefit plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees (as defined in section 414(q)) with respect to the amount of employer-provided contributions or benefits solely because the plan provides that, with respect to each employee, the employer-provided accrued retirement benefit under the plan is limited to the excess (if any) of—

(i) The employee's final pay from the employer, over

(ii) The employer-provided retirement benefit created under the Social Security Act and attributable to service by the employee for the employer.

(2) *Final pay.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section, an employee's final pay from the employer as of a plan year is the employee's compensation (as defined in section 414(q)(7)) for the year (ending with or within the 5-plan-year period ending with the plan year in which the employee terminates from employment with the employer) in which the employee receives the highest compensation from the employer. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, final pay for each employee under the plan may be determined with reference to the 5-plan-year period ending with the plan year before the plan year in which the employee terminates from employment with the employer. In determining an employee's final pay, the plan may specify any 12-month period (ending with or within the applicable 5-plan-year period) as a year provided the specified 12-month period is uniformly and consistently applied with respect to all employees. In determining an employee's final pay, compensation for any year in excess of the applicable limit under section 401(a)(17) for the year may not be taken into account.

(3) *Rules for determining amount of employer-provided social security retirement benefit.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section, the following rules apply.

(i) The employer-provided retirement benefit on which any reduction or offset in the employee's accrued retirement benefit is based is limited solely to the employer-provided primary insurance amount payable under section 215 of the Social Security Act attributable to service by the employee for the employer.

(ii) The employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to service by the employee for the employer is determined by multiplying the employer-provided portion of the employee's projected primary insurance amount by a fraction (not exceeding 1), the numerator of which is the employee's number of complete years of covered service for the employer under the Social Security Act, and the denominator of which is 35.

(4) *Projected primary insurance amount.* (i) As of a plan year, an employee's projected primary insurance amount is the primary insurance amount, determined as of the close of the plan year (the ''determination date''), payable to the employee upon attainment of the employee's social security retirement age (as determined under section 415(b)(8)), assuming the employee's annual compensation from the employer that is treated as wages for purposes of the Social Security Act remains the same from the plan year until the employee's attainment of social security retirement age. With respect to service by the employee for the employer before the determination date, the actual compensation paid to the employee by the employer during all periods of service of the employee for the employer covered by the Social Security Act must be used in determining an employee's projected primary insurance amount. With respect to years before the employee's commencement of service for the employer, in determining the employee's projected primary insurance amount, it may be assumed that the employee received compensation in an amount computed

by using a six-percent salary scale projected backwards from the determination date to the employee's 21st birthday. However, if the employee provides the employer with satisfactory evidence of the employee's actual past compensation for the prior years treated as wages under the Social Security Act at the time the compensation was earned and the actual past compensation results in a smaller projected primary insurance amount, the plan must use the actual past compensation. The plan administrator must give clear written notice to each employee of the employee's right to supply actual compensation history and of the financial consequences of failing to supply the history. The notice must be given each time the summary plan description is provided to the employee and must also be given upon the employee's separation from service. The notice must also state that the employee can obtain the actual compensation history from the Social Security Administration. In determining the employee's projected primary insurance amount, the employer may not take into account any compensation from any other employer while the employee is employed by the employer.

(ii) As of a plan year, the employer-provided portion of the employee's projected primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act is 50 percent of the employee's projected primary insurance amount (as determined under paragraph (e)(4)(i) of this section).

(5) *Employer-provided accrued retirement benefit.* For purposes of this section, the employee's employer-provided accrued retirement benefit as of a plan year is the employee's accrued retirement benefit under the plan (determined on an actual basis and not on a projected basis) attributable to employer contributions under the plan. With respect to plans that provide for employee contributions, see section 411(c) for rules relating to the allocation of accrued benefits between employer contributions and employee contributions.

(6) *Additional rules.* (i) As of a plan year, paragraph (e)(1) of this section does not apply to the extent that its application would result in a decrease in an employee's accrued benefit. See sections 411(b)(1)(G) and 411(d)(6).

(ii) Section 401(a)(5)(D) and this paragraph (e) do not apply to a plan maintained by an employer, determined for purposes of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act or the Railroad Retirement Tax Act, as applicable, that does not pay any wages within the meaning of section 3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e). For this purpose, a plan maintained for a self-employed individual within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), who is also subject to the tax under section 1401, is deemed to be a plan maintained by an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section 3121(a).

(iii) If a plan provides for the payment of an employee's accrued retirement benefit (whether or not subsidized) commencing before an employee's social security retirement age, the projected employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to service by the employee for the employer (as determined under paragraphs (e)(3) and (e)(4) of this section) that may be applied as an offset to limit the employee's accrued retirement benefit must be reduced in accordance with § 1.401(l)–3(e)(1). The reduction is made by multiplying the employee's projected employer-provided primary insurance amount by a fraction, the numerator of which is the appropriate factor under § 1.401(l)–3(e)(1), and the denominator of which is 0.75 percent.

(iv) The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices or other documents of general applicability, prescribe additional rules that may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this section, including rules relating to the determination of an employee's projected primary insurance amount attributable to the employee's service for former employers and rules applying section 401(a)(5)(D) with respect to an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section 3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e) for some years and not for other years.

(7) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (e).

Example 1. Employer Z maintains a noncontributory defined benefit plan that uses the calendar year as its plan year. The plan

provides a normal retirement benefit, commencing at age 65, equal to $500 a year, multiplied by the employee's years of service for Z, limited to the excess of the amount of the employee's final pay from Z (as determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) of this section) over the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to the employee's service for Z. If an employee's social security retirement age is greater than 65, the plan provides for reduction of the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount in accordance with paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section. The plan provides no limitation on the number of years of service taken into account in determining benefits under the plan. Employee A retires on July 6, 1995, at A's social security retirement age of 65 with 35 years of service for Z. The plan uses the plan year as the 12–month period for determining an employee's year of final highest pay from the employer. A's compensation for A's final 5 plan years is as follows:

1995 plan year	$10,500
1994 plan year	$20,000
1993 plan year	$18,000
1992 plan year	$17,000
1991 plan year	$16,500

A's annual primary insurance amount under social security, determined as of A's social security retirement age, is $9,000, of which $4,500 is the employer-provided portion attributable to A's service for Z ($9,000 × 50 percent × 35/35). Under the plan's benefit formula (disregarding the final pay limitation), A would be entitled to receive a normal retirement benefit of $17,500 ($500 × 35 years). However, under the plan, A's otherwise determined normal retirement benefit of $17,500 is limited to the excess of the amount of A's final pay from Z over A's employer-provided primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for Z. Accordingly, A's normal retirement benefit is determined to be $15,500 ($20,000 (A's final pay from Z) less $4,500 (A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for Z)) rather than $17,500. The final pay limitation in Z's plan satisfies section 401(a)(5)(D) and this paragraph (e). Accordingly, the plan maintained by Z does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees within the meaning of section 401(a)(4) merely because of the final pay limitation contained in the plan.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1,* except that A has 32 years of service for Z when A retires at A's social security retirement age. Under the plan's benefit formula (disregarding the final pay limitation), A would be entitled to receive an annual normal retirement benefit of $16,000 ($500 × 32 years). However, the plan provides that A's normal retirement benefit of $16,000 will be limited to $15,500 ($20,000 (the amount of A's final pay from Z) less $4,500 (½ of A's primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act)). The final pay limitation does not satisfy this paragraph (e). The portion of A's employer-provided primary insurance amount under the Social Security Act attributable to A's service for Z is 32/35 × $4,500, or $4,114. Therefore, to satisfy this paragraph (e), the final pay provision in Z's plan may not limit A's otherwise determined normal retirement benefit of $16,000 to less than $15,886 ($20,000 (the amount of X's final pay) minus $4,114 (the portion of A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for Z)).

Example 3. (a) Employer X maintains a noncontributory defined benefit plan that uses the calendar year as its plan year. The formula for determining benefits under the plan provides a normal retirement benefit at age 65 equal to 90 percent of an employee's final average compensation, with the benefit reduced by 1/30th for each year of the employee's service less than 30 and limited to the employee's final pay (as determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) of this section) less the employee's employer-provided primary insurance amount under social security attributable to the employee's service for X. The plan determines an employee's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to the employee's service for X in accordance with paragraph (e)(3) of this section and applies the reductions applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section if benefits commence before social security retirement age. The plan determines an employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C).

(b) Employee A commences participation in the plan on January 1, 1990, when A is 35 years of age. A's social security retirement age is 67. As of the close of the 2014 plan year, A's final average compensation from X is $15,000; A's final pay from X is $15,400, and A's projected employer-provided annual primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X is $4,000 (after the reduction applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section). Under the plan formula, A's accrued benefit as of the close of the 2014 plan year is $11,250 (90 percent × $15,000 × 25/30). As of the close of the 2014 plan year, the plan's final pay limitation does not affect A's benefit because A's benefit under the plan as of the close of the plan year and before application of the final pay limitation ($11,250) does not exceed A's final pay of $15,400 from X, determined as of the close of the plan year, less A's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X ($4,000).

(c) Assume that, as of the close of the 2015 plan year, A's final average compensation

from X is $14,500 and A's final pay from X is $15,400. Assume also that as of the close of the 2015 plan year, A's employer-provided primary insurance amount attributable to A's service for X is $4,200 (after the reduction applicable under paragraph (e)(6)(iii) of this section). Accordingly, A's benefit as of the close of the 2015 plan year and before application of the final pay limitation is $11,310 (90 percent × $14,500 × 26/30). Under the plan's final pay limitation, A's benefit of $11,310 would be limited to $11,200, the amount of A's final pay from X ($15,400), less A's employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to A's service for X ($4,200). However, the plan's final pay limitation may not be applied to limit A's accrued benefit for the 2015 plan year to an amount below $11,250, which was A's accrued benefit under the plan at the close of the prior plan year. The foregoing is further illustrated in the following table for the plan years presented above and for additional years of service performed by A for X.

TABLE

[In dollar amounts]

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Years of service	Final average compensation	Benefit under plan formula (Column 2 × 0.9 × years of service/30)	Final pay	Employer-provided projected primary insurance amount under social security attributable to service for employer	Benefit if final pay reduction is applied in full (Column 4 − Column 5)	Benefit to which A is entitled (smaller of Column 6 or Column 3, but not less than Column 7 for prior year)
25	$15,000	$11,250	$15,400	$4,000	$11,400	$11,250
26	14,500	11,310	15,400	4,200	11,200	11,250
27	15,500	12,555	15,800	4,400	11,400	11,400
28	15,500	13,020	16,000	4,500	11,500	11,500
29	15,000	13,050	16,000	4,800	11,200	11,500
30	14,500	13,050	16,000	5,000	11,000	11,500

(f) *Certain benefits not taken into account.* In determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) and this section, other benefits created under state or federal law (e.g., worker's compensation benefits or black lung benefits) may not be taken into account.

(g) *More than one plan treated as single plan.* [Reserved]

(h) *Effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (h)(2) of this section, this section is effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), this section is effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

(3) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraphs (h)(1) and (h)(2) of this section, and on or after the first day of the first plan year to which the amendments made to section 401(a)(5) by section 1111(b) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA '86) apply, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5), taking into account pre-existing guidance and the amendments made by TRA '86 to related provisions of the Code. Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5) will generally be determined based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, including the extent to which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(5) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of this section.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47614, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10817, 10818, 10951, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46830, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(a)(17)–1 Limitation on annual compensation.

(a) *Compensation limit requirement*—(1) *In general.* In order to be a qualified plan, a plan must satisfy section 401(a)(17). Section 401(a)(17) provides an annual compensation limit for each employee under a qualified plan. This limit applies to a qualified plan in two ways. First, a plan may not base allocations, in the case of a defined contribution plan, or benefit accruals, in the case of a defined benefit plan, on compensation in excess of the annual compensation limit. Second, the amount of an employee's annual compensation that may be taken into account in applying certain specified nondiscrimination rules under the Internal Revenue Code is subject to the annual compensation limit. These two limitations are set forth in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, respectively. Paragraph (d) of this section provides the effective dates of section 401(a)(17), the amendments made by section 13212 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (OBRA '93), and this section. Paragraph (e) of this section provides rules for determining post-effective-date accrued benefits under the fresh-start rules.

(2) *Annual compensation limit for plan years beginning before January 1, 1994.* For purposes of this section, for plan years beginning prior to the OBRA '93 effective date, annual compensation limit means $200,000, adjusted as provided by the Commissioner. The amount of the annual compensation limit is adjusted at the same time and in the same manner as under section 415(d). The base period for the annual adjustment is the calendar quarter ending December 31, 1988, and the first adjustment is effective on January 1, 1990. Any increase in the annual compensation limit is effective as of January 1 of a calendar year and applies to any plan year beginning in that calendar year. In any plan year beginning prior to the OBRA '93 effective date, if compensation for any plan year beginning prior to the statutory effective date is used for determining allocations or benefit accruals, or when applying any nondiscrimination rule, then the annual compensation limit for the first plan year beginning on or after the statutory effective date (generally $200,000) must be applied to compensation for that prior plan year.

(3) *Annual compensation limit for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994*—(i) *In general.* For purposes of this section, for plan years beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date, annual compensation limit means $150,000, adjusted as provided by the Commissioner. The adjusted dollar amount of the annual compensation limit is determined by adjusting the $150,000 amount for changes in the cost of living as provided in paragraph (a)(3)(ii) of this section and rounding this adjusted dollar amount as provided in paragraph (a)(3)(iii) of this section. Any increase in the annual compensation limit is effective as of January 1 of a calendar year and applies to any plan year beginning in that calendar year. For example, if a plan has a plan year beginning July 1, 1994, and ending June 30, 1995, the annual compensation limit in effect on January 1, 1994 ($150,000), applies to the plan for the entire plan year.

(ii) *Cost of living adjustment.* The $150,000 amount is adjusted for changes in the cost of living by the Commissioner at the same time and in the same manner as under section 415(d). The base period for the annual adjustment is the calendar quarter ending December 31, 1993.

(iii) *Rounding of adjusted compensation limit.* After the $150,000, adjusted in accordance with paragraph (a)(3)(ii) of this section, exceeds the annual compensation limit for the prior calendar year by $10,000 or more, the annual compensation limit will be increased by the amount of such excess, rounded down to the next lowest multiple of $10,000.

(4) *Additional guidance.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings and procedures, notices, and other guidance, published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin (see § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter), provide any additional guidance that may be necessary or appropriate concerning the annual limits on compensation under section 401(a)(17).

(b) *Plan limit on compensation*—(1) *General rule.* A plan does not satisfy section 401(a)(17) unless it provides

that the compensation taken into account for any employee in determining plan allocations or benefit accruals for any plan year is limited to the annual compensation limit. For purposes of this rule, allocations and benefit accruals under a plan include all benefits provided under the plan, including ancillary benefits.

(2) *Plan-year-by-plan-year requirement.* For purposes of this paragraph (b), the limit in effect for the current plan year applies only to the compensation for that year that is taken into account in determining plan allocations or benefit accruals for the year. The compensation for any prior plan year taken into account in determining an employee's allocations or benefit accruals for the current plan year is subject to the applicable annual compensation limit in effect for that prior year. Thus, increases in the annual compensation limit apply only to compensation taken into account for the plan year in which the increase is effective. In addition, if compensation for any plan year beginning prior to the OBRA '93 effective date is used for determining allocations or benefit accruals in a plan year beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date, then the annual compensation limit for that prior year is the annual compensation limit in effect for the first plan year beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date (generally $150,000).

(3) *Application of limit to a plan year*—(i) *In general.* For purposes of applying this paragraph (b), the annual compensation limit is applied to the compensation for the plan year on which allocations or benefit accruals are based.

(ii) *Compensation for the plan year.* If a plan determines compensation used in determining allocations or benefit accruals for a plan year based on compensation for the plan year, then the annual compensation limit that applies to the compensation for the plan year is the limit in effect for the calendar year in which the plan year begins. Alternatively, if a plan determines compensation used in determining allocations or benefit accruals for the plan year on the basis of compensation for a 12-consecutive-month period, or periods, ending no later than the last day of the plan year, then the annual compensation limit applies to compensation for each of those periods based on the annual compensation limit in effect for the respective calendar year in which each 12-month period begins.

(iii) *Compensation for a period of less than 12-months*—(A) *Proration required.* If compensation for a period of less than 12 months is used for a plan year, then the otherwise applicable annual compensation limit is reduced in the same proportion as the reduction in the 12-month period. For example, if a defined benefit plan provides that the accrual for each month in a plan year is separately determined based on the compensation for that month and the plan year accrual is the sum of the accruals for all months, then the annual compensation limit for each month is 1/12th of the annual compensation limit for the plan year. In addition, if the period for determining compensation used in calculating an employee's allocation or accrual for a plan year is a short plan year (i.e., shorter than 12 months), the annual compensation limit is an amount equal to the otherwise applicable annual compensation limit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of months in the short plan year, and the denominator of which is 12.

(B) *No proration required for participation for less than a full plan year.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(3)(iii)(A) of this section, a plan is not treated as using compensation for less than 12 months for a plan year merely because the plan formula provides that the allocation or accrual for each employee is based on compensation for the portion of the plan year during which the employee is a participant in the plan. In addition, no proration is required merely because an employee is covered under a plan for less than a full plan year, provided that allocations or benefit accruals are otherwise determined using compensation for a period of at least 12 months. Finally, notwithstanding paragraph (b)(3)(iii)(A) of this section, no proration is required merely because the amount of elective contributions (within the meaning of § 1.401(k)–1(g)(3)), matching contributions (within the meaning of § 1.401(m)–1(f)(12)), or employee contributions

(within the meaning of § 1.401(m)–1(f)(6)) that is contributed for each pay period during a plan year is determined separately using compensation for that pay period.

(4) *Limits on multiple employer and multiemployer plans.* For purposes of this paragraph (b), in the case of a plan described in section 413(c) or 414(f) (a plan maintained by more than one employer), the annual compensation limit applies separately with respect to the compensation of an employee from each employer maintaining the plan instead of applying to the employee's total compensation from all employers maintaining the plan.

(5) *Family aggregation.* [Reserved]

(6) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (b).

Example 1. Plan X is a defined benefit plan with a calendar year plan year and bases benefits on the average of an employee's high 3 consecutive years' compensation. The OBRA '93 effective date for Plan X is January 1, 1994. Employee A's high 3 consecutive years' compensation prior to the application of the annual compensation limits is $160,000 (1994), $155,000 (1993), and $135,000 (1992). To satisfy this paragraph (b), Plan X cannot base plan benefits for Employee A in 1994 on compensation in excess of $145,000 (the average of $150,000 (A's 1994 compensation capped by the annual compensation limit), $150,000 (A's 1993 compensation capped by the $150,000 annual compensation limit applicable to all years before 1994), and $135,000 (A's 1992 compensation capped by the $150,000 annual compensation limit applicable to all years before 1994)). For purposes of determining the 1994 accrual, each year (1994, 1993, and 1992), not the average of the 3 years, is subject to the 1994 annual compensation limit of $150,000.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as Example 1, except that Employee A's high 3 consecutive years' compensation prior to the application of the limits is $185,000 (1997), $175,000 (1996), and $165,000 (1995). Assume that the annual compensation limit is first adjusted to $160,000 for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1997. Plan X cannot base plan benefits for Employee A in 1997 on compensation in excess of $153,333 (the average of $160,000 (A's 1997 compensation capped by the 1997 limit), $150,000 (A's 1996 compensation capped by the 1996 limit), and $150,000 (A's 1995 compensation capped by the 1995 limit)).

Example 3. Plan Y is a defined benefit plan that bases benefits on an employee's high consecutive 36 months of compensation ending within the plan year. Employee B's high 36 months are the period September 1995 to August 1998, in which Employee B earned $50,000 in each month. Assume that the annual compensation limit is first adjusted to $160,000 for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1997. The annual compensation limit is $150,000, $150,000, and $160,000 in 1995, 1996, and 1997, respectively. To satisfy this paragraph (b), Plan Y cannot base Employee B's plan benefits for the 1998 plan year on compensation in excess of $153,333. This amount is determined by applying the applicable annual compensation limit to compensation for each of the three 12-consecutive-month periods. The September 1995 to August 1996 period is capped by the annual compensation limit of $150,000 for 1995; the September 1996 to August 1997 period is capped by the annual compensation limit of $150,000 for 1996; and the September 1997 to August 1998 period is capped by the annual compensation limit of $160,000 for 1997. The average of these capped amounts is the annual compensation limit applicable in determining benefits for the 1998 year.

Example 4. (a) Employer P is a partnership. Employer P maintains Plan Z, a profit-sharing plan that provides for an annual allocation of employer contributions of 15 percent of plan year compensation for employees other than self-employed individuals, and 13.0435 percent of plan year compensation for self-employed individuals. The plan year of Plan Z is the calendar year. The OBRA '93 effective date for Plan Z is January 1, 1994. In order to satisfy section 401(a)(17), as amended by OBRA '93, the plan provides that, beginning with the 1994 plan year, the plan year compensation used in determining the allocation of employer contributions for each employee may not exceed the annual limit in effect for the plan year under OBRA '93. Plan Z defines compensation for self-employed individuals (employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1)) as the self-employed individual's net profit from self-employment attributable to Employer P minus the amount of the self-employed individual's deduction under section 164(f) for one-half of self-employment taxes. Plan Z defines compensation for all other employees as wages within the meaning of section 3401(a). Employee C and Employee D are partners of Employer P and thus are self-employed individuals. Neither Employee C nor Employee D owns an interest in any other business or is a common-law employee in any business. For the 1994 calendar year, Employee C has net profit from self-employment of $80,000, and Employee D has net profit from self-employment of $175,000. The deduction for Employee C under section 164(f) for one-half of self-employment taxes is $4,828. The deduction for Employee D under section 164(f) for one-half of self-employment taxes is $6,101

(b) The plan year compensation under the plan formula for Employee C is $75,172

($80,000 minus $4,828). The allocation of employer contributions under the plan allocation formula for 1994 for Employee C is $9,805 ($75,172 (Employee C's plan year compensation for 1994) multiplied by 13.0435%). The plan year compensation under the plan formula before application of the annual limit under section 401(a)(17) for Employee D is $168,899 ($175,000 minus $6101). After application of the annual limit, the plan year compensation for the 1994 plan year for Employee D is $150,000 (the annual limit for 1994). Therefore, the allocation of employer contributions under the plan allocation formula for 1994 for Employee D is $19,565 ($150,000 (Employee D's plan year compensation after application of the annual limit for 1994) multiplied by 13.0435%).

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4,* except that Plan Z provides that plan year compensation for self-employed individuals is defined as earned income within the meaning of section 401(c)(2) attributable to Employer P. In addition, Plan Z provides for an annual allocation of employer contributions of 15 percent of plan year compensation for all employees in the plan, including self-employed individuals, such as Employees C and D. The net profit from self-employment for Employee C and the net profit from self-employment for Employee D are the same as provided in *Example 4.* However, the earned income of Employee C determined in accordance with section 401(c)(2) is $65,367 ($80,000 minus $4,828 minus $9,805). The earned income of Employee D determined in accordance with section 401(c)(2) is $146,869 ($175,000 minus $6,101 minus $22,030). Therefore, the allocation of employer contributions under the plan allocation formula for 1994 for Employee C is $9,805 ($65,367 (Employee C's plan year compensation for 1994) multiplied by 15%). Employee D's earned income for 1994 does not exceed the 1994 annual limit of $150,000. Therefore, the allocation of employer contributions under the plan allocation formula for 1994 for Employee D is $22,030 ($146,869 (Employee D's plan year compensation for 1994) multiplied by 15%).

(c) *Limit on compensation for nondiscrimination rules*—(1) *General rule.* The annual compensation limit applies for purposes of applying the nondiscrimination rules under sections 401(a)(4), 401(a)(5), 401(l), 401(k)(3), 401(m)(2), 403(b)(12), 404(a)(2) and 410(b)(2). The annual compensation limit also applies in determining whether an alternative method of determining compensation impermissibly discriminates under section 414(s)(3). Thus, for example, the annual compensation limit applies when determining a self-employed individual's total earned income that is used to determine the equivalent alternative compensation amount under § 1.414(s)–1(g)(1). This paragraph (c) provides rules for applying the annual compensation limit for these purposes. For purposes of this paragraph (c), compensation means the compensation used in applying the applicable nondiscrimination rule.

(2) *Plan-year-by-plan-year requirement.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), when applying an applicable nondiscrimination rule for a plan year, the compensation for each plan year taken into account is limited to the applicable annual compensation limit in effect for that year, and an employee's compensation for that plan year in excess of the limit is disregarded. Thus, if the nondiscrimination provision is applied on the basis of compensation determined over a period of more than one year (for example, average annual compensation), the annual compensation limit in effect for each of the plan years that is taken into account in determining the average applies to the respective plan year's compensation. In addition, if compensation for any plan year beginning prior to the OBRA '93 effective date is used when applying any nondiscrimination rule in a plan year beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date, then the annual compensation limit for that prior year is the annual compensation limit for the first plan year beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date (generally $150,000).

(3) *Plan-by-plan limit.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), the annual compensation limit applies separately to each plan (or group of plans treated as a single plan) of an employer for purposes of the applicable nondiscrimination requirement. For this purpose, the plans included in the testing group taken into account in determining whether the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 is satisfied are generally treated as a single plan.

(4) *Application of limit to a plan year.* The rules provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section regarding the application of the limit to a plan year apply for purposes of this paragraph (c).

(5) *Limits on multiple employer and multiemployer plans.* The rule provided

in paragraph (b)(4) of this section regarding the application of the limit to multiple employer and multiemployer plans applies for purposes of this paragraph (c).

(d) *Effective date*—(1) *Statutory effective date*—(i) *General rule.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (d), section 401(a)(17) applies to a plan as of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1989. For purposes of this section, statutory effective date generally means the first day of the first plan year that section 401(a)(17) is applicable to a plan. In the case of governmental plans, statutory effective date means the first day of the first plan year for which the plan is not deemed to satisfy section 401(a)(17) by reason of paragraph (d)(4) of this section.

(ii) *Exception for collectively bargained plans.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, section 401(a)(17) applies to allocations and benefit accruals for plan years beginning on or after the earlier of—

(A) January 1, 1991; or

(B) The later of January 1, 1989, or the date on which the last of the collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension or renegotiation of any agreement occurring after February 28, 1986). For purposes of this paragraph (d)(1)(ii), the rules of § 1.410(b)–10(a)(2) apply for purposes of determining whether a plan is maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements, and any extension or renegotiation of a collective bargaining agreement, which extension or renegotiation is ratified after February 28, 1986, is to be disregarded in determining the date on which the agreement terminates.

(2) *OBRA '93 effective date*—(i) *In general.* For purposes of this section, OBRA '93 effective date means the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1994, except as provided in this paragraph (d)(2).

(ii) *Exception for collectively bargained plans*—(A) *In general.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and 1 or more employers ratified before August 10, 1993, OBRA '93 effective date means the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after the earlier of—

(*1*) The latest of—

(*i*) January 1, 1994;

(*ii*) The date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates (without regard to any extension, amendment, or, modification of such agreements on or after August 10, 1993); or

(*iii*) In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to collective bargaining under the Railway Labor Act, the date of execution of an extension or replacement of the last of such collective bargaining agreements in effect on August 10, 1993; or

(*2*) January 1, 1997.

(B) *Determination of whether plan is collectively bargained.* For purposes of this paragraph (d)(2)(ii), the rules of § 1.410(b)–10(a)(2) apply for purposes of determining whether a plan is maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements, except that August 10, 1993, is substituted for March 1, 1986, as the date before which the collective bargaining agreements must be ratified.

(3) *Regulatory effective date.* This § 1.401(a)(17)–1 applies to plan years beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date. However, in the case of a plan maintained by an organization that is exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), this § 1.401(a)(17)–1 applies to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996. For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations and on or after the statutory effective date, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(a)(17), taking into account, if applicable, the OBRA '93 reduction to the annual compensation limit under section 401(a)(17).

(4) *Special rules for governmental plans*—(i) *Deemed satisfaction by governmental plans.* In the case of governmental plans described in section 414(d), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans),

section 401(a)(17) is considered satisfied for plan years beginning before the later of January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously. For purposes of this paragraph (d)(4), the term governing body with authority to amend the plan means the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan.

(ii) *Transition rule for governmental plans*—(A) *In general.* In the case of an eligible participant in a governmental plan (within the meaning of section 414(d)), the annual compensation limit under this section shall not apply to the extent that the application of the limitation would reduce the amount of compensation that is allowed to be taken into account under the plan below the amount that was allowed to be taken into account under the plan as in effect on July 1, 1993. Thus, for example, if a plan as in effect on July 1, 1993, determined benefits without any reference to a limit on compensation, then the annual compensation limit in effect under this section will not apply to any eligible participant in any future year.

(B) *Eligible participant.* For purposes of this paragraph (d)(4)(ii), an eligible participant is an individual who first became a participant in the plan prior to the first day of the first plan year beginning after the earlier of—

(*1*) The last day of the plan year by which a plan amendment to reflect the amendments made by section 13212 of OBRA '93 is both adopted and effective; or

(*2*) December 31, 1995.

(C) *Plan must be amended to incorporate limits.* This paragraph (d)(4)(ii) shall not apply to any eligible participant in a plan unless the plan is amended so that the plan incorporates by reference the annual compensation limit under section 401(a)(17), effective with respect to noneligible participants for plan years beginning after December 31, 1995 (or earlier, if the plan amendment so provides).

(5) *Benefits earned prior to effective date*—(i) *In general.* Allocations under a defined contribution plan or benefits accrued under a defined benefit plan for plan years beginning before the statutory effective date are not subject to the annual compensation limit. Allocations under a defined contribution plan or benefits accrued under a defined benefit plan for plan years beginning on or after the statutory effective date, but before the OBRA '93 effective date, are subject to the annual compensation limit under paragraph (a)(2) of this section. However, these allocations or accruals are not subject to the OBRA '93 reduction to the annual compensation limit described in paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(ii) *Allocation for a plan year.* The allocations for a plan year include amounts described in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(ii) or § 1.401(m)–1(f)(6) plus the earnings, expenses, gains, and losses attributable to those amounts.

(iii) *Benefits accrued for years before the effective date.* The benefits accrued for plan years prior to a specified date by any employee are the employee's benefits accrued under the plan, determined as if those benefits had been frozen (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(3)(i)) as of the day immediately preceding such specified date. Thus, for example, benefits accrued for those plan years generally do not include any benefits accrued under an amendment increasing prior benefits that is adopted after the date on which the employee's benefits under the plan must be treated as frozen.

(e) *Determination of post-effective-date accrued benefits*—(1) *In general.* The plan formula that is used to determine the amount of allocations or benefit accruals for plan years beginning on or after the dates described in paragraph (d)(1) or (2) must comply with section 401(a)(17) as in effect on such date. This paragraph (e) provides rules for applying section 401(a)(17) in the case of section 401(a)(17) employees who accrue additional benefits under a defined benefit plan in a plan year beginning on or after the relevant effective date. Paragraph (e)(2) of this section contains definitions used in applying these rules. Paragraphs (e)(3) and (e)(4) of this section explain the application of the fresh-start rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–13 to

the determination of the accrued benefits of section 401(a)(17) employees.

(2) *Definitions.* For purposes of this paragraph (e), the following definitions apply:

(i) *Section 401(a)(17) employee.* An employee is a section 401(a)(17) employee as of a date, on or after the statutory effective date, if the employee's current accrued benefit as of that date is based on compensation for a year prior to the statutory effective date that exceeded the annual compensation limit for the first plan year beginning on or after the statutory effective date. In addition, an employee is a section 401(a)(17) employee as of a date, on or after the OBRA '93 effective date, if the employee's current accrued benefit as of that date is based on compensation for a year prior to the OBRA '93 effective date that exceeded the annual compensation limit for the first plan year beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date. For this purpose, a current accrued benefit is not treated as based on compensation that exceeded the relevant annual compensation limit, if a plan makes a fresh start using the formula with wear-away described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4)(ii), and the employee's accrued benefit determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4)(ii)(B), taking into account the annual compensation limit, exceeds the employee's frozen accrued benefit (or, if applicable, the employee's adjusted accrued benefit) as of the fresh-start date.

(ii) *Section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date.* Section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date means a fresh-start date as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12 not earlier than the last day of the last plan year beginning before the statutory effective date, and not later than the last day of the last plan year beginning before the effective date of these regulations.

(iii) *OBRA '93 fresh-start date.* OBRA '93 fresh-start date means a fresh-start date as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12 not earlier than the last day of the last plan year beginning before the OBRA '93 effective date, and not later than the last day of the last plan year beginning before the effective date of these regulations.

(iv) *Section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit.* Section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit means the accrued benefit for any section 401(a)(17) employee frozen (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(3)(i)) as of the last day of the last plan year beginning before the statutory effective date.

(v) *OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit.* OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit means the accrued benefit for any section 401(a)(17) employee frozen (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(3)(i)) as of the OBRA '93 fresh-start date.

(3) *Application of fresh-start rules*—(i) *General rule.* In order to satisfy section 401(a)(17), a defined benefit plan must determine the accrued benefit of each section 401(a)(17) employee by applying the fresh-start rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c). The fresh-start rules must be applied using a section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date and using the plan benefit formula, after amendment to comply with section 401(a)(17) and this section, as the formula applicable to benefit accruals in the current plan year. In addition, the fresh-start rules must be applied to determine the accrued benefit of each section 401(a)(17) employee using an OBRA '93 fresh-start date and using the plan benefit formula, after amendment to comply with the reduction in the section 401(a)(17) annual compensation limit described in paragraph (a)(3) of this section, as the formula applicable to benefit accruals in the current plan year.

(ii) *Consistency rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) and (d)*—(A) *General rule.* In applying the fresh-start rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) and (d), the group of section 401(a)(17) employees is a fresh-start group. See § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(5)(ii)(A). Thus, the consistency rules of those sections govern, unless otherwise provided. For example, if the plan is using a fresh-start date applicable to all employees and is not adjusting frozen accrued benefits under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) for employees who are not section 401(a)(17) employees, then the frozen accrued benefits for section 401(a)(17) employees may not be adjusted under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) or this paragraph (e).

(B) *Determination of adjusted accrued benefit.* If the fresh-start rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) and (d) are applied to determine the benefits of all employees after a fresh-start date, the plan will not fail to satisfy the consistency requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(5)(i)

merely because the plan makes the adjustment described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) to the frozen accrued benefits of employees who are not section 401(a)(17) employees, but does not make the adjustment to the frozen accrued benefits of section 401(a)(17) employees. In addition, the plan does not fail to satisfy the consistency requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(5)(i) merely because the plan makes the adjustment described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) for section 401(a)(17) employees on the basis of the compensation formula that was used to determine the frozen accrued benefit (as required under paragraph (e)(4)(iii) of this section) but makes the adjustment for employees who are not section 401(a)(17) employees on the basis of any other method provided in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8).

(4) *Permitted adjustments to frozen accrued benefit of section 401(a)(17) employees*—(i) *General rule.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraphs (e)(4)(ii) and (iii) of this section, the rules in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(3) (permitting certain adjustments to frozen accrued benefits) apply to section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefits or OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefits.

(ii) *Optional forms of benefit.* After either the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date or the OBRA '93 fresh-start date, a plan may be amended either to provide a new optional form of benefit or to make an optional form of benefit available with respect to the section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit or the OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit, provided that the optional form of benefit is not subsidized. Whether an optional form is subsidized may be determined using any reasonable actuarial assumptions.

(iii) *Adjusting section 401(a)(17) accrued benefits*—(A) *In general.* If the plan adjusts accrued benefits for employees under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) as of a fresh-start date, the adjusted accrued benefit (within the meaning of section § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)) for each section 401(a)(17) employee must be determined after the fresh-start date by reference to the plan's compensation formula that was actually used to determine the frozen accrued benefit as of the fresh-start date. For this purpose, the plan's compensation formula incorporates the plan's underlying compensation definition and compensation averaging period. In making the adjustment, the denominator of the adjustment fraction described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)(i) is the employee's compensation as of the fresh-start date using the plan's compensation formula as of that date and, in the case of an OBRA '93 fresh-start date, reflecting the annual compensation limits that applied as of the fresh-start date. The numerator of the adjustment fraction is the employee's updated compensation (i.e., compensation for the current plan year within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)), determined after applying the annual compensation limits to each year's compensation that is used in the plan's compensation formula as of the fresh-start date. Similarly, in applying the alternative rule in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)(v), the updated compensation that is substituted must be determined after applying the annual compensation limits to each year's compensation that is used in the plan's compensation formula. Thus, no adjustment will be permitted unless the updated compensation (determined after applying the annual compensation limit) exceeds the compensation that was used to determine the employee's frozen accrued benefit.

(B) *Multiple fresh starts.* If a plan makes more than one fresh start with respect to a section 401(a)(17) employee, the employee's frozen accrued benefit as of the latest fresh-start date will either be determined by applying the current benefit formula to the employee's total years of service as of that fresh-start date or will consist of the sum of the employee's frozen accrued benefit (or adjusted accrued benefit (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)(i))) as of the previous fresh-start date plus additional frozen accruals since the previous fresh start. If the frozen accrued benefit consists of such a sum, in making the adjustments described in paragraph (e)(4)(iii)(A) of this section, separate adjustments must be made to that previously frozen accrued benefit (or adjusted accrued

benefit) and the additional frozen accruals to the extent that the frozen accrued benefit and the additional accruals have been determined using different compensation formulas or different compensation limits (i.e., the section 401(a)(17) limit before and after the reduction in limit described in paragraph (a)(3) of this section). In this case, if the plan is applying the adjustment fraction of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)(i), the denominator of the separate adjustment fraction for adjusting each portion of the frozen accrued benefit must reflect the actual compensation formula, and, if applicable, compensation limit, originally used for determining that portion. For example, the frozen accrued benefit of a section 401(a)(17) employee as of the OBRA '93 fresh-start date may be based on the sum of the section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit (determined without any annual compensation limit) plus benefit accruals in the years between the statutory effective date and the OBRA '93 effective date (based on compensation that was subject to the annual compensation limits for those years). In this example, in adjusting the section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit, the denominator of the adjustment fraction does not reflect any annual compensation limit. Similarly, in adjusting the frozen accruals for years between the statutory effective date and the OBRA '93 effective date, the denominator of the adjustment fraction reflects the level of the annual compensation limit in effect for those years.

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (e).

Example 1. (a) Employer X maintains Plan Y, a calendar year defined benefit plan providing an annual benefit for each year of service equal to 2 percent of compensation averaged over an employee's high 3 consecutive calendar years' compensation. Section 401(a)(17) applies to Plan Y in 1989. As of the close of the last plan year beginning before January 1, 1989 (i.e., the 1988 plan year), Employee A, with 5 years of service, had accrued a benefit of $25,000 which equals 10 percent (2 percent multiplied by 5 years of service) of average compensation of $250,000. Employer X decides to comply with the provisions of this section for plan years before the effective date of this section. Employer X decides to make the amendment effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989, and uses December 31, 1988 as the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date. Plan Y, as amended, provides that, in determining an employee's benefit, compensation taken into account is limited in accordance with the provisions of this section to the annual compensation limit under section 401(a)(17), and that, for section 401(a)(17) employees, the employee's accrued benefit is the greater of

(i) The employee's benefit under the plan's benefit formula (after the plan formula is amended to comply with section 401(a)(17)) as applied to the employee's total years of service; and

(ii) The employee's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1988, determined as though the employee terminated employment on that date without regard to any plan amendments after that date.

Employer X decides not to amend Plan Y to provide for the adjustments permitted under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) to the accrued benefit of section 401(a)(17) employees as of December 31, 1988.

(b) Under Plan Y, Employee A's accrued benefit at the end of 1989 is $25,000, which is the greater of Employee A's accrued benefit as of the last day of the 1988 plan year ($25,000), and $24,000, which is Employee A's benefit based on the plan's benefit formula applied to Employee A's total years of service ($200,000 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 6 years of service)). The formula of Plan Y applicable to section 401(a)(17) employees for calculating their accrued benefits for years after the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date is the formula in § 1.401(a)–13(c)(4)(ii) (formula with wear-away). The fresh-start formula is applied using a benefit formula for the 1989 plan year that satisfies section 401(a)(17) and this section, and the December 31, 1988 fresh-start date used for the plan is a section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date within the meaning of paragraph (e)(2)(ii) of this section. Thus, Plan Y, as amended, satisfies paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section for plan years commencing prior to the OBRA '93 effective date.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1,* except that the plan formula provides that effective January 1, 1989, for section 401(a)(17) employees, an employee's benefit will equal the sum of the employee's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1988 (determined as though the employee terminated employment on that date and without regard to any amendments after that date), and 2 percent of compensation averaged over an employee's high 3 consecutive years' compensation times years of service taking into account only years of service after December 31, 1988. Thus, under Plan Y's formula, Employee A's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1989 is $29,000, which is equal to the sum of $25,000 (Employee A's accrued benefit as of

December 31, 1988) plus $4,000 ($200,000 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 1 year of service)). The formula of Plan Y applicable to section 401(a)(17) employees for calculating their accrued benefits for years after the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date is the formula in § 1.401(a)–13(c)(4)(i) (formula without wear-away). The fresh-start formula is applied using a benefit formula for the 1989 plan year that satisfies section 401(a)(17) and this section, and the December 31, 1988 fresh-start date used for the plan is a section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date within the meaning of paragraph (e)(2)(ii) of this section. Thus, Plan Y, as amended, satisfies paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section for plan years commencing prior to the OBRA '93 effective date.

Example 3. (a) Assume the same facts as in *Example 1,* except that the plan formula provides that effective January 1, 1989, an employee's benefit equals the greater of the plan formulas in *Example 1* and *Example 2.* The formula of Plan Y applicable to section 401(a)(17) employees for calculating their accrued benefits for years after the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date is the formula in § 1.401(a)–13(c)(4)(iii) (formula with extended wear-away). The fresh-start formula is applied using a benefit formula for the 1989 plan year that satisfies section 401(a)(17) and this section, and the December 31, 1988 fresh-start date used for the plan is a section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date within the meaning of paragraph (e)(2)(ii) of this section. Thus, Plan Y, as amended, satisfies paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section for plan years commencing prior to the OBRA '93 effective date.

(b) Assume that for each of the years 1991–93 Employee A's annual compensation under the plan compensation formula, disregarding the amendment to comply with section 401(a)(17) is $300,000. The annual compensation limit is adjusted to $222,220, $228,860, and $235,840 for plan years beginning January 1, 1991, 1992, and 1993, respectively. Because Employer X has decided to amend Plan Y to comply with the provisions of this section effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989, and has used December 31, 1988 as the section 401(a)(17) fresh-start date, the compensation that may be taken into account for plan benefits in 1993 cannot exceed $228,973 (the average of $222,220, $228,860, and $235,840). Therefore, as of December 31, 1993, the benefit determined under the fresh-start formula with wear-away would be $45,795 ($228,973 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 10 years of service)). The benefit determined under the fresh-start formula without wear-away would be $47,897, which is equal to $25,000 (Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit) plus $22,897 ($228,973 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 5 years of service)). Because Employee A's accrued benefit is being determined using the fresh-start formula with extended wear-away, Employee A's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1993, is equal to $47,897, the greater of the two amounts.

Example 4. (a) Assume the same facts as in *Example 3,* except that Plan Y satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(3) through (d)(7) and that the amendment to Plan Y effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, also provided for adjustments to the section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)-13(d) using the fraction described in § 1.401(a)(4)-13(d)(8)(i).

(b) As of December 31, 1993, the numerator of Employee A's compensation fraction is $228,973 (the average of Employee A's annual compensation for 1991, 1992, and 1993, as limited by the respective annual limit for each of those years). The denominator of Employee A's compensation fraction determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(4)(iii) of this section is $250,000 (the average of Employee A's high 3 consecutive calendar year compensation as of December 31, 1988, determined without regard to section 401(a)(17)). Therefore, Employee A's compensation fraction is $228,973/$250,000. Because the compensation adjustment fraction is less than 1, Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit is not adjusted. Therefore, Employee A's accrued benefit as of December 31, 1993, would still be $47,897, which is equal to $25,000 (Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit) plus $22,897 ($228,973 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 5 years of service).

Example 5. (a) Assume the same facts as in *Example 3,* except that as of January 1, 1994, Plan Y is amended to provide that benefits will be determined based on compensation of $150,000 (the limit in effect under section 401(a)(17) for plan years beginning on or after the OBRA '93 effective date) and that for section 401(a)(17) employees, each employee's accrued benefit will be determined under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4)(i) (formula without wear-away) using December 31, 1993 as the OBRA '93 fresh-start date.

(b) Assume that for each of the years 1996–98 Employee A's annual compensation under the plan compensation definition, disregarding the amendment to comply with section 401(a)(17), is $400,000. Assume that the annual compensation limit is first adjusted to $160,000 for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1997, and is not adjusted for the plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1998. The compensation that may be taken into account for the 1998 plan year cannot exceed $156,667 (the average of $150,000 for 1996, $160,000 for 1997, and $160,000 for 1998).

(c) Therefore, at the end of December 31, 1998, Employee A's accrued benefit is $63,564, which is equal to $47,897 (Employee A's OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit) plus $15,667 ($156,667 multiplied by (2 percent multiplied by 5 years of service)).

Example 6. (a) Assume the same facts as in *Example 5,* except that, for the fresh-start

group (in this case the section 401(a)(17) employees), the amendments to Plan Y provide for adjustments to the section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit and the OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d) using the fraction described in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d)(8)(i).

(b) Employee A's frozen accrued benefit as of December 31, 1993, is adjusted as of December 31, 1998, as follows:

(1) Employee A's frozen accrued benefit as of December 31, 1993, is the sum of Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit ($25,000) and Employee A's frozen accruals for the years 1989–93 ($22,897).

(2) The numerator of Employee A's adjustment fraction is $156,667 (the average of $150,000, $160,000, and $160,000). The denominator of Employee A's adjustment fraction with respect to Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit is $250,000, and the denominator of Employee A's adjustment fraction with respect to the rest of Employee A's frozen accrued benefit is $228,973 (the average of Employee A's annual compensation for 1991, 1992, and 1993, as limited by the respective annual limit for each of those years).

(3) Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit as adjusted through December 31, 1998, remains $25,000. The compensation adjustment fraction determined in accordance with paragraph (e)(4)(iii) of this section is less than one ($156,667 divided by $250,000).

(4) Employee A's frozen accruals for the years 1989–93, as adjusted through December 31, 1998, remain $22,897 because the adjustment fraction is less than one ($156,667 divided by $228,973).

(5) Employee A's adjusted accrued benefit as of December 31, 1998, equals $47,897 (the sum of the $25,000 and $22,897 amounts from paragraphs (b)(3) and (b)(4), respectively, of this *Example*).

(c) Employee A's section 401(a)(17) frozen accrued benefit will not be adjusted for compensation increases until the numerator of the fraction used to adjust that frozen accrued benefit exceeds the denominator of $250,000 used in determining those accruals.

Similarly, the portion of Employee A's OBRA '93 frozen accrued benefit attributable to the frozen accruals for the years 1989–1993 will not be adjusted for compensation increases until the numerator of the fraction used to adjust those frozen accruals exceeds the denominator of $228,973 used in determining those accruals.

[T.D. 8547, 59 FR 32905, June 27, 1994]

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[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63413, Dec. 4, 1991]

§1.401(a)(26)–1 Minimum participation requirements.

(a) *General rule.* A plan is a qualified plan for a plan year only if the plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) for the plan year. A plan that satisfies any of the exceptions described in paragraph (b) of this section passes section 401(a)(26) automatically for the plan year. A plan that does not satisfy one of the exceptions in paragraph (b) of this section must satisfy §1.401(a)(26)–2(a). In addition, a defined benefit plan must satisfy §1.401(a)(26)–3 with respect to its prior benefit structure. Finally, a defined benefit plan that benefits former employees (for example, a defined benefit plan that is amended to provide an ad hoc cost-of-living adjustment to former employees) must separately satisfy §1.401(a)(26)–4 with respect to its former employees.

(b) *Exceptions to section 401(a)(26)*—(1) *Plans that do not benefit any highly compensated employees.* A plan, other than a

frozen defined benefit plan as defined in § 1.401(a)(26)–2(b), satisfies section 401(a)(26) for a plan year if the plan is not a top-heavy plan under section 416 and the plan meets the following requirements:

(i) The plan benefits no highly compensated employee or highly compensated former employee of the employer; and

(ii) The plan is not aggregated with any other plan of the employer to enable the other plan to satisfy section 401(a)(4) or 410(b). The plan may, however, be aggregated with the employer's other plans for purposes of the average benefit percentage test in section 410(b)(2)(A)(ii).

(2) *Multiemployer plans*—(i) *In general.* The portion of a multiemployer plan that benefits only employees included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement may be treated as a separate plan that satisfies section 401(a)(26) for a plan year.

(ii) *Multiemployer plans covering noncollectively bargained employees*—(A) *In general.* The rule provided in paragraph (b)(2)(i) does not apply to the portion of a multiemployer plan that benefits employees who are not included in any collective bargaining unit covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Thus, the portion of the plan benefiting these employees must separately satisfy section 401(a)(26).

(B) *Special testing rule.* A multiemployer plan that benefits employees who are not included in any collective bargaining unit covered by a collective bargaining agreement satisfies section 401(a)(26) if the plan benefits 50 employees. For purposes of this special testing rule, employees who are included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement may be included in determining whether the plan benefits 50 employees.

(3) *Certain underfunded defined benefit plans*—(i) *In general.* A defined benefit plan is deemed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for a plan year if all of the conditions of paragraphs (b)(3)(ii) through (b)(3)(iv) of this section are satisfied with respect to the plan for the plan year.

(ii) *Eligible plans.* This condition is satisfied for a plan year only if the plan is subject to Title IV of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) for the plan year or, if the plan is not a Title IV plan under ERISA, it is not a top-heavy plan within the meaning of section 416. This condition does not apply for plan years beginning before January 1, 1992.

(iii) *Actuarial certification.* This condition is satisfied for a plan year only if the employer's timely filed actuarial report, as required by section 6059, evidences that the plan does not have sufficient assets to satisfy all liabilities under the plan (determined in accordance with section 401(a)(2)).

(iv) *Cessation of all benefit accruals.* This condition is satisfied for a plan year only if, for the plan year, no employee or former employee is benefiting within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(26)–5(a) or (b). For this purpose, an employee is not treated as benefiting solely by reason of being a non-key employee receiving minimum benefit accruals required by section 416.

(4) *Section 401(k) plan maintained by employers that include certain governmental or tax-exempt entities.* Section 401(k)(4)(B) prevents certain State and local governments and tax-exempt organizations from maintaining a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. A plan (or portion of a plan) that is either a section 401(k) plan or a section 401(m) plan that is provided under the same general arrangement as a section 401(k) plan may be treated as a separate plan that satisfies section 401(a)(26) for a plan year if the following requirements are satisfied:

(i) The section 401(k) plan is maintained by an employer who has employees precluded from being eligible employees under the arrangement by reason of section 401(k)(4)(B), and

(ii) More than 95 percent of the employees of the employer who are not precluded from being eligible employees under a section 401(k) plan by reason of section 401(k)(4)(B) benefit under the section 401(k) plan.

(5) *Certain acquisitions or dispositions*—(i) *General rule.* Rules similar to the rules prescribed under section 410(b)(6)(C) apply under section 401(a)(26). Pursuant to these rules, the requirements of section 401(a)(26) are treated as satisfied for certain plans of an employer involved in an acquisition

or disposition (transaction) for the transition period. The transition period begins on the date of the transaction and ends on the last day of the first plan year beginning after the date of the transaction.

(ii) *Special rule for transactions that occur in the plan year prior to the first plan year to which section 401(a)(26) applies.* Where there has been a transaction described in section 410(b)(6)(C) in the plan year prior to the first plan year in which section 401(a)(26) applies to a plan, the plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) for the transition period if the plan benefited 50 employees or 40 percent of the employees of the employer immediately prior to the transaction.

(iii) *Definition of ''acquisition'' and ''disposition.''* For purposes of this paragraph (b)(5), the terms ''acquisition'' and ''disposition'' refer to an asset or stock acquisition, merger, or other similar transaction involving a change in employer of the employees of a trade or business.

(c) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability, provide any additional rules that may be necessary or appropriate in applying the minimum participation requirements of section 401(a)(26).

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63413, Dec. 4, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46838, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(26)–2 Minimum participation rule.

(a) *General rule.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (a) for a plan year only if the plan benefits at least the lesser of—

(1) 50 employees of the employer, or

(2) 40 percent of the employees of the employer.

(b) *Frozen plans.* A plan under which no employee or former employee benefits (within the meaning of §1.401(a)(26)–5 (a) or (b)), is a frozen plan for purposes of this section and satisfies paragraph (a) of this section automatically. Thus, a frozen defined contribution plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) automatically and a frozen defined benefit plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) for a plan year by satisfying the prior benefit structure requirements in §1.401(a)(26)–3. For purposes of the rule in this paragraph (b), a defined benefit plan that provides only the minimum benefits for non-key employees required by section 416 is a frozen defined benefit plan.

(c) *Plan.* ''Plan'' means a plan within the meaning of §1.401(b)–7 (a) and (b), after the application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of paragraph (d)(1) of this section and, if applicable, the permissive disaggregation rules of paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(d) *Disaggregation of certain plans*—(1) *Mandatory disaggregation*—(i) *ESOPs and non-ESOPs.* The portion of a plan that is an ESOP and the portion of the plan that is not an ESOP are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 401(a)(26), except as otherwise permitted under §54.4975–11(e) of this Chapter.

(ii) *Plans maintained by more than one employer*—(A) *Multiple employer plans.* If a plan benefits employees of more than one employer and those employees are not included in a unit of employees covered by one or more collective bargaining agreements, the plan is a multiple employer plan. A multiple employer plan is treated as separate plans, each of which is maintained by a separate employer and must separately satisfy section 401(a)(26) by reference only to that employer's employees.

(B) *Multiemployer plans.* The portion of a multiemployer plan that benefits employees who are included in one or more units of employees covered by one or more collective bargaining agreements and the portion of that plan that benefits employees who are not included in a unit of employees covered pursuant to any collective bargaining agreement are treated as separate plans. The portion of a multiemployer plan that benefits employees who are not included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement is a multiple employer plan as described in paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(A) of this section. This paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(B) does not apply to the extent that the special testing rule in §1.401(a)(26)–1(b)(2)(ii) applies. Also, this paragraph (d)(1)(B)(*2*) does not apply for purposes of prior benefit structure testing under §1.401 (a)(26)–3.

(iii) *Defined benefit plans with other arrangements*—(A) *In general.* A defined benefit plan is treated as comprising

separate plans if, under the facts and circumstances, there is an arrangement (either under or outside the plan) that has the effect of providing any employee with a greater interest in a portion of the assets of a plan in a way that has the effect of creating separate accounts. Separate plans are not created, however, merely because a partnership agreement provides for allocation among partners, in proportion to their partnership interests, of either the cost of funding the plan or surplus assets upon plan termination.

(B) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate certain situations in which other arrangements relating to a defined benefit plan are or are not treated as creating separate plans:

Example 1. Employer A maintains a defined benefit plan under which each highly compensated employee can direct the investment of the portion of the plan's assets that represents the accumulated contributions with respect to that employee's plan benefits. In addition, by agreement outside the plan, if the product of the employee's investment direction exceeds the value needed to fund that employee's benefits, Employer A agrees to make a special payment to the participant. In this case, each separate portion of the pool of assets over which an employee has investment authority is a separate plan for the employee.

Example 2. Employer B is a partnership that maintains a defined benefit plan. The partnership agreement provides that, upon termination of the plan, a special allocation of any excess plan assets after reversion is made to the partnership on the basis of partnership share. This arrangement does not create separate plans with respect to the partners.

(iv) *Plans benefiting employees of qualified separate lines of business.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 401(a)(26) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b), the portion of a plan that benefits employees of one qualified separate line of business is treated as a separate plan from the portions of the same plan that benefit employees of the other qualified separate lines of business of the employer. See §§ 1.414(r)–1(c)(3) and 1.414(r)–9 (separate application of section 401(a)(26) to the employees of a qualified separate line of business). The rule in this paragraph (d)(6) does not apply to a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(3)(ii) for a plan year.

(2) *Permissive disaggregation*—(i) *Plans benefiting collectively bargained employees.* For purposes of section 401(a)(26), an employer may treat the portion of a plan that benefits employees who are included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement as a plan separate from the portion of a plan that benefits employees who are not included in such a collective bargaining unit. This paragraph (d)(2)(i) applies separately to each collective bargaining agreement. Thus, for example, the portion of a plan that benefits employees included in a unit of employees covered by one collective bargaining agreement may be treated as a plan that is separate from the portion of the plan that benefits employees included in a unit of employees covered by another collective bargaining agreement.

(ii) *Plans benefiting otherwise excludable employees.* If an employer applies section 401(a)(26) separately to the portion of a plan that benefits only employees who satisfy age and service conditions under the plan that are lower than the greatest minimum age and service conditions permissible under section 410(a), the plan is treated as comprising separate plans, one benefiting the employees who have not satisfied the lower minimum age and service but not the greatest minimum age and service conditions permitted under section 410(a) and one benefiting employees who have satisfied the greatest minimum age and service conditions permitted under section 410(a). See § 1.401(a)(26)–6(b)(1)(ii) for rules concerning testing of otherwise excludable employees.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63414, Dec. 4, 1991]

§ 1.401(a)(26)–3 Rules applicable to a defined benefit plan's prior benefit structure.

(a) *General rule.* A defined benefit plan that does not meet one of the exceptions in § 1.401(a)(26)–1(b) must satisfy paragraph (c) of this section with respect to its prior benefit structure. Defined contribution plans are not subject to this section.

(b) *Prior benefit structure.* Each defined benefit plan has only one prior

benefit structure, and all accrued benefits under the plan as of the beginning of a plan year (including benefits rolled over or transferred to the plan) are included in the prior benefit structure for the year.

(c) *Testing a prior benefit structure*—(1) *General rule.* A plan's prior benefit structure satisfies this paragraph if the plan provides meaningful benefits to a group of employees that includes the lesser of 50 employees or 40 percent of the employer's employees. Thus, a plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (c) if at least 50 employees or 40 percent of the employer's employees currently accrue meaningful benefits under the plan. Alternatively, a plan satisfies this paragraph if at least 50 employees and former employees or 40 percent of the employer's employees and former employees have meaningful accrued benefits under the plan.

(2) *Meaningful benefits.* Whether a plan is providing meaningful benefits, or whether individuals have meaningful accrued benefits under a plan, is determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances. The relevant factors in making this determination include, but are not limited to, the following: the level of current benefit accruals; the comparative rate of accruals under the current benefit formula compared to prior rates of accrual under the plan; the projected accrued benefits under the current benefit formula compared to accrued benefits as of the close of the immediately preceding plan year; the length of time the current benefit formula has been in effect; the number of employees with accrued benefits under the plan; and the length of time the plan has been in effect. A rule for determining whether an offset plan provides meaningful benefits is provided in §1.401(a)(26)–5(a)(2). A plan does not satisfy this paragraph (c) if it exists primarily to preserve accrued benefits for a small group of employees and thereby functions more as an individual plan for the small group of employees or for the employer.

(d) *Multiemployer plan rule.* A multiemployer plan is deemed to satisfy the prior benefit structure rule in paragraph (c)(1) of this section for a plan year if the multiemployer plan provides meaningful benefits to at least 50 employees for a plan year, or 50 employees have meaningful accrued benefits under the plan. For purposes of this paragraph, all employees benefiting under the multiemployer plan may be considered, whether or not these employees are included in a unit of employees covered pursuant to any collective bargaining agreement.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63415, Dec. 4, 1991]

§1.401(a)(26)–4 Testing former employees.

(a) *Scope.* This section applies to any defined benefit plan that benefits former employees in a plan year within the meaning of §1.401(a)(26)–5(b) and does not meet one of the exceptions in §1.401(a)(26)–1(b).

(b) *Minimum participation rule for former employees.* Except as set forth in paragraph (c) of this section, a plan that is subject to this section must benefit at least the lesser of:

(1) 50 former employees of the employer, or

(2) 40 percent of the former employees of the employer.

(c) *Special rule.* A plan satisfies the minimum participation rule in paragraph (b) of this section if the plan benefits at least five former employees, and if either:

(1) More than 95 percent of all former employees with vested accrued benefits under the plan benefit under the plan for the plan year, or

(2) At least 60 percent of the former employees who benefit under the plan for the plan year are nonhighly compensated former employees.

(d) *Excludable former employees*—(1) *General rule.* Whether a former employee is an excludable former employee for purposes of this section is determined under §1.401(a)(26)–6(c).

(2) *Exception.* Solely for purposes of paragraph (c) of this section, the rule in §1.401(a)(26)–6(c)(4) (regarding vested accrued benefits eligible for mandatory distribution) does not apply to any former employee having a vested accrued benefit. Thus, a former employee who has a vested accrued benefit is not an excludable former employee merely because that vested accrued benefit does not exceed $3,500.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63416, Dec. 4, 1991]

§ 1.401(a)(26)–5 Employees who benefit under a plan.

(a) *Employees benefiting under a plan*—(1) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under a plan for a plan year if and only if, for that plan year, the employee would be treated as benefiting under the provisions of § 1.410(b)–3(a), without regard to § 1.410(b)–3(a)(iv).

(2) *Sequential or concurrent benefit offset arrangements*—(i) *In general.* An employee is treated as accruing a benefit under a plan that includes an offset or reduction of benefits that satisfies either paragraph (a)(2)(ii) or (a)(2)(iii) of this section if either the employee accrues a benefit under the plan for the year, or the employee would have accrued a benefit if the offset or reduction portion of the benefit formula were disregarded. In addition, an employee is treated as accruing a meaningful benefit for purposes of prior benefit structure testing under § 1.401(a)(26)–3 if the employee would have accrued a meaningful benefit if the offset or reduction portion of the benefit formula were disregarded.

(ii) *Offset by sequential or grandfathered benefits.* An offset or reduction of benefits under a defined benefit plan satisfies this paragraph (a)(2) if the benefit formula provides that an employee will not accrue additional benefits under the current portion of the benefit formula until the employee has accrued, under such portion, a benefit in excess of such employee's benefit under one or more formulas in effect for prior years that are based wholly on prior years of service. The prior benefit may have accrued under the same or a separate plan, may be provided under the same or a separate plan and may relate to service with the same or previous employers. Benefits will not fail to be treated as based wholly on prior years if they are based, directly or indirectly, on compensation earned after such prior years (including compensation earned in the current year), if they are adjusted to reflect increases in the section 415 limitations, or if they are increased to provide an ad hoc cost of living adjustment designed to adjust, in whole or in part, for inflation. Furthermore, benefits do not fail to be treated as based wholly on prior years merely because the benefits (e.g., early retirement benefits) are subject to an age or years-of-service condition and, in applying the condition or conditions, the current and prior years are taken into account.

(iii) *Concurrent benefit offset arrangements*—(A) *General rule.* An offset or reduction of benefits under a defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (a)(2)(iii) if the benefit formula provides a benefit that is offset or reduced by contributions or benefits under another plan that is maintained by the same employer and the following additional requirements are met:

(*1*) The contributions or benefits under a plan that are used to offset or reduce the benefits under the positive portion of the fomu1a being tested accrued under such other plan;

(*2*) The employees who benefit under the formula being tested also benefit under the other plan on a reasonable and uniform basis; and

(*3*) The contributions or benefits under the plan that are used to offset or reduce the benefits under the formula being tested are not used to offset or reduce that employee's benefits under any other plan or any other formula.

(B) *Special rules for certain section 414(n) employer-recipients.* The same employer requirement in the concurrent benefit offset rule in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A) of this section is waived for certain section 414(n) employer-recipients. Under this exception, an employer-recipient (within the meaning of sections 414 (n) and (o)) may treat contributions or benefits under a plan maintained by a leasing organization as contributions or benefits accrued under the recipient organization plan provided the following requirements are met: the employer-recipient maintains a plan covering leased employees (which employees are treated as employees of the employer-recipient within the meaning of sections 414(n)(2) and 414(o)(2)); the leased employees are also covered under a plan maintained by the leasing organization; and contributions or benefits under the plan maintained by the employer-recipient are offset or

reduced by the contributions or benefits under the leasing organization plan that are attributable to service with the recipient organization. Also, for purposes of the benefiting condition requirement in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A)(*2*) of this section, the employees of the employer-recipient who are not leased from the leasing organization are not required to benefit under the plan of the leasing organization.

(b) *Former employees benefiting under a plan.* A former employee is treated as benefiting for a plan year if and only if the former employee would be treated as benetiting under the rules in §1.410(b)–3(b).

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63416, Dec. 4, 1991]

§1.401(a)(26)–6 Excludable employees.

(a) *In general.* For purposes of applying section 401(a)(26) with respect to either employees, former employees, or both employees and former employees, as applicable, all employees other than excludable employees described in paragraph (b) of this section, all former employees other than excludable former employees described in paragraph (c) of this section, or both, as the case may be, must be taken into account. Except as specifically provided otherwise in this section, the rules of this section are applied by reference only to the particular plan and must be applied on a uniform and consistent basis.

(b) *Excludable employees.* An employee is an excludable employee if the employee is covered by one or more of the following exclusions:

(1) *Minimum age and service exclusions*—(i) *In general.* If a plan applies minimum age and service eligibility conditions permissible under section 410(a)(1) and excludes all employees who do not meet those conditions from benefiting under the plan, tbn all employees who fail to satisfy those conditions may be treated as excludable employees with respect to that plan. An employee is treated as meeting the age and service requirements on the date any employee with the same age and service would be eligible to commence participation in the plan, as provided in section 410(b)(4)(C).

(ii) *Plans benefiting otherwise excludable employees.* An employer may treat a plan benefiting otherwise excludable employees as two separate plans, one for the otherwise excludable employees and one for the other employees benefiting under the plan. The effect of this rule is that employees who would be excludable under paragraph (b)(1) of this section (applied without regard to section 410(a)(1)(B)), but for the fact that the plan does not apply the greatest permissible minimum age and service conditions, may be treated as excludable employees with respect to the plan. This treatment is only available if each of the following conditions is satisfied:

(A) The plan under which the otherwise excludable employees benefit also benefits employees who are not otherwise excludable.

(B) The plan under which the otherwise excludable employees benefit satisfies section 401(a)(26), both by reference only to otherwise excludable employees and by reference only to employees who are not otherwise excludable.

(C) The contributions or benefits provided to the otherwise excludable employees (expressed as percentages of compensation) are not greater than the contributions or benefits provided to the employees who are not otherwise excludable under the plan.

(D) No highly compensated employee is included in the group of otherwise excludable employees for more than one plan year.

(iii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate some of the minimum-age-and-service exclusion requirements:

Example 1. Employer X maintains a defined contribution plan, Plan X, under which employees who have not completed 1 year of service are not eligible to participate. Employer X has six employees. Two of the employees participate in Plan X. The other four employees have not completed 1 year of service and are therefore not eligible to participate in Plan X. The four employees who have not completed 1 year of service are excludable employees and may be disregarded for purposes of applying the minimum participation test. Therefore, Plan X satisfies section 401(a)(26) because both of the two employees who must be considered are participants in Plan X.

Example 2. Employer Y has 100 employees and maintains two plans, Plan 1 and Plan 2. Plan 1 provides that employees who have not

completed 1 year of service are not eligible to participate. Plan 2 has no minimum age or service requirement. Twenty of Y's employees do not meet the minimum service requirement under Plan 1. Each plan satisfies the ratio test under section 410(b)(1)(B). In testing Plan 1 to determine whether it satisfies section 401(a)(26), the 20 employees not meeting the minimum age and service requirement under Plan 1 are treated as excludable employees. In testing Plan 2 to determine whether it satisfies section 401(a)(26), no employees are treated as excludable employees because Plan 2 does not have a minimum age or service requirement.

(2) *Certain air pilots.* An employee who is excluded from consideration under section 410(b)(3)(B) (relating to certain air pilots) may be treated as an excludable employee.

(3) *Certain nonresident aliens*—(i) *In general.* An employee who is excluded from consideration under section 410(b)(3)(C) (relating to certain nonresident aliens) may be treated as an excludable employee.

(ii) *Special treaty rule.* In addition, an employee who is a nonresident alien (within the meaning of section 7701(b)(1)(B)) and who does receive earned income (within the meaning of section 911(d)(2)) from the employer that constitutes income from sources within the United States (within the meaning of section 861(a)(3)) is permitted to be excluded, if all of the employee's earned income from the employer from sources within the United States is exempt from United States income tax under an applicable income tax convention. This paragraph (b)(3)(ii) applies only if all employees described in the preceding sentence are so excluded.

(4) *Employees covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.* When testing a plan benefiting only noncollectively bargained employees, an employee who is excluded from consideration under section 410(b)(3)(A) (exclusion for employees included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement) may be treated as an excludable employee. This rule may be applied separately to each collective bargaining agreement. See § 1.401(a)(26)–8 for the definitions of the terms ''collective bargaining agreement'', ''collectively bargained employee,'' and ''covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement''.

(5) *Employees not covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.* When testing a plan that benefits only employees who are included in a group of employees who are covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, an employee who is not included in the group of employees who are covered by the collective bargaining agreement may be treated as an excludable employee.

(6) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the excludable employee rules that relate to employees covered pursuant to collective bargaining agreements. For purposes of these examples assume that no other exclusion rules are applicable.

Example 1. Employer W has 70 collectively bargained employees and 30 non-collectively bargained employees. Employer W maintains Plan W, which benefits only the 30 non-collectively bargained employees. The 70 collectively bargained employees may be treated as excludable employees and thus may be disregarded in applying section 401(a)(26) to Plan W.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as *Example I,* except that the Commissioner has determined that the employee representative is not a bona fide employee representative under section 7701(a)(46) and thus there are no ''collectively bargained employees.'' In this case, all employees of W must be considered in determining whether section 401(a)(26) is met.

Example 3. Employer X has collectively bargained employees and 70 noncollectively bargained employees. Employer X maintains Plan X, which benefits only the 30 collectively bargained employees. Employer X may treat the non-collectively bargained employees as excludable employees and disregard them in applying section 401(a)(26) to the collectively bargained plan.

Example 4. Assume the same facts as *Example 3,* except that the Commissioner has determined that the employee representative is not a bona fide employee representative under section 7701(a)(46) and thus there is no recognized collective bargaining agreement. In this case, Employer X may not treat the non-collectively bargained employees of X as excludable employees.

Example 5. Assume the same facts as *Example 3,* except that 3 percent of the 30 collectively bargained employees are professionals. In this case, Employer X may not treat the non-collectively bargained employees of X as excludable employees.

Example 6. Employer Y has 100 collectively bargained employees. Thirty of Y's employees are represented by Collective Bargaining Unit 1 and covered under Plan 1. Seventy of Y's employees are represented by Collective Bargaining Unit 2 and covered under Plan 2. For purposes of testing Plan 1, the employees of Collective Bargaining Unit 2 may be treated as excludable employees. Similarly, for purposes of testing Plan 2, the employees of Collective Bargaining Unit 1 may be treated as excludable employees.

(7) *Certain terminating employees*—(i) *In general.* An employee may be treated as an excludable employee for a plan year with respect to a particular plan if—

(A) The employee does not benefit under the plan for the plan year,

(B) The employee is eligible to participate in the plan,

(C) The plan has a minimum period of service requirement or a requirement that an employee be employed on the last day of the plan year (last-day requirement) in order for an employee to accrue a benefit or receive an allocation for the plan year,

(D) The employee fails to accrue a benefit or receive an allocation under the plan solely because of the failure to satisfy the minimum period of service or last-day requirement,

(E) The employee terminates employment during the plan year with no more than 500 hours of service, and the employee is not an employee as of the last day of the plan year (for purposes of this paragraph (b)(7)(i)(E), a plan that uses the elapsed time method of determining years of service may use either 91 consecutive calendar days or 3 consecutive calendar months instead of 500 hours of service, provided it uses the same convention for all employees during a plan year), and

(F) If this paragraph (b)(7) is applied with respect to any employee with respect to a plan for a plan year, it is applied with respect to all employees with respect to the plan for the plan year.

(ii) *Hours of service.* For purposes of this paragraph (b)(7), the term ''hour of service'' has the same meaning as set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 under the general method of crediting service for the employee. If one of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3 is used for crediting service under the plan, the 500-hour requirement must be adjusted accordingly.

(8) *Employees of qualified separate lines of business.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 401(a)(26) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b), in testing a plan that benefits employees of one qualified separate line of business, the employees of the other qualified separate lines of business of the employer are treated as excludable employees. See §§ 1.414(r)–1(c)(3) and 1.414(r)–9 (separate application of section 401(a)(26) to the employees of a qualified separate line of business). The rule in this paragraph (b)(8) does not apply to a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–l(c)(3)(ii) for a plan year.

(c) *Former employees*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying section 401(a)(26) with respect to former employees, all former employees of the employer are taken into account, except that the employer may treat a former employee described in paragraph (c)(2) through (c)(4) of this section as an excludable former employee. If any of the former employee exclusion rules under paragraphs (c)(2) through (c)(4) of this section is applied, it must be applied to all former employees for the plan year on a consistent basis.

(2) *Employees terminated before a specified date.* The employer may treat a former employee as excludable if—

(i) The former employee became a former employee either prior to January 1, 1984, or prior to the tenth calendar year preceding the calendar year in which the current plan year begins, and

(ii) The former employee became a former employee in a calendar year that precedes the earliest calendar year in which any former employee who benefits under the plan in the current plan year became a former employee.

(3) *Previously excludable employees.* The employer may treat a former employee as excludable if the former employee was an excludable employee (or would have been an excludable employee if these regulations had been in effect) under the rules of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section during the plan

year in which the former employee became a former employee. If the employer treats a former employee as excludable pursuant to this paragraph (c)(3), the former employee is not taken into account with respect to a plan even if the former employee is benefiting under the plan.

(4) *Vested accrued benefits eligible for mandatory distribution.* A former employee may be treated as an excludable former employee if the present value of the former employee's vested accrued benefit does not exceed $3,500. This determination is made in accordance with the rules of sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e).

(d) *Certain police or firefighters.* An employer may apply section 401(a)(26) separately with respect to any classification of qualified public safety employees for whom a separate plan is maintained. Thus, for purposes of testing a separate plan covering a class of qualified public safety employees, all employees who are not in that classification are treated as excludable employees. Also, such employees need not be taken into account in determining whether or not any other plan satisfies section 401(a)(26). For purposes of this paragraph (d), *qualified public safety employee* means any employee of any police department or fire department organized and operated by a State or political subdivision if the employee provides police protection, firefighting services, or emergency medical services for any area within the jurisdiction of a State or political subdivision.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63416, Dec. 4, 1991]

§ 1.401(a)(26)–7 Testing methods.

(a) *Testing on each day of the plan year.* A plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) for a plan year only if the plan satisfies section 401(a)(26) on each day of the plan year. An employee benefits on a day if the employee is a participant for such day and the employee benefits under the plan for the year under the rules in § 1.401(a)(26)–5.

(b) *Simplified testing method.* A plan is treated as satisfying the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section if it satisfies section 401(a)(26) on any single plan day during the plan year, but only if that day is reasonably representative of the employer's workforce and the plan's coverage. A plan does not have to be tested on the same day each plan year.

(c) *Retroactive correction.* If a plan fails to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for a plan year, the plan may be retroactively amended during the same period and under the same conditions as provided for in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3) through (g)(5) to satisfy section 401(a)(26). A plan merger that occurs by the end of the period provided in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(iv) is treated solely for purposes of section 401(a)(26) as if it were effective as of the first day of the plan year. The rule of this paragraph (c) may be illustrated by the following example.

Example. Assume that an employer with 500 employees maintains two defined contribution plans. Plan A benefits 45 employees. Plan B benefits 50 employees. Immediately before the end of the period provided for in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(iv), the employer expands coverage under Plan A to benefit 20 more employees retroactively for the plan year. Thus, Plan A satisfies paragraph (a) of this section for the plan year. Alternatively, before the end of the period provided for in § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(iv), or later if a later period is applicable under section 401(b), the employer could merge Plan A with Plan B to satisfy section 401(a)(26).

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63418, Dec. 4, 1991]

§ 1.401(a)(26)–8 Definitions.

In applying this section and §§ 1.401(a)(26)–1 through 1.401(a)(26)–9 the definitions in this section govern unless otherwise provided.

Collective bargaining agreement. Collective bargaining agreement means an agreement that the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective bargaining agreement between employee representatives and the employer that satisfies § 301.7701–17T. Employees described in section 413(b)(8) who are employees of the union or the plan and are treated as employees of an employer are not employees covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement for purposes of section 401(a)(26) unless the employees are actually covered pursuant to such an agreement.

Collectively bargained employee. Collectively bargained employee means a collectively bargained employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–6(d)(2).

Covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Covered by a collective bargaining agreement means covered by a collective bargaining agreement within the meaning of §1.410(b)–6(d)(2)(iii).

Defined benefit plan. Defined benefit plan means a defined benefit plan within the meaning of §1.410(b)–9.

Defined contribution plan. Defined contribution plan means a defined contribution plan within the meaning of §1.410(b)–9.

Employee. Employee means an employee, within the meaning of §1.410(b)–9.

Employer. Employer means the employer within the meaning of §1.410(b)–9.

ESOP. ESOP means an employee stock ownership plan within the meaning of section 4975(e)(7) or a tax credit employee stock ownership plan within the meaning of section 409(a).

Former employee. Former employee means a former employee within the meaning of §1.410(b)–9.

Highly compensated employee. Highly compensated employee means an employee who is highly compensated within the meaning of section 414(q).

Highly compensated former employee. Highly compensated former employee means a former employee who is highly compensated within the meaning of section 414(q)(9).

Multiemployer plan. Multiemployer plan means a multiemployer plan within the meaning of section 414(f).

Noncollectively bargained employee. Noncollectively bargained employee means an employee who is not a collectively bargained employee.

Nonhighly compensated employee. Nonhighly compensated employee' means an employee who is not a highly compensated employee.

Nonhighly compensated former employee. Nonhighly compensated former employee means a former employee who is not a highly compensated former employee.

Plan. Plan means plan as defined in §1.401(a)(26)–2(c).

Plan year. Plan year means the plan year of the plan as defined in the written plan document. In the absence of a specifically designated plan year, the plan year is deemed to be the calendar year.

Professional employee. Professional employee means a professional employee as defined in §1.410(b)–9.

Section 401(k) plan. Section 401(k) plan means a plan consisting of elective contributions described in §1.401(k)–1(g)(3) under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement described in §1.401(k)–1(a)(4)(i).

Section 401(m) plan. Section 401(m) plan means a plan consisting of employee contributions described in §1.401(m)–1(f)(6) or matching contributions described in §1.401(m)–1(f)(12), or both.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63418, Dec. 4, 1991]

§1.401(a)(26)–9 Effective dates and transition rules.

(a) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, section 401(a)(26) and the regulations thereunder apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989.

(b) *Transition rules*—(1) *Governmental plans and certain section 403(b) annuities.* Section 401(a)(26) is treated as satisfied for plan years beginning before the later of January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously, in the case of governmental plans described in section 414(d), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans). For purposes of this paragraph (b)(1), the term ''governing body with authority to amend the plan'' means the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan.

(2) *Early retirement ''window-period'' benefits.* Early retirement benefits available under a plan only to employees who retire within a limited period of time, not to exceed one year, are treated as satisfying section 401(a)(26) if such benefits are provided under plan terms that were adopted and in effect on or before March 14, 1989.

(3) *Employees who do not benefit because of a minimum-period-of-service requirement or a last-day requirement.* For the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1988, and before January 1, 1990, employees who are eligible to participate under the plan and who fail to accrue a benefit solely because of the

failure to satisfy either a minimum-period-of-service requirement of 1000 hours of service or less or a last-day requirement may be treated as benefiting under the plan.

(4) *Certain plan terminations*—(i) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (b)(4)(ii) of this section, if a plan terminates after section 401(a)(26) becomes effective with respect to the plan (as determined under paragraph (a) of this section), the plan is not treated as a qualified plan upon termination unless it complies with section 401(a)(26) and the regulations thereunder (to the extent they are applicable) for all periods for which section 401(a)(26) is effective with respect to the plan.

(ii) *Exception.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) and (b)(4)(i) of this section, a plan does not fail to be treated as a qualified plan upon termination merely because the plan fails to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(26) and the regulations thereunder if the plan is terminated with a termination date on or before December 31, 1989, and either of the following conditions is satisfied:

(A) In the case of a defined benefit plan, no highly compensated employee has an accrued benefit under the plan exceeding the lesser of either the benefit the employee had accrued as of the close of the last plan year beginning before January 1, 1989, or the benefit the employee would have accrued as of the close of the last plan year under the terms of the plan in effect and applicable with respect to the employee on December 13, 1988.

(B) In the case of a defined contribution plan, no highly compensated employee receives a contribution allocation for any plan year beginning after December 31, 1988. For this purpose, a contribution allocation with respect to an employee for a plan year beginning before January 1, 1989, may be treated as a contribution allocation for a plan year beginning after December 31, 1988, if the allocation for the prior year exceeds the allocation that the employee would have received for such year under the terms of the plan in effect and applicable with respect to the employee on December 13, 1988. An allocation of forfeitures to highly compensated employees with respect to contributions made for plan years beginning before January 1, 1988, does not cause a defined contribution plan to fail to satisfy the conditions of this paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(B).

(5) *ESOPs and non-ESOPs.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a) of this section and § 54.4975–11(a)(5) of this Chapter, an employer may treat the rule in § 1.401(a)(26)–2(d)(1)(i), regarding mandatory disaggregation of ESOPs and non-ESOPs as not effective for plan years beginning before January 1, 1990.

(c) *Waiver of excise tax on reversions*—(1) *In general.* Pursuant to section 1112(e)(3) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA '86), if certain conditions are satisfied, a waiver of the excise tax under section 4980 applies with respect to any employer reversion that occurs by reason of the termination or merger of a plan before the first year to which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan. In general, the applicable conditions are that the plan must have been in existence on August 16, 1986; that if section 401(a)(26) was in effect for the plan year including August 16, 1986, the plan would have failed to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(26) and would have continued to fail the requirements at all times thereafter; that the plan satisfies the applicable conditions in paragraph (b)(4)(ii)(A) or (B) of this section; and that certain requirements regarding asset or liability transfers and mergers and spinoffs involving the plan after August 16, 1986, are satisfied.

(2) *Termination date.* An employer reversion with respect to a plan is eligible for the section 4980 excise tax waiver only if the employer reversion occurs by reason of the termination of the plan with a termination date prior to the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan. Solely for purposes of this waiver, the employer reversion is treated as satisfying this paragraph (c)(2) even though the plan's termination date is during the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applies to the plan if the plan's termination date is on or before May 31, 1989. If the termination date occurs in the first plan year for which section 401(a)(26) applied to the plan and the employer receives a reversion that is eligible for the waiver of the section

4980 tax, the plan is subject to the interest rate restriction set forth in section 11 12(e)(3)(B) of TRA '86 as amended.

(3) *Failure to satisfy section 401(a)(26).* An employer reversion with respect to a plan is eligible for the excise tax waiver only if the plan was in existence on August 16, 1986, and, if section 401(a)(26) had applied to the plan for the plan year including such date, the plan would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for the plan year and continuously thereafter until the plan's termination or merger. For purposes of this paragraph (c)(3), a plan is treated as though it would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) before such section actually applied to the plan only if the plan (as defined under section 414(1)) failed to benefit at least the lesser of 50 employees or 40 percent of the employer's employees. In general, this determination is to be made on the basis of only the applicable statutory provisions, without regard to the regulations under section 401(a)(26). Thus, for example, the prior benefit structure rules in §1.401(a)(26)–3 do not apply in determining whether a plan would have failed to satisfy section 401(a)(26) for plan years beginning prior to the effective date of section 401(a)(26) with respect to the plan.

(d) *Special rule for collective bargaining agreements.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements (as defined in §1.401(a)(26)–8(a)) that were ratified before March 1, 1986, section 401(a)(26) and the regulations thereunder shall not apply to plan years beginning before the earlier of—

(1) January 1, 1991, or

(2) The later of—

(i) January 1, 1989, or

(ii) The date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates. For purposes of this paragraph (d), any extension or renegotiation of any collective bargaining agreement that is ratified after February 28, 1986, is disregarded in determining the date on which such collective bargaining agreement terminates.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63419, Dec. 4, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46838, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(a)(31)–1 Requirement to offer direct rollover of eligible rollover distributions; questions and answers.

The following questions and answers relate to the qualification requirement imposed by section 401(a)(31) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, pertaining to the direct rollover option for eligible rollover distributions from pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans. Section 401(a)(31) was added by section 522(a) of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102–318, 106 Stat. 290 (UCA). For additional UCA guidance under sections 402(c), 402(f), 403(b)(8) and (10), and 3405(c), see §§1.402(c)–2, 1.402(f)–1, and 1.403(b)–2, and §31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter, respectively.

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Q–1: What are the direct rollover requirements under section 401(a)(31)?

Q–2: Does section 401(a)(31) require that a qualified plan permit a direct rollover to be made to a qualified trust that is not part of a defined contribution plan?

Q–3: What is a *direct rollover* that satisfies section 401(a)(31), and how is it accomplished?

Q–4: Is providing a distributee with a check for delivery to an eligible retirement plan a reasonable means of accomplishing a direct rollover?

Q–5: Is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover currently includible in gross income or subject to 20-percent withholding?

Q–6: What procedures may a plan administrator prescribe for electing a direct rollover, and what information may the plan administrator require a distributee to provide when electing a direct rollover?

Q–7: May the plan administrator treat a distributee as having made an election under a default procedure where the distributee does not affirmatively elect to make or not make a direct rollover within a certain time period?

Q–8: May the plan administrator establish a deadline after which the distributee may not revoke an election to make or not make a direct rollover?

Q–9: Must the plan administrator permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder of that distribution paid to the distributee?

Q–10: Must the plan administrator allow a distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into two or more separate distributions to be paid in direct rollovers to two or more eligible retirement plans?

Q–11: Will a plan satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover if his or her eligible rollover distributions during a year are reasonably expected to total less than $200?

Q–12: Is a plan administrator permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series?

Q–13: Is the eligible retirement plan designated by a distributee to receive a direct rollover distribution required to accept the distribution?

Q–14: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover a distribution and rollover or is it a transfer of assets and liabilities?

Q–15: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is in the form of a plan loan offset amount?

Q–16: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract?

Q–17: What assumptions may a plan administrator make regarding whether a benefit is an eligible rollover distribution?

Q–18: When must a qualified plan be amended to comply with section 401(a)(31)?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q–1: What are the direct rollover requirements under section 401(a)(31)?

A–1: (a) *General rule.* To satisfy section 401(a)(31), added by UCA, a plan must provide that if the distributee of any eligible rollover distribution elects to have the distribution paid directly to an eligible retirement plan, and specifies the eligible retirement plan to which the distribution is to be paid, then the distribution will be paid to that eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover described in Q&A–3 of this section. Thus, the plan must give the distributee the option of having his or her distribution paid in a direct rollover to an eligible retirement plan specified by the distributee. For purposes of section 401(a)(31) and this section, eligible rollover distribution has the meaning set forth in section 402(c)(4) and § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–3 through Q&A–10 and Q&A–14, except as otherwise provided in Q&A–2 of this section, eligible retirement plan has the meaning set forth in section 402(c)(8)(B) and § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–2.

(b) *Related Internal Revenue Code provisions*—(1) *Mandatory withholding.* If a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution does not elect to have the eligible rollover distribution paid directly from the plan to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover under section 401(a)(31), the eligible rollover distribution is subject to 20-percent income tax withholding under section 3405(c). See § 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter for guidance concerning the withholding requirements applicable to eligible rollover distributions.

(2) *Notice requirement.* Section 402(f) requires the plan administrator of a qualified plan to provide, within a reasonable period of time before making an eligible rollover distribution, a written explanation to the distributee of the distributee's right to elect a direct rollover and the withholding consequences of not making that election. The explanation also is required to provide certain other relevant information relating to the taxation of distributions. See § 1.402(f)–1 for guidance concerning the written explanation required under section 402(f).

(3) *Section 403(b) annuities.* Section 403(b)(10) provides that requirements similar to those imposed by section 401(a)(31) apply to annuities described in section 403(b). See § 1.403(b)–2 for guidance concerning the direct rollover requirements for distributions from annuities described in section 403(b).

(c) *Effective date*—(1) *Statutory effective date.* Section 401(a)(31) applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993.

(2) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after October 19, 1995. For eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993 and before October 19, 1995, § 1.401(a)(31)–1T (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1), applies. However, for any distribution made on or after January 1, 1993 but before October 19, 1995, a plan may satisfy section 401(a)(31) by substituting any or all

provisions of this section for the corresponding provisions of § 1.401(a)(31)–1T, if any.

Q–2: Does section 401(a)(31) require that a qualified plan permit a direct rollover to be made to a qualified trust that is not part of a defined contribution plan?

A–2: No. Section 401(a)(31)(D) limits the types of qualified trusts that are treated as eligible retirement plans to defined contribution plans that accept eligible rollover distributions. Therefore, although a plan is permitted, at a participant's election, to make a direct rollover to any type of eligible retirement plan, as defined in section 402(c)(8)(B) (including a defined benefit plan), a plan will not fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) solely because the plan will not permit a direct rollover to a qualified trust that is part of a defined benefit plan. In contrast, if a distributee elects a direct rollover of an eligible rollover distribution to an annuity plan described in section 403(a), that distribution must be paid to the annuity plan, even if the recipient annuity plan is a defined benefit plan.

Q–3: What is a direct rollover that satisfies section 401(a)(31), and how is it accomplished?

A–3: A direct rollover that satisfies section 401(a)(31) is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid directly to an eligible retirement plan for the benefit of the distributee. A direct rollover may be accomplished by any reasonable means of direct payment to an eligible retirement plan. Reasonable means of direct payment include, for example, a wire transfer or the mailing of a check to the eligible retirement plan. If payment is made by check, the check must be negotiable only by the trustee of the eligible retirement plan. If the payment is made by wire transfer, the wire transfer must be directed only to the trustee of the eligible retirement plan. In the case of an eligible retirement plan that does not have a trustee (such as a custodial individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity), the custodian of the plan or issuer of the contract under the plan, as appropriate, should be substituted for the trustee for purposes of this Q&A–3, and Q&A–4 of this section.

Q–4: Is providing a distributee with a check for delivery to an eligible retirement plan a reasonable means of accomplishing a direct rollover?

A–4: Providing the distributee with a check and instructing the distributee to deliver the check to the eligible retirement plan is a reasonable means of direct payment, provided that the check is made payable as follows: [Name of the trustee] as trustee of [name of the eligible retirement plan]. For example, if the name of the eligible retirement plan is ''Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith,'' and the name of the trustee is ''ABC Bank,'' the payee line of a check would read ''ABC Bank as trustee of Individual Retirement Account of John Q. Smith.'' Unless the name of the distributee is included in the name of the eligible retirement plan, the check also must indicate that it is for the benefit of the distributee. If the eligible retirement plan is not an individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity, the payee line of the check need not identify the trustee by name. For example, the payee line of a check for the benefit of distributee Jane Doe might read, ''Trustee of XYZ Corporation Savings Plan FBO Jane Doe.''

Q–5: Is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover currently includible in gross income or subject to 20-percent withholding?

A–5: No. An eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover is not currently includible in the distributee's gross income under section 402(c) and is exempt from the 20-percent withholding imposed under section 3405(c)(2). However, when any portion of the eligible rollover distribution is subsequently distributed from the eligible retirement plan, that portion will be includible in gross income to the extent required under section 402, 403, or 408.

Q–6: What procedures may a plan administrator prescribe for electing a direct rollover, and what information may the plan administrator require a distributee to provide when electing a direct rollover?

A–6: (a) *Permissible procedures.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this Q&A–6, the plan administrator may prescribe any procedure for a distributee to elect a direct rollover under section 401(a)(31), provided that the procedure is reasonable. The procedure may include any reasonable requirement for information or documentation from the distributee in addition to the items of adequate information specified in § 31.3405(c)–1(b), Q&A–7 of this chapter. For example, it would be reasonable for the plan administrator to require that the distributee provide a statement from the designated recipient plan that the plan will accept the direct rollover for the benefit of the distributee and that the recipient plan is, or is intended to be, an individual retirement account, an individual retirement annuity, a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a qualified trust described in section 401(a), as applicable. In the case of a designated recipient plan that is a qualified trust, it also would be reasonable for the plan administrator to require a statement that the qualified trust is not excepted from the definition of an eligible retirement plan by section 401(a)(31)(D) (i.e., is not a defined benefit plan).

(b) *Impermissible procedures.* A plan will fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator prescribes any unreasonable procedure, or requires information or documentation, that effectively eliminates or substantially impairs the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover. For example, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the recipient plan required the distributee to obtain an opinion of counsel stating that the eligible retirement plan receiving the rollover is a qualified plan or individual retirement account. Similarly, it would effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan stating that, upon request by the distributing plan, the recipient plan will automatically return any direct rollover amount that the distributing plan advises the recipient plan was paid incorrectly. It would also effectively eliminate or substantially impair the distributee's ability to elect a direct rollover if the distributing plan required, as a condition for making a direct rollover, a letter from the recipient eligible retirement plan indemnifying the distributing plan for any liability arising from the distribution.

Q–7: May the plan administrator treat a distributee as having made an election under a default procedure where the distributee does not affirmatively elect to make or not make a direct rollover within a certain time period?

A–7: Yes, the plan administrator may establish a default procedure whereby any distributee who fails to make an affirmative election is treated as having either made or not made a direct rollover election. However, the plan administrator may not make a distribution under any default procedure unless the distributee has received an explanation of the default procedure and an explanation of the direct rollover option as required under section 402(f) and § 1.402(f)–1, Q&A–1 and unless the timing requirements described in § 1.402(f)–1, Q&A–2 and Q&A–3 have been satisfied with respect to the explanations of both the default procedure and the direct rollover option.

Q–8: May the plan administrator establish a deadline after which the distributee may not revoke an election to make or not make a direct rollover?

A–8: Yes, but the plan administrator is not permitted to prescribe any deadline or time period with respect to revocation of a direct rollover election that is more restrictive for the distributee than that which otherwise applies under the plan to revocation of the form of distribution elected by the distributee.

Q–9: Must the plan administrator permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to have the remainder of that distribution paid to the distributee?

A–9: Yes, the plan administrator must permit a distributee to elect to have a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover and to

have the remainder paid to the distributee. However, the plan administrator is permitted to require that, if the distributee elects to have only a portion of an eligible rollover distribution paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover, that portion be equal to at least a specified minimum amount, provided the specified minimum amount is less than or equal to $500 or any greater amount as prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter. If the entire amount of the eligible rollover distribution is less than or equal to the specified minimum amount, the plan administrator need not allow the distributee to divide the distribution.

Q–10: Must the plan administrator allow a distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into two or more separate distributions to be paid in direct rollovers to two or more eligible retirement plans?

A–10: No. The plan administrator is not required (but is permitted) to allow the distributee to divide an eligible rollover distribution into separate distributions to be paid to two or more eligible retirement plans in direct rollovers. Thus, the plan administrator may require that the distributee select a single eligible retirement plan to which the eligible rollover distribution (or portion thereof) will be distributed in a direct rollover.

Q–11: Will a plan satisfy section 401(a)(31) if the plan administrator does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover if his or her eligible rollover distributions during a year are reasonably expected to total less than $200?

A–11: Yes. A plan will satisfy section 401(a)(31) even though the plan administrator does not permit any distributee to elect a direct rollover with respect to eligible rollover distributions during a year that are reasonably expected to total less than $200 or any lower minimum amount specified by the plan administrator. The rules described in § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–14 of this chapter (relating to whether withholding under section 3405(c) is required for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than $200) also apply for purposes of determining whether a direct rollover election under section 401(a)(31) must be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is less than $200 or the lower specified amount.

Q–12: Is a plan administrator permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series?

A–12: (a) Yes. A plan administrator is permitted to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applying to all subsequent payments in the series, provided that:

(1) The employee is permitted at any time to change, with respect to subsequent payments, a previous election to make or not make a direct rollover; and

(2) The written explanation provided under section 402(f) explains that the election to make or not make a direct rollover will apply to all future payments unless the employee subsequently changes the election.

(b) See § 1.402(f)–1, Q&A–3 for further guidance concerning the rules for providing section 402(f) notices when eligible rollover distributions are made in a series of periodic payments.

Q–13: Is the eligible retirement plan designated by a distributee to receive a direct rollover distribution required to accept the distribution?

A–13: (a) *General rule.* No. Although section 401(a)(31) requires qualified plans to provide distributees the option to make a direct rollover of their eligible rollover distributions to an eligible retirement plan, it imposes no requirement that any eligible retirement plan accept rollovers. Thus, a plan can refuse to accept rollovers. Alternatively, a plan can limit the circumstances under which it will accept rollovers. For example, a plan can limit the types of plans from which it will accept a rollover or limit the types of assets it will accept in a rollover (such as accepting only cash or its equivalent).

(b) *Qualification of receiving plan.* A plan that accepts a direct rollover from another plan will not fail to satisfy

section 401(a) merely because the plan making the distribution is, in fact, not qualified under section 401(a) or section 403(a) at the time of the distribution, if, prior to accepting the rollover, the receiving plan reasonably concluded that the distributing plan was qualified under section 401(a) or section 403(a). For example, the receiving plan may reasonably conclude that the distributing plan was qualified under section 401(a) or section 403(a) if, prior to accepting the rollover, the plan administrator of the distributing plan provided the receiving plan with a statement that the distributing plan had received a determination letter from the Commissioner indicating that the plan was qualified.

Q–14: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), is an eligible rollover distribution that is paid to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover a distribution and rollover or is it a transfer of assets and liabilities?

A–14: For purposes of applying the plan qualification requirements of section 401(a), a direct rollover is a distribution and rollover of the eligible rollover distribution and not a transfer of assets and liabilities. For example, if the consent requirements under section 411(a)(11) or sections 401(a)(11) and 417(a)(2) apply to the distribution, they must be satisfied before the eligible rollover distribution may be distributed in a direct rollover. Similarly, the direct rollover is not a transfer of assets and liabilities that must satisfy the requirements of section 414(l). Finally, a direct rollover is not a transfer of benefits for purposes of applying the requirements under section 411(d)(6), as described in § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–3. Therefore, for example, the eligible retirement plan is not required to provide, with respect to amounts paid to it in a direct rollover, the same optional forms of benefits that were provided under the plan that made the direct rollover. The direct rollover requirements of section 401(a)(31) do not affect the ability of a qualified plan to make an elective or nonelective transfer of assets and liabilities to another qualified plan in accordance with applicable law (such as section 414(l)).

Q–15: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution that is in the form of a plan loan offset amount?

A–15: A plan will not fail to satisfy section 401(a)(31) merely because the plan does not permit a distributee to elect a direct rollover of an eligible rollover distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount. Section 1.402(c)–2(b), Q&A–9 defines a plan loan offset amount, in general, as a distribution that occurs when, under the terms governing a plan loan, the participant's accrued benefit is reduced (offset) in order to repay the loan. A plan administrator is permitted to allow a direct rollover of a participant note for a plan loan to a qualified trust described in section 401(a) or a qualified annuity plan described in section 403(a). See § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–9 for examples illustrating the rules for plan loan offset amounts that are set forth in this Q&A–15. See § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–11 of this chapter for guidance concerning special withholding rules that apply to a distribution in the form of a plan loan offset amount.

Q–16: Must a direct rollover option be provided for an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract?

A–16: Yes. If any amount to be distributed under a qualified plan distributed annuity contract is an eligible rollover distribution (in accordance with § 1.402(c)–2), Q&A–10 the annuity contract must satisfy section 401(a)(31) in the same manner as a qualified plan under section 401(a). Section 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–10 defines a qualified plan distributed annuity contract as an annuity contract purchased for a participant, and distributed to the participant, by a qualified plan. In the case of a qualified plan distributed annuity contract, the payor under the contract is treated as the plan administrator. See § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–13 of this chapter concerning the application of mandatory 20-percent withholding requirements to distributions from a qualified plan distributed annuity contract.

Q–17: What assumptions may a plan administrator make regarding whether a benefit is an eligible rollover distribution?

A–17: (a) *General rule.* For purposes of section 401(a)(31), a plan administrator may make the assumptions described in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Q&A–17 in determining the amount of a distribution that is an eligible rollover distribution for which a direct rollover option must be provided. Section 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–10 of this chapter provides assumptions for purposes of complying with section 3405(c). See § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–15 concerning the effect of these assumptions for purposes of section 402(c).

(b) *$5,000 death benefit.* A plan administrator is permitted to assume that a distribution from the plan that qualifies for the $5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b) is the only death benefit being paid with respect to a deceased employee that qualifies for that exclusion. Thus, to the extent that such a distribution would be excludible from gross income based on this assumption, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that it is not an eligible rollover distribution.

(c) *Determination of designated beneficiary.* For the purpose of determining the amount of the minimum distribution required to satisfy section 401(a)(9)(A) for any calendar year, the plan administrator is permitted to assume that there is no designated beneficiary.

Q–18: When must a qualified plan be amended to comply with section 401(a)(31)?

A–18: Even though section 401(a)(31) applies to distributions from qualified plans made on or after January 1, 1993, a qualified plan is not required to be amended before the last day by which amendments must be made to comply with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and related provisions, as permitted in other administrative guidance of general applicability, provided that:

(a) In the interim period between January 1, 1993, and the date on which the plan is amended, the plan is operated in accordance with the requirements of section 401(a)(31); and

(b) The amendment applies retroactively to January 1, 1993.

[T.D. 8619, 60 FR 49204, Sept. 22, 1995]

§ 1.401(b)–1 Certain retroactive changes in plan.

(a) *General rule.* Under section 401(b) a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, annuity, or bond purchase plan which does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) on any day solely as a result of a disqualifying provision (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section) shall be considered to have satisfied such requirements on such date if, on or before the last day of the remedial amendment period (as determined under paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) of this section) with respect to such disqualifying provision, all provisions of the plan which are necessary to satisfy all requirements of sections 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) are in effect and have been made effective for all purposes for the whole of such period. Under some facts and circumstances, it may not be possible to amend a plan retroactively so that all provisions of the plan which are necessary to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) are in fact made effective for the whole remedial amendment period. If it is not possible, the requirements of this section will not be satisfied even if the employer adopts a retroactive plan amendment which, in form, appears to satisfy such requirements. Section 401(b) does not permit a plan to be made retroactively effective, for qualification purposes, for a taxable year prior to the taxable year of the employer in which the plan was adopted by such employer.

(b) *Disqualifying provisions.* For purposes of this section, with respect to a plan described in paragraph (a) of this section, the term ''disqualifying provision'' means:

(1) A provision of a new plan, the absence of a provision from a new plan, or an amendment to an existing plan, which causes such plan to fail to satisfy the requirements of the Code applicable to qualification of such plan as of the date such plan or amendment is first made effective or

(2) A plan provision which results in the failure of the plan to satisfy the qualification requirements of the Code by reason of a change in such requirements—

(i) Effected by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (Pub.

L. 93–406, 88 Stat. 829), hereafter referred to as ''ERISA,'' or the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97–248, 96 Stat. 324), hereafter referred to as ''TEFRA,'' or

(ii) Effective before the first day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1989 and that is effected by the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Pub. L. 99–514, 100 Stat. 2085, 2489), hereafter referred to as ''TRA '86,'' the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986, (Pub. L. 99–509, 100 Stat. 1874), hereafter referred to as ''OBRA '86,'' or the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987 (Pub. L. 100–203, 101 Stat. 1330), hereafter referred to as ''OBRA '87.'' For purposes of this paragraph (b)(2)(ii), a disqualifying provision includes any plan provision that is integral to a qualification requirement changed by TRA '86, OBRA '86, or OBRA '87 or any requirement treated by the Commissioner, directly or indirectly, as if section 1140 of TRA '86 applied to it, but only to the extent such provision is effective before the first day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1989. With respect to disqualifying provisions described in this paragraph (b)(2)(ii) effective before the first day of the first plan year which begins after December 31, 1988, there must be compliance with the conditions of section 1140 of TRA '86 (other than the requirement that the plan amendment be made on or before the last day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1988), including operation in accordance with the plan provision as of its effective date with respect to the plan.

(iii) Effected by amendments to the Code that are designated by the Commissioner, at his discretion, as disqualifying provisions described in this paragraph (b)(2). For purposes of this paragraph (b)(2), a disqualifying provision includes the absence from a plan of a provision required by such change if the plan was in effect on the date such change became effective with respect to such plan.

(c) *Remedial amendment period.* (1) The remedial amendment period with respect to a disqualifying provision begins:

(i) In the case of a provision of, or absence of a provision from, a new plan, described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the date the plan is put into effect,

(ii) In the case of an amendment to an existing plan, described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the date the plan amendment is adopted or put into effect (whichever is earlier), or

(iii) In the case of a disqualifying provision described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the date on which the change effected by ERISA, TEFRA, TRA '86, OBRA '86, OBRA '87, or a qualification requirement that is treated, directly or indirectly, as subject to the conditions of section 1140 of TRA '86 described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, became effective with respect to such plan or, in the case of a provision, described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, that is integral to such qualification requirement, the first day on which the plan was operated in accordance with such provision.

(2) Unless further extended as provided by paragraph (d) of this section, the remedial amendment period ends with the latest of:

(i) In the case of a plan maintained by one employer, the time prescribed by law, including extensions, for filing the income tax return (or partnership return of income) of the employer for the employer's taxable year in which falls the latest of:

(A) The date on which the remedial amendment period begins.

(B) The date on which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is adopted, or

(C) The date on which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is made effective,

(ii) In the case of a plan maintained by one employer, the last day of the plan year within which falls the latest of:

(A) The date on which the remedial amendment period begins,

(B) The date on which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is adopted, or

(C) The date on which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is made effective,

(iii) In the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, the last day of the tenth month following the

last day of the plan year in which falls the latest of:

(A) The date on which the remedial amendment period begins,

(B) The date on which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is adopted, or

(C) The date of which a plan amendment described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section is made effective, or

(iv) December 31, 1976, but only in the case of a plan to which section 411 (relating to minimum vesting standards) applies without regard to section 411(e)(2), and only in the case of a remedial amendment period which began on or after September 2, 1974.

For purposes of paragraphs (c)(2)(i), (c)(2)(ii), and (c)(2)(iii) of this section, for any disqualifying provision described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, the remedial amendment period shall be deemed to have begun with the first day of the first plan year which begins after December 31, 1988.

For purposes of this paragraph (c)(2) of this section, a master or prototype plan shall not be considered to be a plan maintained by more than one employer, and whether or not a plan is maintained by more than one employer, shall be determined without regard to section 414 (b) and (c) except that if a plan is maintained solely by an affiliated group of corporations (within the meaning of section 1504) which files a consolidated income tax return pursuant to section 1501 for a taxable year within which falls the latest of the dates described in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section, such plan shall be deemed to be maintained by one employer.

(d) *Extensions of remedial amendment period*—(1) *Opinion letter request by sponsoring organization of master or prototype plan.* In the case of an employer who has adopted a master or prototype plan, a remedial amendment period that began on or after September 2, 1974, shall not end prior to the later of:

(i) June 30, 1977, or

(ii) The last day of the month that is six months after the month in which:

(A) The opinion letter with respect to the request of the sponsoring organization is issued by the Internal Revenue Service,

(B) Such request is withdrawn, or

(C) Such request is otherwise disposed of by the Internal Revenue Service. The rules contained in this subparagraph apply only if the sponsoring organization of such master or prototype plan has, after September 2, 1974, and on or before December 31, 1976, filed a request for an opinion letter with respect to the initial or continuing qualification of the plan (or a trust which is part of the plan). The provisions of this paragraph (d)(1) apply to a master or prototype plan adopted to replace another plan even though the remedial amendment period applicable to the replaced plan has expired at the time of adoption of the replacement plan.

(2) *Notification letter request by law firm sponsor of district-approved plan.* In the case of an employer who has adopted a pattern plan, a remedial amendment period that began on or after September 2, 1974, shall not end prior to the later of:

(i) June 30, 1977, or

(ii) The last day of the month that is six months after the month in which:

(A) The notification letter with respect to the request of the sponsoring law firm is issued by the Internal Revenue Service,

(B) Such request is withdrawn, or

(C) Such request is otherwise disposed of by the Internal Revenue Service. The rules contained in this subparagraph shall apply only if the sponsoring law firm of such pattern plan has, on or before December 31, 1976, filed a request for a notification letter with the Internal Revenue Service with respect to the initial or continuing qualification of the plan (or a trust which is part of the plan). The provisions of this paragraph (d)(2) apply to a pattern plan adopted to replace another plan even though the remedial amendment period applicable to the replaced plan has expired at the time of the adoption of the replacement plan.

(3) *Determination letter request by employer or plan adminstrator.* If on or before the end of a remedial amendment period determined without regard to this paragraph (d), or in a case to which paragraph (d) (1) or (2) of this section applies, on or before the 90th day following the later of the dates described in paragraph (d) (1) or (2) of this

section, the employer or plan administrator files a request pursuant to § 601.201(s) of this chapter (Statement of Procedural Rules) for a determination letter with respect to the initial or continuing qualification of the plan, or a trust which is part of such plan, such remedial amendment period shall be extended until the expiration of 91 days after:

(i) The date on which notice of the final determination with respect to such request for a determination letter is issued by the Internal Revenue Service, such request is withdrawn, or such request is otherwise finally disposed of by the Internal Revenue Service, or

(ii) If a petition is timely filed with the United States Tax Court for a declaratory judgment under section 7476 with respect to the final determination (or the failure of the Internal Revenue Service to make a final determination) in response to such request, the date on which the decision of the United States Tax Court in such proceeding becomes final.

(4) *Transitional rule.* In the case of a request for a determination letter described in and filed within the time prescribed in paragraph (d)(3) of this section with respect to which a final determination is issued by the Internal Revenue Service on or before September 28, 1976 the remedial amendment period described in paragraph (c) of this section shall not end prior to the expiration of 150 days beginning on the date of such final determination by the Internal Revenue Service.

(5) *Disqualifying provision prior to September 2, 1974.* If the remedial amendment period with respect to a disqualifying provision described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section began prior to September 2, 1974, and the provisions of subdivisions (i), (ii) and (iii) of this subparagraph are satisfied, the remedial amendment period described in paragraph (c) shall not end prior to December 31, 1976. This subparagraph shall apply only if—

(i) A request pursuant to § 601.201 of this chapter for a determination letter with respect to the initial or continuing qualification of the plan (or a trust which is part of the plan) was filed not later than the later of:

(A) The time prescribed by law, including extensions, for filing the income tax return (or partnership return of income) of the employer for the employer's taxable year in which falls the date on which the remedial amendment period began, or

(B) The date 6 months after the close of such taxable year,

(ii) The employer, either:

(A) While such request for a determination letter is or was under consideration by the Internal Revenue Service or,

(B) Promptly after the date on which notice of the final determination with respect to such request for a determination letter is issued by the Internal Revenue Service, such request is withdrawn, or such request is otherwise finally disposed of by the Internal Revenue Service, adopts or adopted either a plan amendment retroactive to the date on which the remedial amendment period began, or a prospective plan amendment, and

(iii) The amendment described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) of this section would have resulted in the plan's satisfying the requirements of section 401(a) of the Code from the beginning of the remedial amendment period to the date such amendment was made if this section had been in effect during such period, and in the case of a prospective amendment, if such amendment had been made retroactive to such beginning date.

(e) *Discretionary extensions.* At his discretion, the Commissioner may extend the remedial amendment period or may allow a particular plan to be amended after the expiration of its remedial amendment period and any applicable extension of such period. In determining whether such an extension will be granted, the Commissioner shall consider, among other factors, whether substantial hardship to the employer would result if such an extension were not granted, whether such an extension is in the best interest of plan participants, and whether the granting of the extension is adverse to the interests of the Government. The mere absence of final regulations with respect to issues covered under the Special Reliance Procedure announced by the Internal

Revenue Service in Technical Information Release 1416 on November 5, 1975, and as extended by Internal Revenue Service News Release IR–1616 on May 14, 1976, shall not be deemed to satisfy the criteria of this paragraph. With regard to a particular plan, a request for extension of time pursuant to this paragraph shall be submitted prior to the expiration of the remedial amendment period determined without regard to this paragraph, or within such time thereafter as the Internal Revenue Service may consider resonable under the circumstances. The request should be submitted to the appropriate District Director, determined under §601.201(s)(3)(xii) of this chapter (Statement of Procedural Rules). This subparagraph applies to disqualifying provisions that were adopted or became effective prior to September 2, 1974, as well as disqualifying provisions adopted or made effective on or after September 2, 1974.

(Secs. 401(b), 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 943, 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 401(b), 7805))

[T.D. 7437, 41 FR 42653, Sept. 28, 1976, as amended by T.D. 7896, 48 FR 23817, May 27,1983; T.D. 7997, 49 FR 50645, Dec. 31, 1984; T.D. 8217, 53 FR 29662, Aug. 8, 1988]

§1.401(e)–1 Definitions relating to plans covering self-employed individuals.

(a) *''Keogh'' or ''H.R. 10'' plans, in general*—(1) *Introduction and organization of regulations.* Certain self-employed individuals may be covered by a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan. This section contains definitions contained in section 401(c) relating to plans covering self-employed individuals and is applicable to employer taxable years beginning after December 31, 1975, unless otherwise specified.

The provisions of section 401(a) relating to qualification requirements which are generally applicable to all qualified plans, and other provisions relating to the special rules under section 401 (b), (f), (g), (h), and (i), are also generally applicable to any plan covering a self-employed individual. However, in addition to such requirements and special rules, any plan covering a self-employed individual is subject to the rules contained in §§1.401 (e)–2, (e)–5, and (j)–1 through (j)–5. Section 1.401(e)–2 contains general rules, §1.401(e)–5 contains a special rule limiting the contribution and benefit base to the first $100,000 of annual compensation, and §1.401 (j)–1 through (j)–5 contains special rules for defined benefit plans. Section 1.401(e)–3 contains special rules which are applicable to plans covering self-employed individuals when one or more of such individuals is an owner-employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(3). Section 1.401(e)–4 contains rules relating to contributions on behalf of owner-employees for premiums on annuity, etc., contracts and a transitional rule for certain excess contributions made on behalf of owner-employees for employer taxable years beginning before January 1, 1976. The provisions of this section and of §§1.401(e)–2 through 1.401(e)–5 are applicable to employer taxable years beginning after December 31, 1975, unless otherwise specified.

(2) [Reserved]

(b) [Reserved]

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47053, Aug. 10, 1979]

§1.401(e)–2 General rules relating to plans covering self-employed individuals.

(a) *''Keogh'' or ''H.R. 10'' plans; introduction and organization of regulations.* This section provides certain rules which supplement, and modify, the qualification requirements of section 401(a) and the special rules provided by §1.401(b)–1 and other special rules under subsections (f), (g), (h), and (i) of section 401 in the case of a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan which covers a self-employed individual who is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1). Section 1.401(e)–1(a)(1) sets forth other provisions which also supplement, and modify, these requirements and special rules in the case of a plan described in this section. The provisions of this section apply to employer taxable years beginning after December 31, 1975, unless otherwise specified.

(b) [Reserved]

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47053, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.401(e)–3 Requirements for qualification of trusts and plans benefiting owner-employees.

(a) *''Keogh'' or ''H.R. 10'' plans covering owner-employees; introduction and organization of regulations.* This section prescribes the additional requirements which must be met for qualification of a trust forming part of a pension or profit-sharing plan, or of an annuity plan, which covers any self-employed individual who is an owner-employee as defined in section 401(c)(3). These additional requirements are prescribed in section 401(d) and are made applicable to such a trust by section 401(a)(10)(B) and to an annuity plan by section 404(a)(2). However, to the extent that the provisions of §§ 1.401(e)–1 and 1.401(e)–2 are not modified by the provisions of this section such provisions are also applicable to a plan which covers an owner-employee. The provisions of this section apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 1975, unless otherwise specified.

(b) [Reserved]

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47053, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.401(e)–4 Contributions for premiums on annuity, etc., contracts and transitional rule for certain excess contributions.

(a) *In general.* The provisions of this section prescribe the rules specified in section 401(e) relating to certain contributions made under a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan on behalf of a self-employed individual who is an owner-employee (as defined in section 401(c)(3) and the regulations thereunder) in taxable years of the employer beginning after December 31, 1975. In addition, such plans are also subject to the limitations on contributions and benefits under section 415 for years beginning after December 31, 1975. However, the defined contribution compensation limitation described in section 415(c)(1)(B) will not apply to any contribution described in this section provided that the requirements specified in section 415(c)(7) and § 1.415–6(h) are satisfied. Solely for the purpose of applying section 4972(b) (relating to excise tax on excess contributions for self-employed individuals) to other contributions made by an owner-employee as an employee, the amount of any employer contribution which is not deductible under section 404 for the employer's taxable year but which is described in section 401(e) and this section shall be taken into account as a contribution made by such owner-employee as an employee during the taxable year of his employer in which such contribution is made.

(b) *Contributions described in section 401(e)*—(1) An employer contribution on behalf of an owner-employee is described in section 401(e), if—

(i) Under the provisions of the plan, the contribution is expressly required to be applied (either directly or through a trustee) to pay the premiums or other consideration for one or more annuity, endowment, or life insurance contracts on the life of the owner-employee.

(ii) The employer contributions so applied meet the requirements of subparagraphs (2) through (5) of this paragraph.

(iii) The amount of the contribution exceeds the amount deductible under section 404 with respect to contributions made by the employer on behalf of the owner-employee under the plan, and

(iv) The total employer contributions required to be applied annually to pay premiums on behalf of any owner-employee for contracts described in this paragraph do not exceed $7,500. For purposes of computing such $7,500 limit, the total employer contributions include amounts which are allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance.

(2)(i) The employer contributions must be paid under a plan which satisfies all the requirements for qualification. Accordingly, for example, contributions can be paid under the plan for life insurance protection only to the extent otherwise permitted under sections 401 through 404 and the regulations thereunder. However, certain of the requirements for qualification are modified with respect to a plan described in this paragraph (see section 401(a)(10)(A)(ii) and (d)(5)).

(ii) A plan described in this paragraph is not disqualified merely because a contribution is made on behalf of an owner-employee by his employer during a taxable year of the employer

for which the owner-employee has no earned income. On the other hand, a plan will fail to qualify if a contribution is made on behalf of an owner-employee which results in the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4) as modified by section 401(a)(10)(A)(ii).

(3) The employer contributions must be applied to pay premiums or other consideration for a contract issued on the life of the owner-employee. For purposes of this subparagraph, a contract is not issued on the life of an owner-employee unless all the proceeds which are, or may become, payable under the contract are payable directly, or through a trustee of a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), to the owner-employee or to the beneficiary named in the contract or under the plan. For example, a nontransferable face-amount certificate described in section 401(g) and the regulations thereunder is considered an annuity on the life of the owner-employee if the proceeds of such contract are payable only to the owner-employee or his beneficiary.

(4)(i) For any taxable year of the employer, the amount of contributions by the employer on behalf of the owner-employee which is applied to pay premiums under the contracts described in this paragraph must not exceed the average of the amounts deductible under section 404 by such employer on behalf of such owner-employee for the most recent three taxable years of the employer which are described in the succeeding sentence. The three employer taxable years described in the preceding sentence must be years, ending prior to the date the latest contract was entered into or modified to provide additional, benefits, in which the owner-employee derived earned income from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. However, if such owner-employee has not derived earned income for at least three taxable years preceding such date, then, in determining the ''average of the amounts deductible'', only so many of such taxable years as such owner-employee was engaged in such trade or business and derived earned income therefrom are taken into account.

(ii) For the purpose of making the computation described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the taxable years taken into account include those years in which the individual derived earned income from the trade or business but was not an owner-employee with respect to such trade or business. Furthermore, taxable years of the employer preceding the taxable year in which a qualified plan is established are taken into account.

(iii) For purposes of making the computations described in subdivisions (i) and (ii) of this subparagraph for any taxable year of the employer the average of the amounts deductible under section 404 by the employer on behalf of an owner-employee for the most recent three relevant taxable years of the employer shall be determined as if section 404, as in effect for the taxable year for which the computation is to be made, had been in effect for all three such years.

(5) For any taxable year of an employer in which contributions are made on behalf of an individual as an owner-employee under more than one plan, the amount of contributions described in this section by the employer on behalf of such an owner-employee under all such plans must not exceed $7,500.

(c) *Transitional rule for excess contributions*—(1)(i) The rules of this paragraph are inapplicable to a plan which was not in existence for any taxable year of an employer which begins before January 1, 1976. For taxable years of an employer which begin before January 1, 1976, the rules with respect to excess contributions on behalf of owner-employees set forth in section 401(d) (5) and (8) and in section 401(e), as these sections were in effect on September 1, 1974, prior to their amendment by section 2001(e) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (hereinafter in this paragraph referred to as the ''Act'') (88 Stat. 954), shall apply except as provided by subparagraph (2) of this paragraph. Section 1.401–13 generally provides the rules for excess contributions on behalf of owner-employees set forth in these sections.

(ii) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the rules set forth in such subsections

(d) (5) and (8) and (e) of section 401 with respect to excess contributions for such taxable years beginning before January 1, 1976, apply even though the application of those rules affects a subsequent taxable year. Thus, for example, if, in 1975, a nonwillful excess contribution described in section 401(e)(1) (prior to such amendment) is made on behalf of an owner-employee, the plan will not be qualified unless the provisions required by subparagraphs (A) and (B) of such 401(d)(8) are contained in the plan and made applicable to excess contributions made for such taxable years beginning before January 1, 1976. In such case, the effect of such contribution on the plan, the employer, and the owner-employee would be determined under paragraph (2) of section 401(e), as in effect on September 1, 1974. By reason of section 401(e)(2)(F), as in effect on September 1, 1974, the period for assessing any deficiency by reason of the excess contribution will not expire until the expiration of the 6-month period described in section 401(e)(2)(C), as in effect on September 1, 1974, even if the first day of such 6-month period falls in a taxable year beginning after December 31, 1975. For the rules applicable to a willful excess contribution, which generally divide an owner-employee's interest in a plan into two parts on the basis of employer taxable years beginning before and after December 31, 1975, see § 1.72–17A(e)(2)(v). In the case of a willful excess contribution, the rule specified in section 401(e)(2)(E)(iii), as in effect on September 1, 1974, shall not apply to any taxable year of an employer beginning on or after January 1, 1976. Thus, for example, if a willful excess contribution was made to a plan on behalf of an owner-employee with respect to his employer's taxable year beginning January 1, 1975, the plan would not meet, for purposes of section 404, the requirements of section 401(d) with respect to that owner-employee for such year, but the 5 taxable years following such year would be unaffected because those years begin on or after January 1, 1976.

(2)(i) For purposes of applying the excess contribution rules with respect to the employer taxable years specified in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph for such an employer taxable year which begins after December 31, 1973, see section 404(e) and § 1.404(e)–1A for rules increasing the limitation on the amount of allowable employer deductions on behalf of owner-employees under section 404. For purposes of applying subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 401(e)(1) prior to the amendment made by section 2001(e)(3) of the Act (88 Stat. 954), the employer deduction allowable by section 404(e)(4) with respect to an owner-employee in a defined contribution plan shall be deemed not to be an excess contribution (see § 1.404(e)–1A(c)(4)).

(ii) For purposes of applying the excess contribution rules with respect to the employer taxable years specified in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph to an employer's plan which was not in existence on January 1, 1974, or to a plan in existence on January 1, 1974, which elects under section 1017(d) of the Act (88 Stat. 934), in accordance with regulations, to have the funding provisions of section 412 apply to such an existing plan, see section 404 (a) (1), (a)(6), and (a)(7), as amended by section 1013(c)(1), (2), and (3) of the Act (88 Stat. 922 and 923) for rules modifying the amount of employer deductions on behalf of owner-employees.

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47053, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.401(e)–5 Limitation of contribution and benefit bases to first $100,000 of annual compensation in case of plans covering self-employed individuals.

(a) *General rules—General rule.* (1) Under section 401(a)(17), a plan maintained by an employer which provided contributions or benefits for employees some or all of whom are employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) is a qualified plan only if the annual compensation of each employee taken into account under the plan does not exceed the first $100,000 of such compensation. For purposes of applying section 401(a)(17) and the preceding sentence, all plans maintained by such an employer with respect to the same trade or business shall be treated as a single plan. See also sections 401(d)(9) and (10) (relating to controlled trades or businesses where a plan covers an owner-employee who controls more than one trade or business); section

404(e) (relating to special limitations for self-employed individuals); section 413(b)(7) (relating to determination of limitations provided by section 404(a) in the case of certain plans maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement); and section 413(c)(6) (relating to determination of limitations provided by section 404(a) in the case of certain plans maintained by more than one employer).

(2) *Special section 414(b), (c) rule.* This subparagraph (2) applies to plans maintained by employers that are trades or businesses (whether or not incorporated) that are under common control within the meaning of section 414(c). All such plans that are described in paragraph (a)(1) and § 1.401(e)–6(a) (so called ''Subchapter S plans'') shall be treated as a single plan in applying the limitation of paragraph (a)(1).

(b) *Integrated plans.* (1) In the case of a qualified plan, other than a plan described in section 414(j), which is integrated with the Social Security Act (chapter 21 of the Code), or with contributions or benefits under chapter 2 of the Code (relating to tax on self-employment income) or under any other Federal of State law, the $100,000 limitation described in subparagraph (a) shall be determined without regard to any adjustments to contributions or benefits under the plan on account of such integration. See also subsections (a)(5), (a)(15), and (d)(6) of section 401 and the regulations thereunder for other rules with respect to plans which are integrated.

(2) In the case of a qualified defined benefit plan described in section 414(j), see section 401(j)(4) for a special prohibition against integration.

(c) *Application of nondiscrimination requirement.* (1) This paragraph shall apply—

(i) In the case of a plan which provides contributions or benefits for employees some or all of whom are employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) and

(ii) For a year in which the compensation of any employee covered by the plan exceeds $100,000. In the case of an employee who is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), compensation includes earned income within the meaning of section 401(c)(2).

(2) In applying section 401(a)(4) under the circumstances described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the determination whether the rate of contributions or benefits under the plan discriminates in favor of highly compensated employees shall be made as if the compensation for the year of each employee described in the first sentence of subparagraph (1)(ii) of this paragraph were $100,000, rather than the compensation actually received by him for such year.

(d) *Examples.* The provisions of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A, a self-employed individual, has established the P Profit-Sharing Plan, which covers A and his two commonlaw employees, B and C. A's taxable year and the plan's plan year are both the calendar year. For 1976, A has earned income of $150,000, and B and C each receive compensation of less than $100,000 from A. If he wishes to contribute $7,500 to the plan on his behalf for 1976, A must also contribute to the accounts of B and C under the plan amounts at least equal to 7½ percent of their respective compensation for 1976.

Example (2). D, an owner-employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(3), is a participant in the Q Qualified Defined Contribution Plan, which, in 1975, satisfies the requirements of section 401(d)(6) and all other integration requirements applicable to qualified defined contribution plans. The taxable years of D, the employer of D within the meaning of section 401(c)(4), and the plan are all calendar years. The plan provides for an integration level of $13,200 and a contribution rate of 5 percent of compensation in excess of $13,200. For 1975, D has earned income of $115,000. The maximum amount of earned income upon which D's contribution can be determined is $86,800, and the contribution based upon this maximum amount of earned income is $4,340, computed as follows:

Maximum annual compensation which may be taken into account	$100,000
Less: Social Security Act integration level	13,200
Plan contribution base	$86,800
Multiplied by: Contribution rate (percent)	5
Total	$4,340

(e) *Years to which section applies.* This section applies to taxable years of an employer beginning after December 31, 1975. However, if employer contributions made under a plan for any employee for taxable years of an employer

beginning after December 31, 1973, exceed the amounts permitted to be deducted for that employee under section 404(e), as in effect on September 1, 1974, this section applies to such taxable years of an employer.

Thus, for example, a plan of a calendar year employer which was adopted on January 1, 1974, would be subject to this section in 1974, if the employer made a contribution on behalf of any employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) for such year in excess of the $2,500 or 10 percent earned income limit, whichever is applicable to that employee, specified in section 404(e)(1) as in effect prior to the amendment to such Code section made by section 2001(a)(1)(A) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 952). The plan described in the proceeding sentence would also be subject to this section in 1974, if the employer made a contribution on behalf of any employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) which is allowable as a deduction only because of the addition of paragraph (4) to Code section 404(e) made by section 2001(a)(3) of such Act (88 Stat. 952).

(b) [Reserved]

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47055, Aug. 10, 1979; T.D. 7636, 60 FR 21435, May 2, 1995]

§ 1.401(e)–6 Special rules for shareholder-employees.

(a) *Limitation of contributions and benefit bases to first $100,000 of annual compensation in case of plans covering shareholder-employees.* (1) Under section 401(a)(17), a plan which provides contributions or benefits for employees, some or all of whom are shareholder-employees within the meaning of section 1379(d), is subject to the same limitation on annual compensation as a plan which provides such contributions or benefits for employees some or all of whom are self-employed individuals within the meaning of section 401(c)(1). Thus, a plan which provides contributions or benefits for such shareholder-employees is subject to the rules provided by § 1.401(e)–5, unless otherwise specified. See also section 1379. In the case of plans maintained by employers that are corporations described in section 414(b) and that are described in this subparagraph (1), the same rule described in § 1.401(e)–5(a)(2) shall apply.

(2) Subparagraph (1) applies to taxable years of an electing small business corporation beginning after December 31, 1975. However, if corporate contributions made under a plan on behalf of any shareholder-employee for corporate taxable years beginning after December 31, 1973, exceed the lesser of the amount of contributions specified in section 1379(b)(1) (A) or (B), as in effect on September 1, 1974, for that shareholder-employee, subparagraph (1) applies to such corporate taxable years. Thus, for example if an electing small business corporation whose taxable year is the calendar year adopted a plan on January 1, 1974, the plan would be subject to the provisions of subparagraph (1) of this section in 1974, if the corporation made a contribution in excess of $2,500 on behalf of any shareholder-employee for such year.

(b) [Reserved]

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47056, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.401(f)–1 Certain custodial accounts and annuity contracts.

(a) *Treatment of a custodial account or an annuity contract as a qualified trust.* Beginning on January 1, 1974, a custodial account or an annuity contract may be used, in lieu of a trust, under any qualified pension, profitsharing, or stock bonus plan if the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are met. A custodial account or an annuity contract may be used under such a plan, whether the plan covers common-law employees, self-employed individuals who are treated as employees by reason of section 401(c), or both. The use of a custodial account or annuity contract as part of a plan does not preclude the use of a trust or another custodial account or another annuity contract as part of the same plan. A plan under which a custodial account or an annuity contract is used may be considered in connection with other plans of the employer in determining whether the requirements of section 401 are satisfied. For regulations relating to the period before January 1, 1974, see § 1.401–8.

(b) *Rules applicable to custodial accounts and annuity contracts.* (1) Beginning on January 1, 1974, a custodial account or an annuity contract is treated

as a qualified trust under section 401 if the following requirements are met:

(i) The custodial account or annuity contract would, except for that fact that it is not a trust, constitute a qualified trust under section 401; and

(ii) In the case of a custodial account, the custodian either is a bank or is another person who demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the Commissioner, that the manner in which he will hold the assets will be consistent with the requirements of section 401. This demonstration must be made in the same manner as the demonstration required by § 1.408–2(e).

(2) If a custodial account would, except for the fact that it is not a trust, constitute a qualified trust under section 401, it must, for example, be created pursuant to a written agreement which constitutes a valid contract under local law. In addition, the terms of the contract must make it impossible, prior to the satisfaction of all liabilities with respect to the employees and their beneficiaries covered by the plan. For any part of the funds of the custodial account to be used for, or diverted to, purposes other than for the exclusive benefit of the employees or their beneficiaries as provided for in the plan (see paragraph (a) of § 1.401–2).

(3) An annuity contract would, except for the fact that it is not a trust, constitute a qualified trust under section 401 if it is purchased by an employer for an employee under a plan which meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2) and the regulations thereunder, except that the plan may be either a pension or a profit-sharing plan.

(c) *Effect of this section.* (1)(i) Any custodial account or annuity contract which satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section is treated as a qualified trust for all purposes of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Such a custodial account or annuity contract is treated as a separate legal person which is exempt from the income tax under section 501(a). In addition, the person holding the assets of such account or holding such contract is treated as the trustee thereof. Accordingly, such person is required to file the returns described in sections 6033 and 6047 and to supply any other information which the trustee of a qualified trust is required to furnish.

(ii) Any procedure which has the effect of merely substituting one custodian for another shall not be considered as terminating or interrupting the legal existence of a custodial account which otherwise satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section.

(2)(i) The beneficiary of a custodial account which satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section is taxed in accordance with section 402. In determining whether the funds of a custodial account are distributed or made available to an employee or his beneficiary, the rules which under section 402(a) are applicable to trusts will also apply to the custodial account as though it were a separate legal person and not an agent of the employee.

(ii) If a custodial account which has qualified under section 401 fails to qualify under such section for any taxable year, such custodial account will not thereafter be treated as a separate legal person, and the funds in such account shall be treated as made available within the meaning of section 402(a)(1) to the employees for whom they are held.

(3) The beneficiary of an annuity contract which satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section is taxed as if he were the beneficiary of an annuity contract described in section 403(a).

(d) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section—

(1) The term *bank* means a bank as defined in section 408(n).

(2) The term *annuity* means an annuity as defined in section 401(g). Thus, any contract or certificate issued after December 31, 1962, which is transferable is not treated as a qualified trust under this section.

(e) *Other contracts.* For purposes of this section, other than the non-transferability restriction of paragraph (d)(2), a contract issued by an insurance company qualified to do business in a state shall be treated as an annuity contract. For purposes of the preceding sentence, the contract does not include a life, health or accident, property, casualty or liability insurance contract. For purposes of this paragraph, a contract which is issued by an

insurance company will not be considered a life insurance contract merely because the contract provides incidental life insurance protection. The provisions of this paragraph are effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1975.

(f) *Cross reference.* For the requirement that the assets of an employee benefit plan be placed in trust, and exceptions thereto, see section 403 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, 29 U.S.C. 1103, and the regulations prescribed thereunder by the Secretary of Labor.

(Secs. 401(f)(2), 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 939 and 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 401(f)(2), 7805))

[43 FR 41204, Sept. 15, 1978. Redesignated and amended by T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1695–1696, Jan. 7, 1981; T.D. 8635, 60 FR 65549, Dec. 20, 1995]

§ 1.401(k)–0 Certain cash or deferred arrangements, table of contents.

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(B) Nondiscrimination requirement.

(3) Elective contributions.
(4) Eligible employee.
(i) General rule.
(ii) Certain one-time elections.
(5) Employee.
(6) Employer.
(7) Excess contributions and excess deferrals.
(i) Excess contributions.
(ii) Excess deferrals.
(8) Highly compensated employees.
(i) Plan years beginning after December 31, 1986.
(ii) Plan years beginning after December 31, 1979 and before January 1, 1987.
(9) Matching contributions.
(10) Nonelective contributions.
(11) Plan.
(i) Application of section 410(b) rules.
(ii) Modifications to section 410(b) rules.
(A) In general.
(B) Plans benefiting collective bargaining unit employees.
(C) Multiemployer plans.
(12) Pre-ERISA money purchase pension plan.
(13) Qualified matching contributions and qualified nonelective contributions.
(i) Qualified matching contributions.
(ii) Qualified nonelective contributions.
(iii) Additional requirements.
(14) Rural cooperative plan.
(15) Section 401(k) plan.
(16) Section 401(m) plan.
(h) Effective dates.
(1) General rule.
(2) Collectively bargained plans.
(3) Transition rules.
(i) Cash or deferred arrangements in existence on June 27, 1974.
(ii) Plan years beginning after December 31, 1979, and before January 1, 1992.
(iii) Restructuring.
(A) General rule.
(B) Identification of component plans.
(*1*) Minimum coverage requirement.
(*2*) Commonality requirement.
(4) State and local government plans.
(i) Plans adopted before May 6, 1986.
(ii) Plan years beginning before January 1, 1996.
(iii) Collectively bargained plans.

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§ 1.401(k)–1 Certain cash or deferred arrangements.

(a) *General rules*—(1) *Certain plans permitted to include cash or deferred arrangements.* A plan, other than a profit-sharing, stock bonus, pre-ERISA money purchase pension or rural cooperative plan, does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) if the plan includes a cash or deferred arrangement. A profit-sharing, stock bonus, pre-ERISA money purchase pension, or rural cooperative plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) merely because the plan includes a cash or deferred arrangement. A cash or deferred arrangement is part of a plan for purposes of this section if any contributions to the plan, or accruals or other benefits under the plan, are made or provided pursuant to the cash or deferred arrangement.

(2) *Rules applicable to cash or deferred arrangements generally*—(i) *Definition of cash or deferred arrangement.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement is an arrangement under which an eligible employee may make a cash or deferred election with respect to contributions to, or accruals or other benefits under, a plan that is intended to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) (including a contract that is intended to satisfy the requirements of section 403(a)).

(ii) *Treatment of after-tax employee contributions.* A cash or deferred arrangement does not include an arrangement under which amounts contributed under a plan at an employee's election are designated or treated at the time of contribution as after-tax employee contributions (e.g., by reporting the contributions as taxable income subject to applicable withholding requirements). See also section 414(h)(1). This is the case even if the employee's election to make after-tax employee contributions is made before the amounts subject to the election are currently available to the employee.

(iii) *Treatment of elective contributions as plan assets.* The extent to which elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement constitute plan assets for purposes of the prohibited transaction provisions of section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code and title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is determined in accordance with regulations and rulings issued by the Department of Labor.

(3) *Rules applicable to cash or deferred elections generally*—(i) *Definition of cash or deferred election.* A cash or deferred

election is any election (or modification of an earlier election) by an employee to have the employer either—

(A) Provide an amount to the employee in the form of cash or some other taxable benefit that is not currently available, or

(B) Contribute an amount to a trust, or provide an accrual or other benefit, under a plan deferring the receipt of compensation.

A cash or deferred election includes a salary reduction agreement between an employee and employer under which a contribution is made under a plan only if the employee elects to reduce cash compensation or to forgo an increase in cash compensation.

(ii) *Requirement that amounts not be currently available.* A cash or deferred election can only be made with respect to an amount that is not currently available to the employee on the date of the election. Further, a cash or deferred election can only be made with respect to amounts that would (but for the cash or deferred election) become currently available after the later of the date on which the employer adopts the cash or deferred arrangement or the date on which the arrangement first becomes effective.

(iii) *Amounts currently available.* Cash or another taxable amount is currently available to the employee if it has been paid to the employee or if the employee is able currently to receive the cash or other taxable amount at the employee's discretion. An amount is not currently available to an employee if there is a significant limitation or restriction on the employee's right to receive the amount currently. Similarly, an amount is not currently available as of a date if the employee may under no circumstances receive the amount before a particular time in the future. The determination of whether an amount is currently available to an employee does not depend on whether it has been constructively received by the employee for purposes of section 451.

(iv) *Certain one-time elections not treated as cash or deferred elections.* A cash or deferred election does not include a one-time irrevocable election upon an employee's commencement of employment with the employer or upon the employee's first becoming eligible under any plan of the employer, to have contributions equal to a specified amount or percentage of the employee's compensation (including no amount of compensation) made by the employer on the employee's behalf to the plan and to any other plan of the employer (including plans not yet established) for the duration of the employee's employment with the employer, or in the case of a defined benefit plan to receive accruals or other benefits (including no benefits) under such plans. Thus, for example, employer contributions pursuant to a one-time irrevocable election described in this paragraph are not treated as having been made pursuant to a cash or deferred election and are not includible in an employee's gross income by reason of § 1.402(a)–1(d). In no event is an election made after December 23, 1994 treated as one-time irrevocable election under this paragraph if the election is made by an employee who previously became eligible under another plan (whether or not terminated) of the employer. See paragraph (a)(6)(ii)(C) of this section for an additional one-time election permitted under a cash or deferred arrangement in which partners may participate.

(v) *Tax treatment of employees.* An amount generally is includible in an employee's gross income for the taxable year in which the employee actually or constructively receives the amount. But for section 402(e)(3) and section 401(k), an employee is treated as having received an amount that is contributed to a plan pursuant to the employee's cash or deferred election. This is the case even if the election to defer is made before the year in which the amount is earned, or before the amount is currently available. See § 1.402(a)–1(d).

(vi) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (a)(3) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. An employer maintains a profit-sharing plan under which each eligible employee has an election to defer an annual bonus payable on January 30 each year. The bonus equals 10 percent of compensation during the previous calendar year. Deferred amounts are not treated as after-tax employee contributions. The bonus is currently available on January 30. An election made

prior to January 30 to defer all or part of the bonus is a cash or deferred election, and the bonus deferral arrangement is a cash or deferred arrangement.

Example 2. An employer maintains a profit-sharing plan under which each eligible employee may elect to defer up to 10 percent of compensation for each payroll period during the plan year. An election to defer compensation for a payroll period is a cash or deferred election if the election is made prior to the date on which the compensation is to be paid to the employee and if the deferred amount is not treated as an after-tax employee contribution at the time of deferral.

Example 3. (i) Employer A establishes a qualified money purchase pension plan in 1986. This is the first qualified plan established by Employer A. All salaried employees are eligible to participate under the plan. Hourly-paid employees are not eligible to participate under the plan. In 1996, Employer A establishes a profit-sharing plan under which all employees (both salaried and hourly) are eligible. Employer A permits all employees on the effective date of the profit-sharing plan to make a one-time irrevocable election to have Employer A contribute five percent of compensation on their behalf to the plan and to any other plan of Employer A (including plans not yet established) for the duration of the employee's employment with Employer A, and have their salaries reduced by five percent.

(ii) The election provided under the profit-sharing plan is not a one-time irrevocable election within the meaning of §1.401(k)–1(a)(3)(iv) with respect to the salaried employees of Employer A who, at any time before becoming eligible to participate under the profit-sharing plan, became eligible to participate under the money purchase pension plan. The election under the profit-sharing plan is a one-time irrevocable election within the meaning of §1.401(k)– 1(a)(3)(iv) with respect to the hourly employees, because they were not previously eligible to participate under another plan of the employer.

(4) *Rules applicable to qualified cash or deferred arrangements*—(i) *Definition of qualified cash or deferred arrangement.* A qualified cash or deferred arrangement is a cash or deferred arrangement that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (b), (c), (d), and (e) of this section and that is part of a plan that otherwise satisfies the requirements of section 401(a).

(ii) *Treatment of elective contributions as employer contributions.* Except as provided in paragraph (f) of this section, elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement are treated as employer contributions. Thus, for example, elective contributions are treated as employer contributions for purposes of sections 401(a) and 401(k), 402, 404, 409, 411, 412, 415, 416, and 417.

(iii) *Tax treatment of employees.* Except as provided in section 402(g) and paragraph (f) of this section, elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement are neither includible in an employee's gross income at the time the cash or other taxable amounts would have been includible in the employee's gross income (but for the cash or deferred election), nor at the time the elective contributions are contributed to the plan. See §1.402(a)–1(d)(2)(i).

(iv) *Application of nondiscrimination requirements to plan that includes a qualified cash or deferred arrangement.* A plan that includes a qualified cash or deferred arrangement must satisfy the requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b). Thus, for example, the plan must satisfy section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits and the availability of benefits, rights and features under the plan. See §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(3). The right to make each level of elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement is a benefit, right or feature subject to this requirement, and each of these rights must therefore generally be available to a group of employees that satisfies section 410(b). See §1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(3)(i) and (iii)(D). Thus, for example, if all employees are eligible to make a stated level of elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement, but that level of contributions can only be made from compensation in excess of a stated amount, such as the Social Security taxable wage base, the arrangement will generally favor highly compensated employees with respect to the availability of elective contributions and thus will generally not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4). For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the amount of elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4) only if the amount of elective contributions satisfies the special nondiscrimination test of section 401(k)(3) and paragraph (b)(2) of this

section. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B). See also § 1.401(a)(4)– 11(g)(3)(vii)(A), relating to corrective amendments that may be made to satisfy the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b).

(5) *Rules applicable to nonqualified cash or deferred arrangements*—(i) *Definition of nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement.* A nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement is a cash or deferred arrangement that is not a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. Thus, if a cash or deferred arrangement fails to satisfy one or more of the requirements in paragraph (b), (c), (d) or (e) of this section, the arrangement is a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement.

(ii) *Treatment of elective contributions as employer contributions.* Except as specifically provided otherwise, elective contributions under a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement are treated as nonelective employer contributions. Thus, for example, the elective contributions are treated as nonelective employer contributions for purposes of sections 401(a) (including section 401(a)(4)) and 401(k), 404, 409, 411, 412, 415, 416, and 417 and are not subject to the requirements of section 401(m).

(iii) *Tax treatment of employees.* Elective contributions under a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement are includible in an employee's gross income at the time the cash or other taxable amount that the employee would have received (but for the cash or deferred election) would have been includible in the employee's gross income. See § 1.402(a)–1(d)(1).

(iv) *Qualification of plan that includes a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement.* A profit-sharing, stock bonus, pre-ERISA money purchase pension, or rural cooperative plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) merely because the plan includes a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement. In determining whether the plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4), the special nondiscrimination tests of sections 401(k)(3) and 401(m)(2) may not be used. See §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B) and 1.410(b)–9 (definition of section 401(k) plan).

(6) *Rules applicable to partnership cash or deferred arrangements*—(i) *Application of general rules.* A partnership may maintain a cash or deferred arrangement, and individual partners may make cash or deferred elections with respect to compensation attributable to services rendered to the partnership. Generally, the same rules apply to partnership cash or deferred arrangements as apply to other cash or deferred arrangements. Thus, a partnership cash or deferred arrangement is not a qualified cash or deferred arrangement unless the requirements of section 401(k) and this section are satisfied. For example, any contributions made on behalf of an individual partner pursuant to a partnership cash or deferred arrangement are elective contributions unless they are designated or treated as after-tax employee contributions. Consistent with § 1.402(a)–1(d), the elective contributions are includible in income and are not deductible under section 404(a) unless the arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. Also, even if the arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement, the elective contributions are includible in gross income and are not deductible under section 404(a) to the extent they exceed the applicable limit under section 402(g). See also § 1.401(a)–30.

(ii) *Definition of partnership cash or deferred arrangement*—(A) *General rule.* Effective for contributions made for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, a cash or deferred arrangement includes any arrangement that directly or indirectly permits individual partners to vary the amount of contributions made on their behalf.

(B) *Timing of partner's cash or deferred election.* For purposes of paragraph (a)(3)(ii) of this section, a partner's compensation is deemed currently available on the last day of the partnership taxable year. Accordingly, an individual partner may not make a cash or deferred election with respect to compensation for a partnership taxable year after the last day of that year. A partner's compensation for a partnership taxable year ending with or within a plan year beginning before January 1, 1992, is, however, deemed not to be currently available until the

due date, including extensions, for filing the partnership's federal income tax return for its taxable year ending with or within the plan year. See § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(iii) for the rules regarding when contributions are treated as allocated.

(C) *Transition rule for partnership cash or deferred elections.* A one-time irrevocable election to participate or not to participate in a plan in which partners may participate is not a cash or deferred election if the election was made on or before the later of the first day of the first plan year beginning after December 31, 1988, or March 31, 1989. This election may be made after the commencement of employment or after the employee's first becoming eligible under any plan of the employer. In no event, however, may the election be made after December 23, 1994. The election may be made even if the one-time irrevocable election in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(3)(iv) was previously made.

(iii) *Treatment of certain matching contributions as elective contributions.* If a partnership makes matching contributions with respect to an individual partner's elective contributions or employee contributions, then the matching contributions are treated as elective contributions made on behalf of the partner. In the case of a plan that, on August 8, 1988, did not treat matching contributions as elective contributions, the preceding sentence applies only to plan years beginning after August 8, 1988. See also §§ 1.401(m)–1(f)(12) and 1.404(e)–1A(f).

(7) *Rules applicable to collectively bargained plans*—(i) *In general.* The amount of employer contributions under a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement is treated as satisfying section 401(a)(4) if the arrangement is part of a collectively bargained plan (including a plan adopted by a state or local government before May 6, 1986) that automatically satisfies the requirements of section 410(b). See §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(5) and 1.410(b)–2(b)(7). Except as specifically provided otherwise, elective contributions under the arrangement are treated as employer contributions. See § 1.401(k)–1(a)(5)(ii). However, elective contributions under the nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement are treated as employee contributions for purposes of section 402(a) for plan years beginning after December 31, 1992, and are therefore not excludable from gross income under section 402(e)(3). See § 1.402(a)–1(d)(3)(iv).

(ii) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph (a)(7) are illustrated by the following example:

Example. For the 1994 plan year, Employer A maintains a collectively bargained plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Employer contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement not satisfy the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) and paragraph (b) of this section. Therefore, the arrangement is a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement. The employer contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement are considered to be nondiscriminatory under section 401(a)(4), and the elective contributions are generally treated as employer contributions. Under § 1.402(a)–1(d)(1), however, elective contributions are includible in an employee's gross income.

(b) *Coverage and nondiscrimination requirements*—(1) *In general.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (b) for a plan year only if:

(i) The group of eligible employees under the section 401(k) plan and the group of employees benefiting under the plan to which the nonelective employer contributions are made separately satisfy the requirements of section 410(b) (including the average benefit percentage test, if applicable). For special rules governing the application of section 410(b) to a cash or deferred arrangement, see §§ 1.410(b)–7(c)(1) and 1.410(b)–8(a)(1). See also § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii)(A), relating to corrective amendments that may be made to satisfy the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b).

(ii) The cash or deferred arrangement satisfies the actual deferral percentage test described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. This is the exclusive nondiscrimination test applicable to the amount of elective contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B).

(2) *Actual deferral percentage test*—(i) *General rule.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (b) for a plan year only if:

(A) The actual deferral percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees is not more than the actual deferral percentage for the group of all other eligible employees multiplied by 1.25; or

(B) The excess of the actual deferral percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees over the actual deferral percentage for the group of all other eligible employees is not more than two percentage points, and the actual deferral percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees is not more than the actual deferral percentage for the group of all other eligible employees multiplied by two.

An arrangement does not fail to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (b)(2) merely because all of the eligible employees under an arrangement for a year are highly compensated employees.

(ii) *Rule for plan years beginning after 1979 and before 1987.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1979, and before January 1, 1987, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (b) for a plan year only if:

(A) The actual deferral percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees (top one-third) is not more than the actual deferral percentage for the group of all other eligible employees (lower two-thirds) multiplied by 1.5; or

(B) The excess of the actual deferral percentage for the top one-third over the actual deferral percentage for the lower two-thirds is not more than three percentage points, and the actual deferral percentage for the top one-third is not more than the actual deferral percentage for the lower two-thirds multiplied by 2.5.

(iii) *Plan provision requirement.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) unless it provides that the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) will be met. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(2)(iii), the plan may incorporate by reference the provisions of section 401(k)(3), this paragraph (b), and if applicable, section 401(m)(9) and § 1.401(m)–2.

(3) *Aggregation*—(i) *Aggregation of arrangements and plans.* Except as otherwise specifically provided in this paragraph (b)(3), all cash or deferred arrangements included in a plan are treated as a single cash or deferred arrangement. Thus, for example, if two groups of employees are eligible for separate cash or deferred arrangements under the same plan, the two cash or deferred arrangements are treated as a single cash or deferred arrangement, even if they have significantly different features, such as significantly different limits on elective contributions. See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(11) for the definition of plan used for purposes of this section. That definition contains the exclusive rules for aggregation and disaggregation of plans for purposes of this section. See also paragraph (g)(1)(ii) of this section for rules requiring the aggregation of elective contributions under two or more plans in computing the actual deferral ratios of certain employees.

(ii) *Restructuring and Permissive Aggregation.* Effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1991, restructuring under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c) may not be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of section 401(k). See § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c)(3)(ii). For plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, see § 1.401(k)– 1(h)(3)(iii). An employer may, however, treat a plan benefiting otherwise excludable employees as two separate plans for purposes of sections 401(k) and 410(b) in accordance with §§ 1.410(b)–6(b)(3) and 1.410(b)–7(c)(3).

(4) *Elective contributions taken into account under the actual deferral percentage test*—(i) *General rule.* An elective contribution is taken into account under paragraph (b)(2) of this section for a plan year only if each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) The elective contribution is allocated to the employee's account under the plan as of a date within that plan year. For purposes of this rule, an elective contribution is considered allocated as of a date within a plan year only if—

(*1*) The allocation is not contingent upon the employee's participation in the plan or performance of services on any date subsequent to that date, and

(*2*) The elective contribution is actually paid to the trust no later than the end of the 12-month period immediately following the plan year to which the contribution relates.

(B) The elective contribution relates to compensation that either—

(*1*) Would have been received by the employee in the plan year but for the employee's election to defer under the arrangement, or

(*2*) Is attributable to services performed by the employee in the plan year and, but for the employee's election to defer, would have been received by the employee within two and one-half months after the close of the plan year.

(ii) *Elective contributions and qualified nonelective contributions used to satisfy actual contribution percentage test.* Except as provided in § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5)(iii), elective contributions treated as matching contributions must satisfy the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2) and are not taken into account under paragraph (b)(2) of this section. A qualified nonelective contribution that is treated as a matching contribution is subject to the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2) and is not taken into account as an elective contribution under paragraph (b)(2) or (5) of this section.

(iii) *Elective contributions for partners.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, a partner's distributive share of partnership income is treated as received on the last day of the partnership taxable year. Thus, an elective contribution made on behalf of a partner is treated as allocated to the partner's account for the plan year that includes the last day of the partnership taxable year, provided the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(i)(A) of this section are met.

(iv) *Elective contributions not taken into account.* Elective contributions that do not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section may not use the special nondiscrimination rule of section 401(k)(3) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section for the plan year with respect to which the contributions were made, or for any other plan year. Instead, the amount of the elective contributions must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4) (without regard to the special nondiscrimination test in section 401(k)(3) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section) for the plan year in which they are allocated under the plan as if they were nonelective employer contributions and were the only nonelective employer contributions for the year. See §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B); 1.410(b)–7(c)(1).

(5) *Qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions that may be taken into account under the actual deferral percentage test.* Except as specifically provided otherwise, for purposes of paragraph (b)(2) of this section, all or part of the qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions made with respect to any or all employees who are eligible employees under the cash or deferred arrangement being tested may be treated as elective contributions under the arrangement, provided that each of the following requirements (to the extent applicable) is satisfied:

(i) The amount of nonelective contributions, including those qualified nonelective contributions treated as elective contributions for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test, satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2).

(ii) The amount of nonelective contributions, excluding those qualified nonelective contributions treated as elective contributions for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test and those qualified nonelective contributions treated as matching contributions under § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5) for purposes of the actual contribution percentage test, satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2).

(iii) For plan years beginning before January 1, 1987, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, the matching contributions, including those qualified matching contributions treated as elective contributions for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test, satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4).

(iv) For plan years beginning before January 1, 1987, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, the matching contributions, excluding those qualified matching contributions treated as elective contributions for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test, satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4).

(v) The qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(i)(A) of this section for the plan year as if the contributions were elective contributions.

(vi) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, the section 401(k) plan and the plan or plans to which the qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions are made, could be aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(d) after application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c), as modified in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(11). If the plan year of the section 401(k) plan is changed to satisfy the requirement under § 1.410(b)–7(d)(5) that aggregated plans have the same plan year, the qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions may be taken into account in the resulting short plan year only if the contributions satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(4)(i) of this section with respect to the short year as if the contributions were elective contributions and the aggregated plans could otherwise be aggregated for purposes of section 410(b).

(6) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (b) are illustrated by the following examples.

Example 1. (i) Employees A, B, and C are eligible employees who earn $30,000, $15,000, and $10,000, respectively, in 1989. ln addition, their employer, X, contributes a bonus of up to 10 percent of their regular compensation to a trust under a profit-sharing plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Under the arrangement, each eligible employee may elect to receive none, all, or any part of the 10 percent in cash. The employer contributes the remainder to the trust. The cash portion of the bonus, if any, is paid after the end of the plan year. The 10 percent is therefore not included in compensation until the year paid. Employee A is highly compensated. For the 1989 plan year, A, B, and C make the following elections:

Employee	Compensation	Elective contribution
A	$30,000	$1,780
B	15,000	750
C	10,000	450

(ii) The ratios of employer contributions to the trust on behalf of each eligible employee to the employee's compensation for the plan year (calculated separately for each employee) are:

Employee	Ratio of elective contribution to compensation	Actual deferral ratio (percent)
A	$1,780/30,000	5.93
B	750/15,000	5.00
C	450/10,000	4.50

(iii) The actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated group (Employee A) is 5.93 percent. The actual deferral percentage for the nonhighly compensated group is 4.75 percent ((5%+4.5%)/2)). Because 5.93 percent is less than 5.94 percent (4.75% multiplied by 1.25), the first percentage test is satisfied.

Example 2. (i) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that elective contributions are made pursuant to a salary reduction agreement and no bonuses are paid. Employer X includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). In addition, A defers $2,025. Thus, the compensation and elective contributions for A, B, and C are:

Employee	Compensation	Elective contributions	Actual deferral ratio (percent)
A	$30,000	$2,025	6.75
B	15,000	750	5.00
C	10,000	450	4.50

(ii) The actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated group (Employee A) is 6.75 percent. The actual deferral percentage for the nonhighly compensated group is 4.75 percent ((5.00%+4.50%)/2). Because 6.75 percent exceeds 5.94 percent (4.75×1.25), the first percentage test is not satisfied. However, since the actual deferral percentage equals the maximum percentage allowed under the second percentage test, (4.75+2=6.75), the second percentage test is satisfied.

Example 3. (i) Employees D through L are eligible employees in Employer A's profit-sharing plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement. Employer A includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). Each eligible employee may elect to defer up to six percent of compensation under the cash or deferred arrangement. Employees D and E are highly compensated. The compensation, elective contributions, and actual deferral ratios of these employees for the 1989 plan year are shown below:

Employee	Compensation	Elective contributions	Actual deferral ratio (percent)
D	$100,000	$6,000	6
E	80,000	4,000	5
F	60,000	3,600	6
G	40,000	1,600	4
H	30,000	1,200	4
I	20,000	600	3
J	20,000	600	3
K	10,000	300	3
L	5,000	150	3

(ii) The actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated group is 5.5 percent. The actual deferral percentage for the nonhighly compensated group is 3.71 percent. Because 5.5 percent is greater than 4.64 percent (3.71%×1.25), the first percentage test is not satisfied. However, because 5.5 percent is less than 5.71 percent (the lesser of 3.71%+2 or 3.71%×2), the second percentage test is satisfied.

Example 4. (i) Employer D maintains a profit-sharing plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement. Employer D includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under §1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). The following amounts are contributed under the plan:

(A) Six percent of each employee's compensation. These contributions are not qualified nonelective contributions (QNCs).

(B) Two percent of each employee's compensation. These contributions are QNCs.

(C) Three percent of each employee's compensation that the employee may elect to receive as cash or to defer under the plan.

(ii) For the 1990 plan year, the compensation, elective contributions, and actual deferral ratios of employees M through S were:

Employee	Compensation	Elective contributions	Actual deferral ratio (percent)
M	$100,000	$3,000	3
N	80,000	1,600	2
O	60,000	1,800	3
P	40,000	0	0
Q	30,000	0	0
R	20,000	0	0
S	20,000	0	0

(iii) Both types of nonelective contributions are made for all employees. Thus, both the six percent and the two percent employer contributions satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4) and paragraph (b)(5)(i) of this section.

(iv) The elective contributions alone do not satisfy the special rules in paragraph (b)(4) of this section because the actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated group, consisting of employees M and N, is 2.5 percent and the actual deferral percentage for the nonhighly compensated group is 0.6 percent. However, the two percent QNCs may be taken into account in applying the special rules. The six percent nonelective contributions may not be taken into account because they are not QNCs.

(v) If the two percent QNCs are taken into account, the actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated group is 4.5 percent, and the actual deferral percentage for the nonhighly compensated group is 2.6 percent. Because 4.5 percent is not more than two percentage points greater than 2.6 percent, and not more than two times 2.6, the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section is satisfied. Thus, the plan satisfies this paragraph (b).

Example 5. (i) Employer N maintains a plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement. The plan year and the employer's taxable year are the calendar year. The plan provides for employee contributions, elective contributions, matching contributions, and qualified nonelective contributions (QNCs), all of which meet the applicable requirements of section 401(a)(4). Matching contributions on behalf of nonhighly compensated employees are qualified matching contributions (QMACs). Matching contributions on behalf of highly compensated employees are not QMACs. For the 1988 plan year, elective contributions and matching contributions with respect to highly compensated and nonhighly compensated employees are shown in the following chart.

	Elective contributions (including QNCs) (percent)	Total matching contributions (percent)	QMACs (percent)
Highly compensated	15	5	0
Nonhighly compensated	11	5	5

(ii) The plan fails to meet the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A) because 15 percent is more than 125 percent of, and more than two percentage points greater than, 11 percent. However, the plan provides that QMACs may be used to meet the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii) to the extent needed under that section. Under this provision, the plan takes QMACs of one percent of compensation into account for each nonhighly compensated employee in applying the actual deferral percentage test. After this adjustment, the actual deferral and actual contribution percentages are as follows:

	Actual deferral percentage	Actual contribution percentage
Highly compensated	15	5
Nonhighly compensated	12	4

(iii) The elective contributions and QMACs taken into account under section 401(k) meet the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii)

because 15 percent is 125 percent of 12 percent. The remaining matching contributions meet the requirements of section 401(m) because five percent is 125 percent of four percent.

(c) *Nonforfeitability requirement*—(1) *General rule.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (c) only if the elective contributions meet each of the following requirements:

(i) Each employee's right to the amount attributable to elective contributions is immediately nonforfeitable within the meaning of section 411, and would be nonforfeitable under the plan regardless of the age and service of the employee or whether the employee is employed on a specific date. A contribution that is subject to forfeitures or suspensions permitted by section 411(a)(3) does not satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (c).

(ii) The contributions are disregarded for purposes of applying section 411(a) to other contributions or benefits.

(iii) The contributions remain nonforfeitable even if the employee makes no additional elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement.

(2) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph (c) are illustrated by the following example:

Example. (i) Employees B and C are covered by Employer Y's stock bonus plan, which includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Under the plan, Employer Y makes a nonelective contribution on behalf of each employee equal to four percent of compensation. All employees participating in the plan have a nonforfeitable right to a percentage of their accrued benefit derived from this contribution as shown in the following table:

Years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
Less than 1	0
1	20
2	40
3	60
4	80
5 or more	100

(ii) B and C have three and six years of service, respectively. Employer Y also permits employees to elect to defer up to 6 percent of compensation through salary reduction agreements. Amounts deferred under these agreements are nonforfeitable at all times. In accordance with paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section, the nonforfeitable percentage of Employer Y's nonelective contribution on behalf of B and C may not be treated as a qualified nonelective contribution under paragraph (b)(3) of this section, because these amounts are nonforfeitable by reason of the completion by B and C of a stated number of years of service, and not regardless of the age and service of B and C.

(d) *Distribution limitation*—(1) *General rule.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (d) only if amounts attributable to elective contributions may not be distributed before one of the following events, and any distributions so permitted also satisfy the requirements of paragraphs (d)(2) through (6) of this section (to the extent applicable):

(i) The employee's retirement, death, disability, or separation from service.

(ii) In the case of a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan, the employee's attainment of age 59½, or the employee's hardship.

(iii) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the termination of the plan.

(iv) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the date of the sale or other disposition by a corporation of substantially all the assets (within the meaning of section 409(d)(2)) used by the corporation in a trade or business of the corporation to an unrelated corporation.

(v) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the date of the sale or other disposition by a corporation of its interest in a subsidiary (within the meaning of section 409(d)(3)) to an unrelated entity or individual.

(2) *Rules applicable to hardship distributions*—(i) *Distribution must be on account of hardship.* A distribution is treated as made after an employee's hardship for purposes of paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section only if it is made on account of the hardship. For purposes of this rule, a distribution is made on account of hardship only if the distribution both is made on account of an immediate and heavy financial need of the employee and is necessary to satisfy the financial need. The determination of the existence of an immediate and heavy financial need and of the amount necessary to meet the need must be made in accordance with nondiscriminatory and objective standards set forth in the plan. See section 411(d)(6) and the regulations thereunder.

(ii) *Limit on distributable amount.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, a distribution on account of hardship must be limited to the distributable amount. The distributable amount is equal to the employee's total elective contributions as of the date of distribution, reduced by the amount of previous distributions on account of hardship. If the plan so provides, the employee's total elective contributions used in determining the distributable amount may be increased by income allocable to elective contributions, by amounts treated as elective contributions under paragraph (b)(5) of this section, and by income allocable to amounts treated as elective contributions. The distributable amount may only include amounts that were credited to the employee's account as of a date specified in the plan that is no later than December 31, 1988, or if later, the end of the last plan year ending before July 1, 1989 (or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section).

(iii) *General hardship distribution standards*—(A) *Immediate and heavy financial need.* Whether an employee has an immediate and heavy financial need is to be determined based on all relevant facts and circumstances. Generally, for example, the need to pay the funeral expenses of a family member would constitute an immediate and heavy financial need. A distribution made to an employee for the purchase of a boat or television would generally not constitute a distribution made on account of an immediate and heavy financial need. A financial need may be immediate and heavy even if it was reasonably foreseeable or voluntarily incurred by the employee.

(B) *Distribution necessary to satisfy financial need.* A distribution is not treated as necessary to satisfy an immediate and heavy financial need of an employee to the extent the amount of the distribution is in excess of the amount required to relieve the financial need or to the extent the need may be satisfied from other resources that are reasonably available to the employee. This determination generally is to be made on the basis of all relevant facts and circumstances. For purposes of this paragraph, the employee's resources are deemed to include those assets of the employee's spouse and minor children that are reasonably available to the employee. Thus, for example, a vacation home owned by the employee and the employee's spouse, whether as community property, joint tenants, tenants by the entirety, or tenants in common, generally will be deemed a resource of the employee. However, property held for the employee's child under an irrevocable trust or under the Uniform Gifts to Minors Act is not treated as a resource of the employee. The amount of an immediate and heavy financial need may include any amounts necessary to pay any federal, state, or local income taxes or penalties reasonably anticipated to result from the distribution. A distribution generally may be treated as necessary to satisfy a financial need if the employer relies upon the employee's written representation, unless the employer has actual knowledge to the contrary, that the need cannot reasonably be relieved:

(*1*) Through reimbursement or compensation by insurance or otherwise;

(*2*) By liquidation of the employee's assets;

(*3*) By cessation of elective contributions or employee contributions under the plan; or

(*4*) By other distributions or nontaxable (at the time of the loan) loans from plans maintained by the employer or by any other employer, or by borrowing from commercial sources on reasonable commercial terms, in an amount sufficient to satisfy the need.

For purposes of this paragraph (d)(2)(iii)(B), a need cannot reasonably be relieved by one of the actions listed above if the effect would be to increase the amount of the need. For example, the need for funds to purchase a principal residence cannot reasonably be relieved by a plan loan if the loan would disqualify the employee from obtaining other necessary financing.

(iv) *Deemed hardship distribution standards*—(A) *Deemed immediate and heavy financial need.* A distribution is deemed to be on account of an immediate and heavy financial need of the employee if the distribution is for:

(*1*) Expenses for medical care described in section 213(d) previously incurred by the employee, the employee's spouse, or any dependents of the employee (as defined in section 152) or necessary for these persons to obtain medical care described in section 213(d);

(*2*) Costs directly related to the purchase of a principal residence for the employee (excluding mortgage payments);

(*3*) Payment of tuition, related educational fees, and room and board expenses, for the next 12 months of post-secondary education for the employee, or the employee's spouse, children, or dependents (as defined in section 152); or

(*4*) Payments necessary to prevent the eviction of the employee from the employee's principal residence or foreclosure on the mortgage on that residence.

(B) *Distribution deemed necessary to satisfy financial need.* A distribution is deemed necessary to satisfy an immediate and heavy financial need of an employee if all of the following requirements are satisfied:

(*1*) The distribution is not in excess of the amount of the immediate and heavy financial need of the employee. The amount of an immediate and heavy financial need may include any amounts necessary to pay any federal, state, or local income taxes or penalties reasonably anticipated to result from the distribution.

(*2*) The employee has obtained all distributions, other than hardship distributions, and all nontaxable (at the time of the loan) loans currently available under all plans maintained by the employer.

(*3*) The plan and all other plans maintained by the employer limit the employee's elective contributions for the next taxable year to the applicable limit under section 402(g) for that year minus the employee's elective contributions for the year of the hardship distribution.

(*4*) The employee is prohibited, under the terms of the plan or an otherwise legally enforceable agreement, from making elective contributions and employee contributions to the plan and all other plans maintained by the employer for at least 12 months after receipt of the hardship distribution. For this purpose the phrase ''all other plans maintained by the employer'' means all qualified and nonqualified plans of deferred compensation maintained by the employer. The phrase includes a stock option, stock purchase, or similar plan, or a cash or deferred arrangement that is part of a cafeteria plan within the meaning of section 125. However, it does not include the mandatory employee contribution portion of a defined benefit plan. It also does not include a health or welfare benefit plan, including one that is part of a cafeteria plan within the meaning of section 125. See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(4)(i) for the continued treatment of suspended employees as eligible employees.

(C) *Commissioner may expand standards.* The Commissioner may expand the list of deemed immediate and heavy financial needs and may prescribe additional methods for distributions to be deemed necessary to satisfy an immediate and heavy financial need only in revenue rulings, notices, and other documents of general applicability, and not on an individual basis.

(3) *Rules applicable to distributions upon plan termination.* A distribution may not be made under paragraph (d)(1)(iii) of this section if the employer establishes or maintains a successor plan. For purposes of this rule, the definition of the term ''employer'' contained in paragraph (g)(6) of this section is applied as of the date of plan termination, and a successor plan is any other defined contribution plan maintained by the same employer. However, if at all times during the 24-month period beginning 12 months before the termination, fewer than two percent of the employees who were eligible under the defined contribution plan that includes the cash or deferred arrangement as of the date of plan termination are eligible under the other defined contribution plan, the other plan is not a successor plan. The term ''defined contribution plan'' means a plan that is a defined contribution plan as defined in section 414(i), but does not include an employee stock ownership plan as defined in section 4975(e) or 409(a) or a simplified employee pension as defined in section 408(k). A plan is a

successor plan only if it exists at any time during the period beginning on the date of plan termination and ending 12 months after distribution of all assets from the terminated plan.

(4) *Rules applicable to distributions upon sale of assets or subsidiary*—(i) *Seller must maintain the plan.* A distribution may be made under section 401(k)(10) and paragraph (d)(1) (iv) or (v) of this section only from a plan that the seller continues to maintain after the disposition. This requirement is satisfied if and only if the purchaser does not maintain the plan after the disposition. A purchaser maintains the plan of the seller if it adopts the plan or otherwise becomes an employer whose employees accrue benefits under the plan. A purchaser also maintains the plan if the plan is merged or consolidated with, or any assets or liabilities are transferred from the plan to a plan maintained by the purchaser in a transaction subject to section 414(*l*)(1). A purchaser is not treated as maintaining the plan merely because a plan that it maintains accepts elective transfers described in § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–3(b)(1), or rollover contributions of amounts distributed by the plan (including distributions that the recipient elects, under section 401(a)(31), to have paid in a direct rollover to the plan of the purchaser).

(ii) *Employee must continue employment.* A distribution may be made under paragraph (d)(1) (iv) or (v) of this section only to an employee who continues employment with the purchaser of assets or with the subsidiary, whichever is applicable.

(iii) *Distribution must be in connection with disposition of assets or subsidiary.* Elective contributions may not be distributed under paragraph (d)(1) (iv) or (v) of this section except in connection with the disposition that results in the employee's transfer to the purchaser. Whether a distribution is made in connection with the disposition of assets or a subsidiary depends on all of the facts and circumstances. Except in unusual circumstances, however, a distribution will not be treated as having been made in connection with a disposition unless it was made by the end of the second calendar year after the calendar year in which the disposition occurred.

(iv) *Definitions*—(A) *Substantially all.* For purposes of paragraph (d)(1)(iv) of this section, the sale of ''substantially all'' the assets used in a trade or business means the sale of at least 85 percent of the assets.

(B) *Unrelated employer.* For purposes of paragraph (d)(1) (iv) and (v) of this section, an ''unrelated'' entity or individual is one that is not required to be aggregated with the seller under section 414 (b), (c), (m), or (o) after the sale or other disposition.

(5) *Lump sum requirement for certain distributions.* After March 31, 1988, a distribution may be made under paragraph (d)(1) (iii), (iv), or (v) of this section only if it is a lump sum distribution. The term *lump sum distribution* has the meaning provided in section 402(d)(4), without regard to subparagraphs (A) (i) through (iv), (B), and (F) of that section.

(6) *Rules applicable to all distributions*—(i) *Impermissible distributions.* Amounts attributable to elective contributions may not be distributed on account of any event not described in this paragraph (d), such as completion of a stated period of plan participation or the lapse of a fixed number of years. For example, if excess deferrals (and income) for an employee's taxable year are not distributed within the time prescribed in § 1.402(g)–1(e) (2) or (3), the amounts may be distributed only on account of an event described in this paragraph (d).

(ii) *Deemed distributions.* The cost of life insurance (P.S. 58 costs) is not treated as a distribution for purposes of section 401(k)(2) and this paragraph. The making of a loan is not treated as a distribution, even if the loan is secured by the employee's accrued benefit attributable to elective contributions or is includible in the employee's income under section 72(p). However, the reduction, by reason of default on a loan, of an employee's accrued benefit derived from elective contributions is treated as a distribution.

(iii) *ESOP dividend distributions.* A plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (d) merely by reason of a dividend distribution described in section 404(k)(2).

(iv) *Limitations apply after transfer.* The limitations of this paraqraph (d) generally continue to apply to amounts attributable to elective contributions (including amounts treated as elective contributions) that are transferred to another qualified plan of the same or another employer. Thus, the transferee plan will generally fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) and this section if transferred amounts may be distributed before the times specified in this paragraph (d). The limitations of paragraph (d) of this section cease to apply after the transfer, however, if the amounts could have been distributed at the time of the transfer (other than on account of hardship), and the transfer is an elective transfer described in § 1.411(d)–4, Q&A–3(b)(1). The limitations of paragraph (d) of this section also do not apply to amounts distributed from another plan that the recipient elects under section 401(a)(31) to have paid in a direct rollover to the plan.

(v) *Required consent.* A distribution may be made under this paragraph (d) only if any consent or election required under section 411(a)(11) or 417 is obtained.

(7) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (d) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Employer C maintains a profit-sharing plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Elective contributions under the arrangement may be withdrawn for any reason after two years following the end of the plan year in which the contributions were made. Because the plan permits distributions of elective contributions before the occurrence of one of the events specified in section 401(k)(2)(B) and this paragraph (d), the plan includes a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement and the elective contributions are currently includible in income under section 402.

Example 2. Employer D maintains a pre-ERISA money purchase plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Elective contributions under the arrangement may be distributed to an employee on account of hardship. Under paragraph (d)(1) of this section, hardship is a distribution event only in a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan. Since elective contributions under the arrangement may be distributed before a distribution event occurs, the cash or deferred arrangement does not satisfy this paragraph (d), and is not a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. Moreover, the plan is not a qualified plan because a pension plan may not provide for payment of benefits upon hardship. See § 1.401–1(b)(1)(i).

(e) *Additional requirements for qualified cash or deferred arrangements*—(1) *Qualified profit-sharing, stock bonus, pre-ERISA money purchase or rural cooperative plan requirement.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if the plan of which it is a part is a profit-sharing, stock bonus, pre-ERISA money purchase or rural cooperative plan that otherwise satisfies the requirements of section 401(a) (taking into account the cash or deferred arrangement). A plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement may provide for other contributions, including employer contributions (other than elective contributions), employee contributions, or both. See paragraph (e)(7) of this section, however, for limitations on the extent to which elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement may be taken into account in determining whether the other contributions satisfy the requirements of section 401(a).

(2) *Cash availability requirement.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if the arrangement provides that the amount that each eligible employee may defer as an elective contribution is available to the employee in cash. Thus, for example, if an eligible employee is provided the option to receive a taxable benefit (other than cash) or to have the employer contribute on the employee's behalf to a profit-sharing plan an amount equal to the value of the taxable benefit, the arrangement is not a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. Similarly, if an employee has the option to receive a specified amount in cash or to have the employer contribute an amount in excess of the specified cash amount to a profit-sharing plan on the employee's behalf, any contribution made by the employer on the employee's behalf in excess of the specified cash amount is not treated as made pursuant to a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. This cash availability requirement applies even if the cash or deferred arrangement is part of a cafeteria plan within the meaning of section 125.

(3) *Separate accounting requirement*—(i) *General rule.* A cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if the portion of an employee's benefit subject to the requirements of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section is determined by an acceptable separate accounting between that portion and any other benefits. Separate accounting is not acceptable unless gains, losses, withdrawals, and other credits or charges are separately allocated on a reasonable and consistent basis to the accounts subject to the requirements of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section and to other accounts. Subject to section 401(a)(4), forfeitures are not required to be allocated to the accounts in which benefits are subject to paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section.

(ii) *Failure to satisfy separate accounting requirement.* The requirements of paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section are treated as satisfied if all amounts held under a plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement or under another plan, contributions under which are taken into account under the arrangement for purposes of paragraph (b) of this section are treated as attributable to elective contributions subject to the requirements of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section.

(4) *Limitations on cash or deferred arrangements of state and local governments and tax-exempt organizations*—(i) A cash or deferred arrangement does not satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (e) if the arrangement is adopted:

(A) After May 6, 1986, by a state or local government or political subdivision thereof, or any agency or instrumentality thereof (''a governmental unit''), or

(B) After July 1, 1986, by any organization exempt from tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code.

For purposes of paragraph (e)(4) of this section, whether an organization is exempt from tax under subtitle A of the Internal Revenue Code is determined without regard to section 414 (b), (c), (m) or (o).

(ii) A cash or deferred arrangement is treated as adopted after the dates described in paragraph (e)(4)(i) of this section with respect to all employees of any employer that adopts the arrangement after such dates. If an employer adopted an arrangement prior to such dates, all employees of the employer may participate in the arrangement.

(iii) For purposes of this paragraph (e)(4), an employer that has made a legally binding commitment to adopt a cash or deferred arrangement is treated as having adopted the arrangement on that date.

(iv) If a governmental unit adopted a cash or deferred arrangement before May 7, 1986, then any cash or deferred arrangement adopted by the unit at any time is treated as adopted before that date.

(v) This paragraph (e)(4) does not apply to a rural cooperative plan.

(vi) For purposes of this paragraph (e)(4), an employee representative is treated as an employee of a tax exempt employer even if the employee could be treated as an employee by another employer under § 1.413–1(i)(1).

(5) *One-year eligibility requirement.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if no employee is required to complete a period of service greater than one year (determined without regard to section 410(a)(1)(B)(i)) with the employer maintaining the plan to be eligible to make an election under the arrangement.

(6) *Other benefits not contingent upon elective contributions*—(i) *General rule.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if no other benefit is conditioned (directly or indirectly) upon the employee's electing to make or not to make elective contributions under the arrangement. The preceding sentence does not apply to any matching contribution (as defined in section 401(m)) made by reason of such an election or to any benefit that is provided at the employee's election under a plan described in section 125(d) in lieu of an elective contribution under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement.

(ii) *Definition of other benefits.* Other benefits include, but are not limited to, benefits under a defined benefit plan; nonelective employer contributions under a defined contribution plan; the

availability, cost, or amount of health benefits; vacations or vacation pay; life insurance; dental plans; legal services plans; loans (including plan loans); financial planning services; subsidized retirement benefits; stock options; property subject to section 83; and dependent care assistance. Also, increases in salary and bonuses (other than those actually subject to the cash or deferred election) are benefits for purposes of this paragraph (e)(6). The ability to make after-tax employee contributions is a benefit, but that benefit is not contingent upon an employee's electing to make or not make elective contributions under the arrangement merely because the amount of elective contributions reduces dollar-for-dollar the amount of after-tax employee contributions that may be made. Benefits under any other plan or arrangement (whether or not qualified) are not contingent upon an employee's electing to make or not to make elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement merely because the elective contributions are or are not taken into account as compensation under the other plan or arrangement for purposes of determining benefits.

(iii) *Effect of certain statutory limits.* A benefit under a defined benefit plan that is contingent upon elective contributions solely by reason of the combined plan fraction of section 415(e) is not treated as contingent for purposes of this paragraph (e)(6). Similarly, any benefit under an excess benefit plan described in section 3(36) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 that is dependent on the employee's electing to make or not to make elective contributions is not treated as contingent.

(iv) *Nonqualified deferred compensation.* Participation in a nonqualified deferred compensation plan is treated as contingent for purposes of this paragraph (e)(6) only to the extent that an employee may receive additional deferred compensation under the nonqualified plan to the extent the employee makes or does not make elective contributions. Deferred compensation under a nonqualified plan of deferred compensation that is dependent on an employee's having made the maximum elective deferrals under section 402(g) or the maximum elective contributions permitted under the terms of the plan also is not treated as contingent.

(v) *Plan loans and distributions.* A loan or distribution of elective contributions is not a benefit conditioned on an employee's electing to make or not make elective contributions under the arrangement merely because the amount of the loan or distribution is based on the amount of the employee's account balance.

(vi) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (e)(6) are illustrated by the following examples.

Example 1. Employer T maintains a cash or deferred arrangement for all of its employees. Employer T also maintains a nonqualified deferred compensation plan for two highly paid executives, Employees R and C. Under the terms of the nonqualified deferred compensation plan, R and C are eligible to participate only if they do not make elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement. Participation in the nonqualified plan is a contingent benefit for purposes of this paragraph (e)(6), because R's and C's participation is conditioned on their electing not to make elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement.

Example 2. Employer T maintains a cash or deferred arrangement for all its employees. Employer T also maintains a nonqualified deferred compensation plan for two highly paid executives, Employees R and C. Under the terms of the arrangements, Employees R and C may defer a maximum of 10 percent of their compensation, and may allocate their deferral between the cash or deferred arrangement and the nonqualified deferred compensation plan in any way they choose (subject to the overall 10 percent maximum). Because the maximum deferral available under the nonqualified deferred compensation plan depends on the elective deferrals made under the cash or deferred arrangement, the right to participate in the nonqualified plan is a contingent benefit for purposes of paragraph (e)(6).

(7) *Coordination with other plans.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if no elective contributions (or qualified matching contributions treated as elective contributions under paragraph (b)(5) of this section) under the arrangement are taken into account for purposes of determining whether any other contributions

under any plan (including the plan to which the elective contributions are made) satisfy the requirements of section 401(a). Indeed, the portion of a plan that consists of elective contributions is treated as a separate plan for purposes of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b). See § 1.410(b)–7(c)(1). Similarly, elective contributions under a cash or deferred arrangement generally may not be taken into account in determining whether a plan satisfies the minimum contribution or benefit requirements of section 416. See § 1.416–1, M–20. However, qualified nonelective contributions that are treated as elective contributions for purposes of section 401(k)(3) under paragraph (b)(5) of this section may be used to enable a plan to satisfy the minimum contribution or benefit requirements under section 416. See § 1.416–1, M–18. This paragraph (e) does not apply for purposes of determining whether a plan satisfies the average benefit percentage requirement of section 410(b)(2)(A)(ii). See also § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5) for circumstances under which elective contributions may be used to determine whether a plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(m).

(8) *Recordkeeping requirements.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, a cash or deferred arrangement satisfies this paragraph (e) only if the employer maintains the records necessary to demonstrate compliance with the applicable nondiscrimination requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, including the extent to which qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions are taken into account.

(9) *Consistent application of separate line of business rules.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b), and applies the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to the portion of the plan that consists of contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement, then the requirements of section 401(k) and this section must be applied on an employer-wide rather than a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis to all of the plans or portions of plans taken into account in determining whether the cash or deferred arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement, regardless of whether those plans or portions of plans also satisfy the requirements necessary to apply the special rule in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii). Conversely, if an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b), and does not apply the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to the portion of the plan that consists of contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement, then the requirements of section 401(k) and this section must be applied on a qualified-separate-line-of-business rather than an employer-wide basis to all of the plans or portions of plans taken into account in determining whether the cash or deferred arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement, regardless of whether one or more of those plans or portions of plans is tested under the special rule § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii). This requirement applies solely for purposes of determining whether the cash or deferred arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement under section 401(k) and this section. The rules of this paragraph are illustrated by the following example.

Example. (i) Employer A maintains a profit-sharing plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement in which all of the employees of Employer A are eligible to participate. Employer A is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b). However, Employer A applies the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to the portion of its profit-sharing plan that consists of elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement (and to no other plans or portions of plans). Employer A makes qualified nonelective contributions to the profit-sharing plan for the 1995 plan year, and the profit-sharing plan provides that these qualified nonelective contributions may be used to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test.

(ii) Under these facts, the requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) must be applied on an employer-wide rather than a qualified-

separate-line-of-business basis in determining whether the qualified nonelective contributions made to the profit-sharing plan satisfy the requirements of § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5), and thus whether they may be taken into account under the actual deferral percentage test. Therefore, in order for the nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test, both (1) the total amount of nonelective contributions under the profit-sharing plan, including the qualified nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test, and (2) the total amount of nonelective contributions under the profit-sharing plan, excluding the qualified nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test, must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4) on an employer-wide basis. Of course, in order for the profit-sharing plan to satisfy section 401(a), it must still satisfy sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis.

(f) *Correction of excess contributions*—(1) *General rule*—(i) *Permissible correction methods.* A cash or deferred arrangement does not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3) or paragraph (b)(2) of this section with respect to the amount of elective contributions under the arrangement if the employer, in accordance with the terms of the plan that includes the cash or deferred arrangement and paragraph (b)(5) of this section, makes qualified nonelective contributions or qualified matching contributions that are treated as elective contributions under the arrangement and that, in combination with the elective contributions, satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section. In addition, a cash or deferred arrangement does not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3) or paragraph (b)(2) of this section for a plan year with respect to the amount of the elective contributions under the arrangement if, in accordance with the terms of the plan that includes the cash or deferred arrangement, excess contributions are recharacterized in accordance with paragraph (f)(3) of this section, or excess contributions (and income allocable thereto) are distributed in accordance with paragraph (f)(4) of this section.

(ii) *Combination of correction methods.* A plan may use any of the correction methods described in paragraph (f)(1)(i) of this section, may limit elective contributions in a manner designed to prevent excess contributions from being made, or may use a combination of these methods, to avoid or correct excess contributions. Thus, for example, a portion of the excess contributions for a highly compensated employee may be recharacterized under paragraph (f)(3) of this section, and the remaining portion of the excess contributions may be distributed under paragraph (f)(4) of this section. A plan may require or permit a highly compensated employee to elect whether any excess contributions are to be recharacterized or distributed.

(iii) *Impermissible correction methods.* Excess contributions for a plan year may not remain unallocated or be allocated to a suspense account for allocation to one or more employees in any future year. In addition, excess contributions may not be corrected using the retroactive correction rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g). See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii) and (5). See paragraph (f)(6) of this section for the effects of a failure to correct excess contributions.

(iv) *Partial distributions.* Any distribution of less than the entire amount of excess contributions with respect to any highly compensated employee is treated as a pro rata distribution of excess contributions and allocable income or loss.

(2) *Amount of excess contributions.* The amount of excess contributions for a highly compensated employee for a plan year is the amount (if any) by which the employee's elective contributions must be reduced for the employee's actual deferral ratio to equal the highest permitted actual deferral ratio under the plan. To calculate the highest permitted actual deferral ratio under a plan, the actual deferral ratio of the highly compensated employee with the highest actual deferral ratio is reduced by the amount required to cause the employee's actual deferral ratio to equal the ratio of the highly compensated employee with the next highest actual deferral ratio. If a lesser reduction would enable the arrangement to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test, only this lesser reduction may be made. This process must be repeated until the cash or deferred arrangement satisfies the actual deferral percentage test. The highest actual deferral ratio remaining under the plan

after leveling is the highest permitted actual deferral ratio. Thus, for each highly compensated employee, the amount of excess contributions for a plan year is equal to the employee's elective contributions, plus qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions taken into account in determining the employee's actual deferral ratio under paragraph (g)(1) of this section, minus the amount determined by multiplying the employee's actual deferral ratio (determined after application of this paragraph (f)(2)) by the compensation used in determining the ratio. In no case may the amount of excess contributions to be recharacterized or distributed for a plan year with respect to any highly compensated employee exceed the amount of elective contributions made on behalf of the highly compensated employee for the plan year.

(3) *Recharacterization of excess contributions*—(i) *General rule.* Excess contributions are recharacterized in accordance with this paragraph (f)(3) only if the excess contributions are treated as described in paragraph (f)(3)(ii) of this section, and all of the conditions set forth in paragraph (f)(3)(iii) of this section are satisfied.

(ii) *Treatment of recharacterized excess contributions.*

(A) Excess contributions recharacterized under this paragraph (f)(3) are includable in the employee's gross income on the earliest dates any elective contribution made on behalf of the employee during the plan year would have been received by the employee had the employee originally elected to receive the amounts in cash, or on such later date permitted in paragraph (f)(3)(iv) of this section. The recharacterized excess contributions must be treated as employee contributions for purposes of section 72, section 401(a)(4) and 401(m), and paragraphs (b) and (d) of this section. This requirement is not treated as satisfied unless:

(*1*) The payor or plan administrator reports the recharacterized excess contributions as employee contributions to the Internal Revenue Service and the employee by—

(*i*) Timely providing such forms as the Commissioner may designate to the employer and to employees whose excess contributions are recharacterized under this paragraph (f)(3); and

(*ii*) Timely taking such other action as the Commissioner may require; and

(*2*) The plan administrator accounts for the amounts as contributions by the employee for purposes of sections 72 and 6047.

(B) Recharacterized excess contributions continue to be treated as employer contributions that are elective contributions for all other purposes under the Internal Revenue Code, including sections 401(a) (other than 401(a)(4) and 401(m)), 404, 409, 411, 412, 415, 416, and 417. Thus, for example, recharacterized excess contributions remain subject to the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section; must be deducted under section 404; and are treated as employer contributions described in section 415(c)(2)(A) and § 1.415–6(b). In addition, these amounts are not treated as compensation for purposes of sections 404 and 415, and may be treated as compensation for purposes of sections 401(a)(4), 401(a)(5), 401(k), 401(l) and 414(s) only to the extent that elective contributions may be treated, and are treated under the plan, as compensation. See § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). Recharacterized excess contributions that relate to plan years ending on or before October 24, 1988, may be treated as either employer contributions or employee contributions for purposes of paragraph (d) of this section. The amount of excess contributions included in an employee's gross income is reduced as provided under paragraph (f)(5)(i)(B) of this section.

(iii) *Additional rules*—(A) *Time of recharacterization.* Excess contributions may not be recharacterized under this paragraph (f)(3) after the later of October 24, 1988, or 2½ months after the close of the plan year to which the recharacterization relates. Recharacterization is deemed to have occurred on the date on which the last of those highly compensated employees with excess contributions to be recharacterized is notified in accordance with paragraph (f)(3)(ii)(A) of this section. The Commissioner may designate the means by which this notification is to be provided.

(B) *Employee contributions must be permitted under plan.* The amount of recharacterized excess contributions, in combination with the employee contributions actually made by the highly compensated employee, may not exceed the maximum amount of employee contributions (determined without regard to the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2)) that the highly compensated employee could have made under the provisions of the plan in effect on the first day of the plan year in the absence of recharacterization. See §1.401(m)–1(a)(2) for requirements relating to the availability of employee contributions.

(C) *Plans under which excess contributions may be recharacterized.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1991, elective contributions may be recharacterized under this paragraph (f)(3) only under the plan under which they are made or under a plan with which that plan could be aggregated under §1.410(b)–7(d) after application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of §1.410(b)–7(c), as modified in §1.401(k)–1(g)(11). For plan years beginning before that date and after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided under paragraph (h) of this section, elective contributions may be recharacterized under this paragraph (f)(3) only under the plan under which they are made or under a plan with the same plan year as that plan.

(iv) *Transition rules.* If amounts recharacterized for any plan year were not previously included in income, they must be treated as received by employees for income tax purposes on the first day of the first plan year ending after 1987. If notice of recharacterization was provided to the affected highly compensated employees by October 24, 1988, recharacterization is deemed to have occurred 2½ months after the close of the plan year and the penalty tax of section 4979 will not be imposed. The rules in this paragraph (f)(3)(iv) are effective only for plan years ending before August 9, 1988.

(v) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph (f)(3) are illustrated by the following example:

Example. (i) Employer X maintains Plan Y, a calendar year profit-sharing plan that includes a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. Under Plan Y, each eligible employee may elect to defer up to 10 percent of compensation under a salary reduction agreement. An eligible employee may also make employee contributions of up to 10 percent of compensation. X pays the amounts deferred to the trust on the last day of each month. Employer X includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under §1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See §1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). Salaries are paid on the same date.

(ii) (A) In January 1989, X determines that during 1988 the compensation and actual deferral ratios (ADRs) of X's six employees were as follows:

Employee	Compensation (A)	Elective contribution (B)	ADR (%)(B/A)
A	$70,000	$7,000	10.00
B	60,000	4,500	7.50
C	20,000	1,000	5.00
D	15,000	0	0
E	10,000	350	3.50
F	10,000	350	3.50

(B) The average deferral percentage (ADP) for X's highly compensated group, A and B, is 8.75 percent ((10.00%+7.50%)/2). The ADP for X's other employees is 3 percent ((5.00%+0% + 3.50% + 3.50%)/4). Because 8.75 percent is more than 2 times 3 percent and more than 3 percent plus 2 percentage points, the plan fails to satisfy paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Neither A nor B made any employee contributions for the year.

(iii) Plan Y provides that each highly compensated participant will have excess contributions, as defined in paragraph (g)(7) of this section, recharacterized. The amount to be recharacterized will be determined according to the method described in paragraph (f)(2) of this section.

(iv) In order to satisfy paragraph (b)(2) of this section, Plan Y must reduce the ADP for X's highly compensated employees to not more than 5 percent. This will satisfy the test described in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, because 5 percent is not more than 2 times 3 percent and is not more than 2 percentage points greater than 3 percent. Plan Y first reduces A's ADR to 7.5 percent (the ADR of the highly compensated employee having the next highest ADR). Since this is not sufficient to satisfy the ADP test in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the ADR of both A and B must be reduced to 5 percent.

(v) The maximum dollar amount that may be deferred by each employee is determined by using the formula D=(ADR×S) where D is the maximum allowable deferral, ADR is the reduced ADR, and S is the compensation. Thus, A's maximum allowable deferral is $3,500 (.05×$70,000), and B's maximum allowable deferral is $3,000 (.05×$60,000). The balance of the original deferrals by A and B

($3,500 and $1,500 respectively) must be included in their taxable wages for 2988, the year in which X would have paid cash to A and B.

(vi) A deferred $583.33 per month, except for January, February, March, and April, when A deferred $583.34. Pursuant to the first-in, first-out rule in paragraph (f)(3)(ii) of this section, the deferrals made in January, February, March, April, and May, as well as $583.31 of the deferral made in June, are treated as employee contributions. A similar procedure is undertaken with respect to B. X and the plan administrator provide A and B with the forms and notices that the Commissioner requires. If A and B had already filed income tax returns for 1988, they must file amended returns. If Plan Y had a plan year ending November 30, 1987, and A and B had made elective deferrals in December 1987, they would also have to file amended returns for 1987. In addition, the plan administrator must satisfy paragraph (f)(3)(ii)(B) of this section. Of course, the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2) must be satisfied for 1988, taking the recharacterized amounts into account.

(4) *Corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income)*—(i) *General rule.* Excess contributions (and income allocable thereto) are distributed in accordance with this paragraph (f)(4) only if the excess contributions and allocable income are designated by the employer as a distribution of excess contributions (and income), and are distributed to the appropriate highly compensated employees after the close of the plan year in which the excess contributions arose and within 12 months after the close of that plan year. In the event of a complete termination of the plan during the plan year in which an excess contribution arose, the corrective distribution must be made as soon as administratively feasible after the date of termination of the plan, but in no event later than 12 months after the date of termination. If the entire account balance of a highly compensated employee is distributed during the plan year in which an excess contribution arose, the distribution is deemed to have been a corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income) to the extent that a corrective distribution would otherwise have been required.

(ii) *Income allocable to excess contributions*—(A) *General rule.* The income allocable to excess contributions is equal to the sum of the allocable gain or loss for the plan year and, if the plan so provides, the allocable gain or loss for the period between the end of the plan year and the date of distribution (the ''gap period'').

(B) *Method of allocating income.* A plan may use any reasonable method for computing the income allocable to excess contributions, provided that the method does not violate section 401(a)(4), is used consistently for all participants and for all corrective distributions under the plan for the plan year, and is used by the plan for allocating income to participants' accounts. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(8).

(C) *Alternative method of allocating income.* A plan may allocate income to excess contributions by multiplying the income for the plan year (and the gap period, if the plan so provides) allocable to elective contributions and amounts treated as elective contributions by a fraction. The numerator of the fraction is the excess contributions for the employee for the plan year. The denominator of the fraction is equal to the sum of:

(*1*) The total account balance of the employee attributable to elective contributions and amounts treated as elective contributions as of the beginning of the plan year; plus

(*2*) The employee's elective contributions and amounts treated as elective contributions for the plan year and for the gap period if gap period income is allocated.

(D) *Safe harbor method of allocating gap period income.* Under the safe harbor method, income on excess contributions for the gap period is equal to 10 percent of the income allocable to excess contributions for the plan year (calculated under the method described in paragraph (f)(4)(ii)(C)) of this section, multiplied by the number of calendar months that have elapsed since the end of the plan year. For purposes of calculating the number of calendar months that have elapsed under the safe harbor method, a corrective distribution that is made on or before the fifteenth day of the month is treated as made on the last day of the preceding month. A distribution made after the fifteenth day of the month is treated as made on the first day of the next month.

(iii) *No employee or spousal consent required.* A corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income) may be made under the terms of the plan without regard to any notice or consent otherwise required under sections 411(a)(11) and 417.

(iv) *Treatment of corrective distributions as employer contributions.* Excess contributions are treated as employer contributions for purposes of sections 404 and 415 even if distributed from the plan.

(v) *Tax treatment of corrective distributions*—(A) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraph (f)(4)(v) (B) or (C) of this section, a corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income) that is made within 2½ months after the end of the plan year for which the excess contributions were made is includible in the employee's gross income on the earliest dates any elective contributions by the employee during the plan year would have been received by the employee had the employee originally elected to receive the amounts in cash. A corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income) that is made more than 2½ months after the end of the plan year for which the contributions were made is includible in the employee's gross income in the employee's taxable year in which distributed. Regardless of when the corrective distribution is made, it is not subject to the early distribution tax of section 72(t) and is not treated as a distribution for purposes of applying the excise tax under section 4980A. See paragraph (f)(5)(i)(B) of this section for rules relating to the taxation of excess contributions that reduce excess deferrals. See paragraph (f)(6)(i) of this section for additional rules relating to the employer excise tax on amounts distributed more than 2½ months after the end of the plan year.

(B) *Rule for de minimis distributions.* If the total amount of excess contributions and excess aggregate contributions distributed to a recipient under a plan for any plan year is less than $100 (excluding income), a corrective distribution of excess contributions (and income) is includible in the gross income of the recipient in the taxable year of the recipient in which the corrective distribution is made.

(C) *Rule for certain 1987 and 1988 excess contributions.* Distributions for plan years beginning in 1987 and 1988 to which the de minimis rule of this section would otherwise apply may be reported by the recipient, at the recipient's option, either in the year described in paragraph (f)(4)(v)(A) of this section, or in the year described in paragraph (f)(4)(v)(B) of this section. This special rule may be used only for distributions made within 2½ months after the close of the plan year, but in no event later than April 17, 1989.

(vi) *No reduction of required minimum distribution.* A distribution of excess contributions (and income) is not treated as a distribution for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies the minimum distribution requirements of section 401(a)(9).

(5) *Rules applicable to all corrections*—(i) *Coordination with distribution of excess deferrals*—(A) *In general.* The amount of excess contributions to be recharacterized under paragraph (f)(3) of this section or distributed under paragraph (f)(4) of this section with respect to an employee for a plan year, is reduced by any excess deferrals previously distributed to the employee for the employee's taxable year ending with or within the plan year in accordance with section 402(g)(2).

(B) *Treatment of excess contributions that reduce excess deferrals.* Under § 1.402(g)–1(e), the amount of excess deferrals that may be distributed with respect to an employee for a taxable year is reduced by any excess contributions previously distributed or recharacterized with respect to the employee for the plan year beginning with or within the taxable year. The amount of excess contributions includible in the gross income of the employee, and the amount of excess contributions reported by the payor or plan administrator as includible in the gross income of the employee, does not include the amount of any reduction under § 1.402(g)–1(e)(6).

(ii) *Correction of family members.* The determination and correction of excess contributions of a highly compensated employee whose actual deferral ratio is determined under the family aggregation rules of paragraph (g)(1)(ii)(C) of

this section is accomplished by reducing the actual deferral ratio as required under paragraph (f)(2) of this section and allocating the excess contributions for the family group among the family members in proportion to the elective contribution of each family member that is combined to determine the actual deferral ratio.

(iii) *Matching contributions forfeited because of excess deferral or contribution.* For purposes of section 401(k)(2)(C) and paragraph (c)(1) of this section, a qualified matching contribution is not treated as forfeitable merely because under the plan it is forfeited if the contribution to which it relates is treated as an excess contribution, excess deferral, or excess aggregate contribution.

(6) *Failure to correct*—(i) *Failure to correct within 2½ months after end of plan year.* If a plan does not correct excess contributions within 2½ months after the close of the plan year for which the excess contributions are made, the employer will be liable for a 10-percent excise tax on the amount of the excess contributions. See section 4979 and § 54.4979–1. Qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions properly taken into account under paragraph (b)(5) of this section for a plan year may enable a plan to avoid having excess contributions, even if the contributions are made after the close of the 2½ month period.

(ii) *Failure to correct within 12 months after end of plan year.* If excess contributions are not corrected within 12 months after close of the plan year for which they were made, the cash or deferred arrangement will fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3) for the plan year for which the excess contributions are made and all subsequent plan years during which the excess contributions remain in the trust.

(7) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (f) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. (i) The Y corporation maintains a cash or deferred arrangement. The plan year is the calendar year. For plan year 1989, all 10 of Y's employees are eligible to participate in the cash or deferred arrangement. The Y corporation includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). The employees' compensation, elective contributions, and actual deferral ratios are shown in the following table:

Employee	Compensation	Elective contributions	Actual deferral ratio (ADR) (percent)
A	$160,000	$6,400	4.0
B	140,000	7,000	5.0
C	70,000	7,000	10.0
D	65,000	6,500	10.0
E	42,000	2,100	5.0
F	35,000	3,500	10.0
G	28,000	2,800	10.0
H	21,000	700	3.33
I	21,000	0	0
J	21,000	0	0

(ii) Employees A, B, C, and D are highly compensated employees. Employees E, F, G, H, I, and J are nonhighly compensated employees. The actual deferral percentage (ADP) for the highly compensated group is 7.25 percent. The ADP for the nonhighly compensated group is 4.72 percent. These percentages do not meet the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii).

(iii) Employees A and C have each received a distribution of excess deferrals of $1,000. However, the ADR for employee A remains 4.0 percent and the actual deferral ratio for Employee C remains 10.0 percent. The ADP for the group of highly compensated employees remains 7.25 percent.

(iv) The ADP for the highly compensated group must be reduced to 6.72 percent. This is done by reducing the ADR of the highly compensated employees with the highest ADR (Employees C and D) to 8.94 percent. This makes Employee C's maximum elective contribution $6,258. This requires a distribution or recharacterization of $742. But since $1,000 has already been distributed as an excess deferral, no additional distribution or recharacterization is required or permitted. Employee D's elective contribution must be reduced by $689 ($6,500—.0894 ($65,000)) to $5,811 through distribution or recharacterization.

Example 2. A, B, and C are highly compensated employees of Employer R. Employer R maintains a cash or deferred arrangement. Employer R includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). For the plan year 1990, A, B, and C each earns compensation of $100,000 and contributes $7,000 to the plan during the period January through June. B retires in November of 1990 and makes a withdrawal of B's entire account balance of $200,000. In January of 1991, R computes the ADP test for its employees and learns that the highly compensated employees should have contributed only five percent of compensation. Since B made a contribution of $7,000 for 1990, B's contribution and compensation are used in determining the ADP despite the subsequent $200,000 withdrawal.

A, B, and C must each receive a corrective distribution of $2,000 in order to meet the ADP test. Since B has already withdrawn B's total account balance under the plan, only A and C must receive a distribution of $2,000 each in order for the plan to meet the ADP test of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii). Pursuant to the 1990 Form 1099–R Instructions, the plan must issue two Forms 1099–R to B, one reporting the portion of the distribution that was necessary to correct the excess contribution (including income), and one reporting the balance of the distribution. If B had withdrawn less than the total account balance, B would have to withdraw the lesser of $2,000 or the remaining account balance.

Example 3. Individual A has a child, B. Both participate in a cash or deferred arrangement maintained by Employer X. A is one of the 10 most highly compensated employees and B is a nonhighly compensated employee. Employer X includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). A has compensation of $100,000 and defers $7,000 under the cash or deferred arrangement; B has compensation of $40,000 and defers $4,000 under the arrangement. The actual deferral ratio of the family unit is 7.86 percent, calculated by aggregating the contributions and compensation of A and B ($7,000 + $4,000)/($100,000 + $40,000). For the plan, it is determined that under § 1.401(k)–1(f)(2), the actual deferral ratio of the aggregate family unit must be reduced to 7.20 percent. This reduction is applied in proportion to A's and B's contributions. The excess contributions are $920 ($11,000 total contributions minus $10,080 (7.20% x $140,000)). A's share of the excess contributions is $585.45 ($7,000/$11,000 x $920); B's share is $334.55 ($4,000/$11,000 x $920).

Example 4. (i) Employer T maintains a profit-sharing plan containing a cash or deferred arrangement for all employees. Six employees are covered by a collective bargaining agreement, the other seven employees are not. The employee data for 1994 is shown in the following table:

Employee	Collective bargaining unit status	Actual deferral ratio (ADR), (percent)
A	Member	8.0
B	Member	6.0
C	Nonmember	9.0
D	Nonmember	7.0
E–H	Members	4.5
I–M	Nonmembers	6.0

Employees A, B, C, and D are highly compensated.

(ii) For purposes of sections 410(b), 401(a)(4) and 401(k), the portion of T's plan covering collectively bargained unit members must be disaggregated from the portion covering other employees.

Employee	ADR (percent)
Collective Bargaining Unit Members:	
A	8.0
B	6.0
E–H	[1] 4.5
Other Employees:	
C	9.0
D	7.0
I–M	[1] 6.0

[1] Average.

(iii) The ADPs for the collectively bargained highly compensated group and nonhighly compensated group, respectively, are seven percent and 4.5 percent. The ADPs for the other highly compensated and nonhighly compensated employees, respectively, are eight percent and six percent.

(iv) The non-collectively bargained portion of the disaggregated plan satisfies the ADP test for the 1994 plan year, but the collectively bargained portion does not. Employer T is not required to make corrections to the collectively bargained portion of the cash or deferred arrangement, because a collectively bargained plan automatically satisfies the nondiscrimination requirements of 401(a)(4). However, unless Employer T corrects the ADP test failure in the collectively bargained portion of the plan, either by reducing A's ADR to seven percent or adding QNCs for the nonhighly compensated employees, all elective contributions made by collectively bargained employees for the year will be includible in income in 1994.

(g) *Definitions.* The following definitions apply for purposes of this section, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(1) *Actual deferral percentage*—(i) *General rule.* The actual deferral percentage for a group of employees for a plan year is the average of the actual deferral ratios of employees in the group for that plan year. For plan years that begin after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, actual deferral ratios and the actual deferral percentage for a group are calculated to the nearest hundredth of a percentage point.

(ii) *Actual deferral ratio*—(A) *General rule.* An employee's actual deferral ratio for the plan year is the sum of the employee's elective contributions and amounts treated as elective contributions for the plan year, divided by the employee's compensation taken into account for the plan year. If an eligible employee makes no elective contributions, and no qualified matching contributions or qualified nonelective

contributions are taken into account with respect to the employee, the actual deferral ratio of the employee is zero. See paragraphs (b)(4), (b)(5), and (g)(2) of this section for rules regarding the elective contributions, qualified nonelective contributions, and compensation taken into account in calculating this fraction.

(B) *Employee eligible under more than one arrangement*—(*1*) *Highly compensated employees.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, the actual deferral ratio of a highly compensated employee who is eligible to participate in more than one cash or deferred arrangement of the same employer is generally calculated by treating all the cash or deferred arrangements in which the employee is eligible to participate as one arrangement. However, plans that are not permitted to be aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(c), as modified in paragraph (g)(11) of this section, are not aggregated for this purpose. For example, if a highly compensated employee with compensation of $80,000 could make elective contributions under two separate cash or deferred arrangements, the actual deferral ratio for the employee under each arrangement would generally be calculated by dividing the total elective contributions by the employee under both arrangements by $80,000. If one of the cash or deferred arrangements were part of an ESOP, however, while the other was not, the actual deferral percentage of the employee under each arrangement would be calculated by dividing the employee's elective contributions under each arrangement by $80,000 because the ESOP portion is mandatorily disaggregated from the non-ESOP portion.

(*2*) *Nonhighly compensated employees.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1984, and before January 1, 1987 (or such later date provided under paragraph (h) of this section), this paragraph (g)(1)(ii)(B) applies to all employees, and not only to highly compensated employees.

(*3*) *Treatment of plans with different plan years.* If the cash or deferred arrangements that are treated as a single arrangement under this paragraph (g)(1)(ii)(B) are parts of plans that have different plan years, the cash or deferred arrangements are treated as a single arrangement with respect to the plan years ending with or within the same calendar year.

(C) *Employees subject to family aggregation rules*—(*1*) *Aggregation of elective contributions and other amounts.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or any later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, if a highly compensated employee is subject to the family aggregation rules of section 414(q)(6) because that employee is either a five-percent owner or one of the 10 most highly compensated employees, the combined actual deferral ratio for the family group (which is treated as one highly compensated employee) must be determined by combining the elective contributions, compensation, and amounts treated as elective contributions of all family members.

(*2*) *Effect on actual deferral percentage of nonhighly compensated employees.* The elective contributions, compensation, and amounts treated as elective contributions of all family members are disregarded for purposes of determining the actual deferral percentage for the group of nonhighly compensated employees.

(*3*) *Multiple family groups.* If an employee is required to be aggregated as a member of more than one family group in a plan, all eligible employees who are members of those family groups that include that employee are aggregated as one family group.

(2) *Compensation*—(i) *Years beginning after December 31, 1986.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (h) of this section, the term *compensation* means compensation as defined in section 414(s) and § 1.414(s)–1. The period used to determine an employee's compensation for a plan year must be either the plan year or the calendar year ending within the plan year. Whichever period is selected must be applied uniformly to determine the compensation of every eligible employee under the plan for that plan year for purposes of this section. An employer may, however, limit the period taken into account under either method to that portion of the plan year or calendar year in which the employee was an eligible employee, provided that

this limit is applied uniformly to all eligible employees under the plan for the plan year for purposes of this section. See also section 401(a)(17) and § 1.401(a)(17)–1(c)(1).

(ii) *Years beginning before January 1, 1987*—(A) *General rule.* An employee's compensation for a plan year beginning before January 1, 1987, or such later date provided under paragraph (h) of this section, is the amount taken into account under the plan (or plans) in calculating the elective contribution that may be made on behalf of the employee. In a plan that is top-heavy (as defined in section 416), compensation may not exceed $200,000. Compensation may not exclude amounts less than a stated amount, such as the integration level under the plan. Compensation may include all compensation for the plan year, including compensation for the period when an employee was ineligible to make a cash or deferred election.

(B) *Nondiscrimination requirement*—(*1*) If the plan's definition of compensation has the effect of discriminating in favor of employees who are highly compensated, a nondiscriminatory definition shall be determined by the Commissioner.

(*2*) A plan's definition of compensation is treated as nondiscriminatory if the plan defines compensation for a plan year either as—

(*i*) an employee's total nondeferred compensation includible in gross income plus elective contributions under the plan and elective contributions under a plan described in section 125, and/or

(*ii*) an employee's W–2 or total nondeferred compensation includible in gross income.

(3) *Elective contributions.* The term ''elective contribution'' means employer contributions made to a plan that were subject to a cash or deferred election under a cash or deferred arrangement (whether or not the arrangement is a qualified cash or deferred arrangement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section). No amount that has become currently available to an employee or that is designated or treated, at the time of deferral or contribution, as an after-tax employee contribution may be treated as an elective contribution. See paragraphs (a)(2) and (a)(3) of this section. See also paragraph (a)(6)(iii) of this section for rules relating to the treatment as elective contributions of certain matching contributions made by partnerships.

(4) *Eligible employee*—(i) *General rule.* The term ''eligible employee'' means an employee who is directly or indirectly eligible to make a cash or deferred election under the plan for all or a portion of the plan year. For example, if an employee must perform purely ministerial or mechanical acts (e.g., formal application for participation or consent to payroll withholding) in order to be eligible to make a cash or deferred election for a plan year, the employee is an eligible employee for the plan year without regard to whether the employee performs the acts. An employee who is unable to make a cash or deferred election because the employee has not contributed to another plan is also an eligible employee. By contrast, if an employee must perform additional service (e.g., satisfy a minimum period of service requirement) in order to be eligible to make a cash or deferred election for a plan year, the employee is not an eligible employee for the plan year unless the service is actually performed. See paragraph (e)(5) of this section, however, for certain limits on the use of minimum service requirements. An employee who would be eligible to make elective contributions but for a suspension due to a distribution, a loan, or an election not to participate in the plan, is treated as an eligible employee for purposes of section 401(k)(3) for a plan year even though the employee may not make a cash or deferred election by reason of the suspension. Finally, an employee does not fail to be treated as an eligible employee merely because the employee may receive no additional annual additions because of section 415(c)(1) or 415(e).

(ii) *Certain one-time elections.* An employee is not an eligible employee merely because the employee, upon commencing employment with the employer or upon the employee's first becoming eligible to make a cash or deferred election under any arrangement of the employer, is given the one-time opportunity to elect, and the employee

does in fact elect, not to be eligible to make a cash or deferred election under the plan or any other plan maintained by the employer (including plans not yet established) for the duration of the employee's employment with the employer. This rule applies in addition to the rules in paragraphs (a)(3)(iv) and (a)(6)(ii)(C) of this section relating to the definition of a cash or deferred election. In no event is an election made after December 23, 1994 treated as a one-time irrevocable election under this paragraph if the election is made by an employee who previously became eligible under another plan (whether or not terminated) of the employer.

(5) *Employee.* The term *employee* means an employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(6) *Employer.* The term *employer* means the employer within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(7) *Excess contributions and excess deferrals*—(i) *Excess contributions.* The term ''excess contribution'' means, with respect to a plan year, the excess of the elective contributions, including qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions that are treated as elective contributions under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, on behalf of eligible highly compensated employees for the plan year over the maximum amount of the contributions permitted under paragraph (b)(2) of this section. The amount of excess contributions for each highly compensated employee is determined by using the method described in paragraph (f)(2) of this section.

(ii) *Excess deferrals.* The term ''excess deferrals'' means excess deferrals as defined in § 1.402(g)–1(e)(3).

(8) *Highly compensated employees*—(i) *Plan years beginning after December 31, 1986.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided under paragraph (h) of this section, the term ''highly compensated employee'' has the meaning provided in section 414(q).

(ii) *Plan years beginning after December 31, 1979, and before January 1, 1987.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1979, and before January 1, 1987, or such later date provided under paragraph (h) of this section, for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test, highly compensated employees are the one-third of all eligible employees (rounded to the nearest integer) who receive the most compensation. When one or more employees of a group would be highly compensated employees except that each member of the group receives the same amount of compensation, the employer must designate which employees of the group are highly compensated, so that one-third of all eligible employees are considered highly compensated.

(9) *Matching contributions.* The term ''matching contribution'' means matching contributions as defined in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(12).

(10) *Nonelective contributions.* The term ''nonelective contribution'' means employer contributions (other than matching contributions) with respect to which the employee may not elect to have the contributions paid to the employee in cash or other benefits instead of being contributed to the plan.

(11) *Plan*—(i) *Application of section 410(b) rules.* The term *plan* means a plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7 (a) and (b), after application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c) and the permissive aggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(d), with the modifications provided in paragraph (g)(11)(ii) of this section. Thus, for example, two plans (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7(b)) that are treated as a single plan pursuant to the permissive aggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(d) are treated as a single plan for purposes of section 401(k). See also § 1.401(k)–1(b)(3)(ii).

(ii) *Modifications to section 410(b) rules*—(A) *In general.* For purposes of this paragraph (g)(11), § 1.410(b)–7 (c) and (d) are applied without regard to § 1.410(b)–7(c)(1), relating to section 401(k) and 401(m) plans.

(B) *Plans benefiting collective bargaining unit employees.* A plan that benefits employees who are included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement and employees who are not included in such a collective bargaining unit is treated as comprising separate plans. This paragraph (g)(11)(ii)(B) is generally applied separately with respect to each collective bargaining unit. At the option of the

employer, however, two or more separate collective bargaining units can be treated as a single collective bargaining unit, provided that the combinations of units are determined on a basis that is reasonable and reasonably consistent from year to year. Thus, for example, if a plan benefits employees in three categories—employees included in collective bargaining unit A, employees included in collective bargaining unit B, and employees who are not included in any collective bargaining unit—the plan can be treated as comprising three separate plans, each of which benefits only one category of employees. However, if collective bargaining units A and B are treated as a single collective bargaining unit, the plan will be treated as comprising only two separate plans, one benefiting all employees who are included in a collective bargaining unit and another benefiting all other employees. Similarly, if a plan benefits only employees who are included in collective bargaining unit A and employees who are included in collective bargaining unit B, the plan can be treated as comprising two separate plans. However, if collective bargaining units A and B are treated as a single collective bargaining unit, the plan will be treated as a single plan. An employee is treated as included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement if and only if the employee is a collectively bargained employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–6(d)(2).

(C) *Multiemployer plans.* Consistent with section 413(b), the portion of the plan that is maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement (within the meaning of § 1.413–1(a)(2)) is treated as a single plan maintained by a single employer that employs all the employees benefiting under the same benefit computation formula and covered pursuant to that collective bargaining agreement. The rules of paragraph (g)(11)(ii)(B) of this section (including the optional aggregation of collective bargaining units) apply to the resulting deemed single plan in the same manner as they would to a single employer plan, except that the plan administrator is substituted for the employer where appropriate and appropriate fiduciary obligations are taken into account. The noncollectively bargained portion of the plan is treated as maintained by one or more employers, depending on whether the noncollective bargaining unit employees who benefit under the plan are employed by one or more employers.

(12) *Pre-ERISA money purchase pension plan*—(i) A pre-ERISA money purchase pension plan is a pension plan:

(A) That is a defined contribution plan (as defined in section 414(i));

(B) That was in existence on June 27, 1974, and as in effect on that date, included a salary reduction agreement described in paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section; and

(C) Under which neither the employee contributions nor the employer contributions, including elective contributions, may exceed the levels (as a percentage of compensation) provided for by the contribution formula in effect on June 27, 1974.

(ii) A plan was in existence on June 27, 1974, if it was a written plan adopted on or before that date, even if no funds had yet been paid to the trust associated with the plan.

(13) *Qualified matching contributions and qualified nonelective contributions*—(i) *Qualified matching contributions.* The term ''qualified matching contribution'' means matching contributions that satisfy the additional requirements of paragraph (g)(13)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Qualified nonelective contributions.* The term ''qualified nonelective contribution'' means employer contributions, other than elective contributions and matching contributions, that satisfy the additional requirements of paragraph (g)(13)(iii) of this section.

(iii) *Additional requirements.* Except to the extent that paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section specifically provide otherwise, the matching contributions and the nonelective contributions must satisfy the requirements of paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section as though the contributions were elective contributions, without regard to whether the contributions are actually taken into account as elective contributions under paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Thus,

the matching and nonelective contributions must satisfy the vesting requirements of paragraph (c) of this section and be subject to the distribution requirements of paragraph (d) of this section when they are contributed to the plan. See § 1.401(k)–1(f)(5)(iii) for rules regarding matching contributions not treated as forfeitable under section 411(a)(3)(G) because of excess deferrals or contributions.

(14) *Rural cooperative plan.* For purposes of this section, a rural cooperative plan is a plan described in section 401(k)(7).

(15) *Section 401(k) plan.* The term *section 401(k) plan* means a section 401(k) plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(16) *Section 401(m) plan.* The term *section 401(m) plan* means a section 401(m) plan within the meaning of § 1.401(b)–9.

(h) *Effective dates*—(1) *General rule.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (h) or as specifically provided elsewhere in this section, this section applies to plan years beginning after December 31, 1979.

(2) *Collectively bargained plans.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986:

(i) The provisions of this section first effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, do not apply to years that begin before the earlier of January 1, 1989, or the date on which the last of the collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986).

(ii) The provisions of this section first effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, do not apply to years beginning before the earlier of:

(A) The later of January 1, 1989, or the date on which the last of the collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986); or

(B) January 1, 1991.

(3) *Transition rules*—(i) *Cash or deferred arrangements in existence on June 27, 1974.* See § 1.402(a)–1(d)(3)(ii) for a transition rule applicable to cash or deferred arrangements in existence on June 27, 1974.

(ii) *Plan years beginning after December 31, 1979, and before January 1, 1992.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1979 (or, in the case of a pre-ERISA money purchase plan, plan years beginning after July 18, 1984) and before January 1, 1992, a reasonable interpretation of the rules set forth in section 401 (k) and (m) of the Internal Revenue Code (as in effect during those years) may be relied upon to determine whether a cash or deferred arrangement was qualified during those years.

(iii) *Restructuring*—(A) *General rule.* In determining whether the requirements of section 401(k) are satisfied for plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, a plan may be treated as consisting of two or more component plans, each consisting of all of the allocations and other benefits, rights, and features provided to a group of employees under the plan. See § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c). An employee may not be included in more than one component plan of the same plan for a plan year under this method. If this method is used for a plan year, the requirements of section 401(k) are applied separately with respect to each component plan for the plan year. Thus, for example, the actual deferral ratio and the amount of excess contributions, if any, of each eligible employee under each component plan must be determined as if the component plan were a separate plan. This method applies solely for purposes of section 401(k). Thus, for example, the requirements of section 410(b) must still be satisfied by the entire plan.

(B) *Identification of component plans*—(*1*) *Minimum coverage requirement.* The group of eligible employees described in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(4) under each component plan must separately satisfy the requirements of section 410(b) as if the component plan were a separate plan. Component plans may not be aggregated to satisfy this requirement.

(*2*) *Commonality requirement.* The group of employees used to identify a component plan must share some common attribute or attributes, other than similar actual deferral ratios. Permissible common attributes include, for example, employment at the same work site, in the same job category, for the same division or subsidiary, or for a unit acquired in a specific merger or

acquisition, employment for the same number of years, compensation under the same method, *e.g.*, salaried or hourly, coverage under the same contribution formula, and attributes that could be used as the basis of a classification that would be treated as reasonable under § 1.410(b)–4(b). Employees whose only common attribute is the same or similar actual deferral ratios, or another attribute having substantially the same effect as the same or similar actual deferral ratios, are not considered as sharing a common attribute for this purpose. This rule applies regardless of whether the component plan or the plan of which it is a part satisfies the ratio or percentage test of section 410(b).

(4) *State and local government plans*—(i) *Plans adopted before May 6, 1986.* A plan adopted by a state or local government prior to May 6, 1986, is subject to the transitional rules of paragraph (h)(4) (ii) or (iii) of this section.

(ii) *Plan years beginning before January 1, 1996.* (A) The plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) merely because of the nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement.

(B) Employer contributions under the nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement are considered to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4).

(C) Except as provided in paragraphs (a)(7) and (f) of this section, elective contributions under the arrangement are treated as employer contributions under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as if the arrangement were a qualified cash or deferred arrangement. See § 1.401(k)–1(a)(4)(ii). See § 1.402(a)–1(d) for rules governing when elective contributions under the arrangement are includible in an employee's gross income.

(iii) *Collectively bargained plans.* The transition rules in paragraph (h)(4)(ii) of this section apply to a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers and adopted by a state or local government before May 6, 1986, effective on the date the provisions of section 401(k) and this section would be effective under paragraph (h)(2) of this section.

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[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47617, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10818, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46830, Sept. 3, 1993]

§1.401(l)–1 Permitted disparity in employer-provided contributions or benefits.

(a) *Permitted disparity*—(1) *In general.* Section 401(a)(4) provides that a plan is a qualified plan only if the amount of contributions or benefits provided under the plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees. See §1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2). Section 401(a)(5)(C) provides that a plan does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated employees merely because of disparities in employer-provided contributions or benefits provided to, or on behalf of, employees under the plan that are permitted

under section 401(l). Thus, if a plan satisfies section 401(l), permitted disparities in employer-provided contributions or benefits under a plan are disregarded, by reason of section 401(a)(5)(C), in determining whether the plan satisfies any of the safe harbors under §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(2) and 1.401(a)(4)–3(b). However, even if disparities in employer-provided contributions or benefits under a plan are permitted under section 401(l) and thus do not cause the plan to fail to satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2), the plan may still fail to satisfy section 401(a)(4) for other reasons. Similarly, even if disparities in employer-provided contributions or benefits under a plan are not permitted under section 401(l) and thus may not be disregarded under section 401(a)(4) by reason of section 401(l), the plan may still be found to be nondiscriminatory under the tests of section 401(a)(4), including the rules for imputing permitted disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7.

(2) *Overview.* Rules relating to disparities in employer-provided contributions under a defined contribution plan are provided in § 1.401(l)–2. For rules relating to disparities in employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan, see § 401(l)–3. For rules relating to the application of section 401(l) to a plan maintained by a railroad employer, see § 1.401(l)–4. For rules relating to the overall permitted disparity limits, see § 1.401(l)–5. For rules relating to the effective date of section 401(l), see § 1.401(l)–6.

(3) *Exclusive rules.* The rules provided in §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6 are the exclusive means for a plan to satisfy sections 401(l) and 401(a)(5)(C). Accordingly, a plan that provides disparities in employer-provided contributions or benefits that are not permitted under §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6 does not satisfy section 401(l) or 401(a)(5)(C).

(4) *Exceptions.* Sections 401(a)(5)(C) and 401(l) are not available in the following arrangements—

(i) A plan maintained by an employer, determined for purposes of the Federal Insurance Contributions Act or the Railroad Retirement Tax Act, as applicable, that does not pay any wages within the meaning of section 3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e). For this purpose, a plan maintained for a self-employed individual within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), who is also subject to the tax under section 1401, is deemed to be a plan maintained by an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section 3121(a).

(ii) A plan, or the portion of a plan, that is an employee stock ownership plan described in section 4975(e)(7) (an ESOP) or a tax credit employee stock ownership plan described in section 409(a) (a TRASOP), except as provided in § 54.4975–11(a)(7)(ii) of this chapter, which contains a limited exception to this rule for certain ESOPs in existence on November 1, 1977.

(iii) With respect to elective contributions as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(3) under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(4)(i) or with respect to employee or matching contributions defined in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(6) or (f)(12), respectively.

(iv) With respect to contributions to a simplified employee pension made under a salary reduction arrangement described in section 408(k)(6) (a SARSEP).

(5) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, or other documents of general applicability, prescribe additional rules that may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 401(l), including rules applying section 401(l) with respect to an employer that pays wages within the meaning of section 3121(a) or compensation within the meaning of section 3231(e) for some years and not other years.

(b) *Relationship to other requirements.* Unless explicitly provided otherwise, section 401(l) does not provide an exception to any other requirement under section 401(a). Thus, for example, even if the plan complies with section 401(l), the plan may not provide a benefit lower than the minimum benefit required under section 416. Moreover, a plan may not adjust benefits in any manner that results in a decrease in any employee's accrued benefit in violation of section 411(d)(6) and section 411(b)(1)(G). However, a plan does not fail to satisfy section 401(l) merely because, in order to ensure compliance with section 411, an employee's accrued

benefit under the plan is defined as the greater of the employee's previously accrued benefit and the benefit determined under a strict application of the plan's benefit formula and accrual method. See section 401(a)(15) for additional rules relating to circumstances under which plan benefits may not be decreased because of increases in social security benefits.

(c) *Definitions.* In applying §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6, the definitions in this paragraph (c) govern unless otherwise provided.

(1) *Accumulation plan. Accumulation plan* means an accumulation plan within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(2) *Average annual compensation. Average annual compensation* means average annual compensation within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–3(e)(2).

(3) *Base benefit percentage. Base benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under a defined benefit excess plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation at or below the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(4) *Base contribution percentage. Base contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under a defined contribution excess plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation at or below the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(5) *Benefit formula. Benefit formula* means benefit formula within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(6) *Benefit, right, or feature. Benefit, right, or feature* means a benefit, right, or feature within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(7) *Covered compensation*—(i) *In general. Covered compensation* for an employee means the average (without indexing) of the taxable wage bases in effect for each calendar year during the 35-year period ending with the last day of the calendar year in which the employee attains (or will attain) social security retirement age. A 35-year period is used for all individuals regardless of the year of birth of the individual. In determining an employee's covered compensation for a plan year, the taxable wage base for all calendar years beginning after the first day of the plan year is assumed to be the same as the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year. An employee's covered compensation for a plan year beginning after the 35-year period applicable under this paragraph (c)(7)(i) is the employee's covered compensation for the plan year during which the 35-year period ends. An employee's covered compensation for a plan year beginning before the 35-year period applicable under this paragraph (c)(7)(i) is the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year.

(ii) *Special rules*—(A) *Rounded table.* For purposes of determining the amount of an employee's covered compensation under paragraph (c)(7)(i) of this section, a plan may use tables, provided by the Commissioner, that are developed by rounding the actual amounts of covered compensation for different years of birth.

(B) *Proposed regulation definition.* For plan years beginning before January 1, 1995, in lieu of the definition of covered compensation contained in paragraph (c)(7)(i) of this section, a plan may define covered compensation as the average (without indexing) of the taxable wage bases in effect for each calendar year during the 35-year period ending with the last day of the calendar year preceding the calendar year in which the employee attains (or will attain) social security retirement age.

(iii) *Period for using covered compensation amount.* A plan must generally provide that an employee's covered compensation is automatically adjusted for each plan year. However, a plan may use an amount of covered compensation for employees equal to each employee's covered compensation (as defined in paragraph (c)(7)(i) or (c)(7)(ii) of this section) for a plan year earlier than the current plan year, provided the earlier plan year is the same for all employees and is not earlier than the later of—

(A) The plan year that begins 5 years before the current plan year, and

(B) The plan year beginning in 1989.

In the case of an accumulation plan, the benefit accrued for an employee in

prior years is not affected by changes in the employee's covered compensation that occur in later years.

(8) *Defined benefit plan. Defined benefit plan* means a defined benefit plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(9) *Defined contribution plan. Defined contribution plan* means a defined contribution plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9. In addition, for purposes of §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6, a defined contribution plan includes a simplified employee pension as defined in section 408(k) (SEP), other than a SEP (or portion or a SEP) that is a salary reduction arrangement described in section 408(k)(6) (SARSEP).

(10) *Disparity. Disparity* means—

(i) In the case of a defined contribution excess plan, the amount by which the excess contribution percentage exceeds the base contribution percentage,

(ii) In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the amount by which the excess benefit percentage exceeds the base benefit percentage, and

(iii) In the case of an offset plan, the offset percentage.

(11) *Employee. Employee* means employee within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(12) *Employer. Employer* means the employer within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(13) *Employer contributions. Employer contributions* means all amounts taken into account with respect to an employee under a plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(ii).

(14) *Excess benefit percentage. Excess benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under a defined benefit excess plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation above the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(15) *Excess contribution percentage. Excess contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under a defined contribution excess plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation above the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(16) *Excess plan*—(i) *Defined benefit excess plan. Defined benefit excess plan* means a defined benefit plan under which the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined with respect to average annual compensation above the integration level under the plan (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation) is greater than the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined with respect to average annual compensation at or below the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(ii) *Defined contribution excess plan. Defined contribution excess plan* means a defined contribution plan under which the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee with respect to plan year compensation above the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation) is greater than the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee with respect to plan year compensation at or below the integration level (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(17) *Final average compensation*—(i) *In general. Final average compensation* for an employee means the average of the employee's annual section 414(s) compensation for the 3-consecutive-year period ending with or within the plan year or for the employee's period of employment if shorter. The year in which an employee terminates employment may be disregarded in determining final average compensation. The definition of final average compensation used in the plan must be applied consistently with respect to all employees. For example, if the plan provides that the year in which the employee terminates employment is disregarded in determining final average compensation, the year must be disregarded for all employees who terminate employment in that year. The plan may specify any 3-consecutive-year period ending in the plan year, provided the period is determined consistently for all employees. See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)(iii) and § 1.414(s)–1(f) for rules permitting service and compensation with another employer to be

taken into account for purposes of nondiscrimination testing, including satisfying section 401(l).

(ii) *Limitations.* In determining an employee's final average compensation under this paragraph (c)(17), annual section 414(s) compensation for any year in excess of the taxable wage base in effect at the beginning of that year must not be taken into account. A plan may provide that each employee's final average compensation for a plan year is limited to the employee's average annual compensation for the plan year.

(iii) *Determination of section 414(s) compensation.* A plan must use the same definition of section 414(s) compensation to determine final average compensation as the plan uses to determine average annual compensation (or plan year compensation in the case of an accumulation plan).

(18) *Gross benefit percentage. Gross benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under an offset plan (before application of the offset) with respect to an employee's average annual compensation (expressed as a percentage of average annual compensation).

(19) *Highly compensated employee. Highly compensated employee* means HCE within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(20) *Integration level. Integration level* means the dollar amount specified in an excess plan at or below which the rate of employer-provided contributions or benefits (expressed in each case as a percentage of an employee's plan year compensation or average annual compensation up to the specified dollar amount) under the plan is less than the rate of employer-provided contributions or benefits (expressed in each case as a percentage of the employee's plan year compensation or average annual compensation above the specified dollar amount) under the plan above such dollar amount.

(21) *Nonexcludable employee. Nonexcludable employee* means nonexcludable employee within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(22) *Nonhighly compensated employee. Nonhighly compensated employee* means NHCE within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(23) *Offset level. Offset level* means the dollar limit specified in the plan on the amount of each employee's final average compensation taken into account in determining the offset under an offset plan.

(24) *Offset percentage. Offset percentage* means the rate at which an employee's employer-provided benefit is reduced or offset under an offset plan (expressed as a percentage of the employee's final average compensation up to the offset level).

(25) *Offset plan. Offset plan* means a defined benefit plan that is not a defined benefit excess plan and that provides that each employee's employer-provided benefit is reduced or offset by a specified percentage of the employee's final average compensation up to the offset level under the plan.

(26) *PIA. PIA* or *primary insurance amount* means the old-age insurance benefit under section 202 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 402) payable to each employee at a single age that is not earlier than age 62 and not later than age 65. PIA must be determined under the Social Security Act as in effect at the time the employee's offset is determined. Thus, it is determined without assuming any future increases in compensation, any future increases in the taxable wage base, any changes in the formulas used under the Social Security Act to determine PIA (for example, changes in the breakpoints), or any future increases in the consumer price index. However, it may be assumed that the employee will continue to receive compensation at the same rate as that received at the time the offset is being determined, until reaching the single age described in the first sentence of this paragraph (c)(26). PIA must be determined in a consistent manner for all employees and in accordance with revenue rulings or other guidance provided by the Commissioner.

(27) *Plan. Plan* means a plan within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12 or a component plan treated as a plan under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c).

(28) *Plan year compensation. Plan year compensation* means plan year compensation within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(29) *Qualified plan. Qualified plan* means a qualified plan within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(30) *Section 401(l) plan. Section 401(*l*) plan* means a section 401(l) plan within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(31) *Section 414(s) compensation. Section 414(s) compensation* means section 414(s) compensation within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(32) *Social security retirement age. Social security retirement age* for an employee means the social security retirement age of the employee as determined under section 415(b)(8).

(33) *Straight life annuity. Straight life annuity* means a straight life annuity within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

(34) *Taxable wage base. Taxable wage base* means the contribution and benefit base under section 230 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 430).

(35) *Year of service. Year of service* means a year of service as defined in the plan for purposes of the benefit formula and the accrual method under the plan, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3) for rules on years of service that may be taken into account for purposes of nondiscrimination testing, including satisfying section 401(l).

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47618, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10818, 10951, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46831, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(l)–2 Permitted disparity for defined contribution plans.

(a) *Requirements*—(1) *In general.* Disparity in the rates of employer contributions allocated to employees' accounts under a defined contribution plan is permitted under section 401(l) and this section for a plan year only if the plan satisfies paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(5) of this section. A plan that otherwise satisfies this paragraph (a) will not be considered to fail section 401(l) merely because it contains one or more provisions described in § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3)(i)(C) for special rules applicable to target benefit plans.

(2) *Excess plan requirement.* The plan must be a defined contribution excess plan.

(3) *Maximum disparity.* The disparity for all employees under the plan must not exceed the maximum permitted disparity prescribed in paragraph (b) of this section.

(4) *Uniform disparity.* The disparity for all employees under the plan must be uniform within the meaning of paragraph (c) of this section.

(5) *Integration level.* The integration level specified in the plan must satisfy paragraph (d) of this section.

(b) *Maximum permitted disparity*—(1) *In general.* The disparity provided for the plan year must not exceed the maximum excess allowance as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. In addition, the plan must satisfy the overall permitted disparity limits of § 1.401(l)–5.

(2) *Maximum excess allowance.* The maximum excess allowance for a plan year is the lesser of—

(i) The base contribution percentage, or

(ii) The greater of—

(A) 5.7 percent, reduced as required under paragraph (d) of this section, or

(B) The percentage rate of tax under section 3111(a), in effect as of the beginning of the plan year, that is attributable to the old age insurance portion of the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance provisions of the Social Security Act, reduced as required under paragraph (d) of this section. For a year in which the percentage rate of tax described in this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) exceeds 5.7 percent, the Commissioner will publish the rate of such tax and a revised table under paragraph (d)(4) of this section.

(c) *Uniform disparity*—(1) *In general.* The disparity provided under a plan is uniform only if the plan uses the same base contribution percentage and the same excess contribution percentage for all employees in the plan.

(2) *Deemed uniformity*—(i) *In general.* The disparity under a plan does not fail to be uniform for purposes of this paragraph (c) merely because the plan contains one or more of the provisions described in paragraphs (c)(2) (ii) and (iii) of this section.

(ii) *Overall permitted disparity.* The plan provides that, in the case of each employee who has reached the cumulative permitted disparity limit applicable to the employee under § 1.401(l)–5(c), employer contributions are allocated to the account of the employee

with respect to the employee's total plan year compensation at the excess contribution percentage.

(iii) *Non-FICA employees.* The plan provides that, in the case of each employee under the plan with respect to whom none of the taxes under section 3111(a), section 3221, or section 1401 is required to be paid, employer contributions are allocated to the account of the employee with respect to the employee's total plan year compensation at the excess contribution percentage.

(d) *Integration level*—(1) *In general.* The integration level under the plan must satisfy paragraph (d)(2), (d)(3), or (d)(4) of this section, as modified by paragraph (d)(5) of this section in the case of a short plan year. If a reduction applies to the disparity factor under this paragraph (d), the reduced factor is used for all purposes in determining whether the permitted disparity rules for defined contribution plans are satisfied.

(2) *Taxable wage base.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(2) is satisfied only if the integration level under the plan for each employee is the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year.

(3) *Single dollar amount.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(3) is satisfied only if the integration level under the plan for all employees is a single dollar amount (either specified in the plan or determined under a formula specified in the plan) that does not exceed the greater of $10,000 or 20 percent of the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year.

(4) *Intermediate amount.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(4) is satisfied only if—

(i) The integration level under the plan for all employees is a single dollar amount (either specified in the plan or determined under a formula specified in the plan) that is greater than the highest amount determined under paragraph (d)(3) of this section and less than the taxable wage base, and

(ii) The plan adjusts the factor determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section in accordance with the table below.

TABLE

If the integration level		The 5.7 percent factor in the maximum excess allowance is reduced to—
Is more than	But not more than	
Greater of $10,000 or 20% of taxable wage base.	80% of taxable wage base.	4.3%
80% of taxable wage base.	Amount less than taxable wage base.	5.4%

(5) *Prorated integration level for short plan year.* If a plan uses paragraph (2) or (4) of the definition of plan year compensation under § 1.401(a)(4)–12 (i.e., section 414(s) compensation for the plan year or the period of plan participation) and has a plan year that comprises fewer than 12 months, the integration level under the plan for each employee must be an amount equal to the otherwise applicable integration level described in paragraph (d)(2), (d)(3), or (d)(4) of this section, multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of months in the plan year, and the denominator of which is 12. No adjustment to the maximum excess allowance is required as a result of the application of this paragraph (d)(5), other than any adjustment already required under paragraph (d)(4) of this section.

(e) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this section. In each example, 5.7 percent exceeds the percentage rate of tax described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section.

Example 1. Employer X maintains a profit-sharing plan with the calendar year as its plan year. For the 1989 plan year, the plan provides that the account of each employee who has plan year compensation in excess of the taxable wage base in effect at the beginning of the plan year will receive an allocation for the plan year of 5.7 percent of plan year compensation in excess of the taxable wage base. The plan provides that no allocation will be made to the account of any employee for the plan year with respect to plan year compensation not in excess of the taxable wage base. The maximum excess allowance is exceeded for the 1989 plan year because the excess contribution percentage (5.7 percent) for the plan year exceeds the base contribution percentage (0 percent) for the plan year by more than the lesser of the base contribution percentage (0 percent) or the percentage determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section (5.7 percent) for the plan year.

Example 2. Employer Y maintains a money purchase pension plan with the calendar year as its plan year. For the 1990 plan year, the plan provides that the account of each employee will receive an allocation of 5 percent of the employee's plan year compensation up to the taxable wage base in effect at the beginning of the plan year plus an allocation of 10 percent of the employee's plan year compensation in excess of the taxable wage base. The maximum excess allowance is not exceeded for the plan year because the excess contribution percentage (10 percent) for the plan year does not exceed the base contribution percentage (5 percent) for the plan year by more than the lesser of the base contribution percentage (5 percent) or the percentage determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section (5.7 percent) for the plan year.

Example 3. Assume the same facts as in *Example 2,* except that the plan provides that, with respect to plan year compensation in excess of the taxable wage base, the account of each employee will receive an allocation for the plan year of 12 percent of such compensation. The maximum excess allowance is exceeded for the plan year because the excess contribution percentage (12 percent) for the plan year exceeds the base contribution percentage (5 percent) for the plan year by more than the lesser of the base contribution percentage (5 percent) or the percentage determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section (5.7 percent) for the plan year.

Example 4. Employer Z maintains a money purchase pension plan with a plan year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. The taxable wage base for the 1990 calendar year is $51,300 and the taxable wage base for the 1991 calendar year is $53,400. For the plan year beginning July 1, 1990, and ending June 30, 1991, the plan provides that the account of each employee will receive an allocation of 4 percent of the employee's plan year compensation up to $53,400 plus an allocation of 6 percent of the employee's plan year compensation in excess of $53,400. Although the excess contribution percentage (6 percent) for the plan year does not exceed the base contribution percentage (4 percent) for the plan year by more than the lesser of the base contribution percentage (4 percent) or the percentage determined under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section (5.7 percent), the plan does not satisfy paragraph (a)(5) of this section because the integration level of $53,400 exceeds the maximum permitted integration level of $51,300 (the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year).

Example 5. Assume the same facts as in *Example 4,* except that for the plan year beginning July 1, 1990, and ending June 30, 1991, the plan provides that the account of each employee will receive an allocation of 5 percent of the employee's plan year compensation up to $30,000 plus an allocation of 9 percent of the employee's plan year compensation in excess of $30,000. The integration level of $30,000 is 58 percent of the taxable wage base of $51,300 for the 1990 calendar year. The maximum excess allowance is not exceeded for the plan year because the excess contribution percentage (9 percent) for the plan year does not exceed the base contribution percentage (5 percent) for the plan year by more than the lesser of the base contribution percentage (5 percent) or the percentage determined under paragraphs (b)(2)(ii) and (d) of this section (4.3 percent) for the plan year.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47621, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10818, 10951, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46832, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(l)–3 Permitted disparity for defined benefit plans.

(a) *Requirements*—(1) *In general.* Disparity in the rates of employer-provided benefits under a defined benefit plan is permitted under section 401(l) and this section for a plan year only if the plan satisfies paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(6) of this section. A plan that otherwise satisfies this paragraph (a) will not be considered to fail section 401(l) merely because it contains one or more provisions described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(6) (such as multiple formulas). Section 401(a)(5)(D) and § 1.401(a)(5)–1(d) provide other rules under which benefits provided under a defined benefit plan (including defined benefit excess and offset plans) may be limited. See § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(5)(viii) for special rules under which an insurance contract plan may satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) and section 401(l). See § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(iii)(B) for special rules applicable to cash balance plans.

(2) *Excess or offset plan requirement.* The plan must be a defined benefit excess plan or an offset plan.

(3) *Maximum disparity.* The disparity for all employees under the plan must not exceed the maximum permitted disparity prescribed in paragraph (b) of this section.

(4) *Uniform disparity.* The disparity for all employees under the plan must be uniform within the meaning of paragraph (c) of this section.

(5) *Integration or offset level.* The integration or offset level specified in the plan must satisfy paragraph (d) of this section.

(6) *Benefits, rights, and features.* The benefits, rights, and features provided

under the plan must satisfy paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(b) *Maximum permitted disparity*—(1) *In general.* In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the disparity provided for the plan year may not exceed the maximum excess allowance as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. In the case of an offset plan, the disparity provided for the plan year may not exceed the maximum offset allowance as defined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section. In addition, either type of plan must satisfy the overall permitted disparity limits of § 1.401(l)–5.

(2) *Maximum excess allowance.* The maximum excess allowance for a plan year is the lesser of—

(i) 0.75 percent, reduced as required under paragraphs (d) and (e) of this section, or

(ii) The base benefit percentage for the plan year.

(3) *Maximum offset allowance.* The maximum offset allowance for a plan year is the lesser of—

(i) 0.75 percent, reduced as required under paragraphs (d) and (e) of this section, or

(ii) One-half of the gross benefit percentage, multiplied by a fraction (not to exceed one), the numerator of which is the employee's average annual compensation, and the denominator of which is the employee's final average compensation up to the offset level.

(4) *Rules of application*—(i) *Disparity provided for the plan year.* Disparity provided for the plan year generally means the disparity provided under the plan's benefit formula for the employee's year of service with respect to the plan year. However, if a plan determines each employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C), disparity provided under the plan also means the disparity in the benefit accrued for the employee for the plan year. Thus, a plan using the fractional accrual method must satisfy this paragraph (b) with respect to the plan's benefit formula and with respect to the benefits accrued for the plan year.

(ii) *Reduction in disparity rate.* Any reductions in the 0.75–percent factor required under paragraphs (d) and (e) of this section are cumulative.

(iii) *Normal and optional forms of benefit*—(A) *In general.* A plan satisfies the maximum permitted disparity requirement of this paragraph (b) only if the plan satisfies this paragraph (b) with respect to each optional form of benefit (including the normal form of benefit) provided under the plan.

(B) *Level annuity forms.* In the case of an optional form of benefit payable as a level annuity over a period of not less than the life of the employee, the optional form must satisfy the maximum permitted disparity requirement of this paragraph (b). Thus, for example, if the form of a defined benefit plan's normal retirement benefit is an annuity for life with a 10-year certain feature and the plan permits employees to elect an optional form of benefit in the form of a straight life annuity, the plan must satisfy the maximum disparity requirement of this paragraph (b) with respect to each of the optional forms of benefit. An annuity that decreases only after the death of the employee, or that decreases only after the death of either the employee or the joint annuitant, is considered a level annuity for purposes of this paragraph (b).

(C) *Other forms.* In the case of an optional form of benefit that is not described in paragraph (b)(4)(iii)(B) of this section, the optional form must satisfy the maximum permitted disparity requirement of this paragraph (b), when the respective portions of the optional form are normalized under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–12 to a straight life annuity commencing at the same time as the optional form of benefit, regardless of whether the straight life annuity form is actually provided under the plan. In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the respective portions are the portion of the optional form attributable to average annual compensation up to the integration level (the ''base portion'') and the portion of the optional form attributable to average annual compensation in excess of the integration level (the ''excess portion''). In the case of an offset plan, the respective portions are the optional form determined without regard to the offset (the ''gross amount'') and the offset applied to the gross amount to determine the optional form (the ''offset amount'').

(D) *Post-retirement cost-of-living adjustments—(1) In general.* A benefit does not fail to be a level annuity described in paragraph (b)(4)(iii)(B) of this section merely because it provides an automatic post-retirement cost-of-living adjustment that satisfies paragraph (b)(4)(iii)(D)(*2*) of this section. Thus, increases in the employee's annuity pursuant to such a cost-of-living adjustment do not cause the disparity provided under the optional form of benefit to exceed the maximum disparity permitted under this paragraph (b). For rules on ad hoc post-retirement cost-of-living adjustments, see § 1.401(a)(4)–10(b).

(*2*) *Requirements.* A cost-of-living adjustment satisfies this paragaph (b)(4)(iii)(D)(*2*) if—

(*i*) It is included in the accrued benefit of all employees, and.

(*ii*) It increases, on a uniform and consistent basis, the benefits of all former employees who are no younger than age 62, at a rate no greater than adjustments to social security benefits under section 215(i)(2)(A) of the Social Security Act that have occurred since the later of the employee's attainment of age 62 or commencement of benefits.

(E) *Section 417(e) exception.* A plan will not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b) merely because the disparity in a benefit that is subject to the interest rate restrictions of sections 401(a)(11) and 417(e) exceeds the maximum disparity that would otherwise be allowed under this paragraph (b) if the increase in disparity is required to satisfy § 1.417(e)–1(d). In applying the exception in this paragraph (b)(4)(iii)(E), for purposes of determining what is required under § 1.417(e)–1(d), a plan may use the rate described in § 1.417(e)–1(d)(2)(i) for all employees, without regard to whether the present value of an employee's vested benefit exceeds $25,000.

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (b). Unless otherwise provided, the following facts apply. The plan is noncontributory and is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. The plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the integration level; in the case of an offset plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the offset level and provides that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation. Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65.

Example 1. Plan N is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 0.5 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service. The plan provides no benefits with respect to average annual compensation up to the integration level. The disparity provided under the plan exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage (0.5 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (0 percent) by more than the base benefit percentage (0 percent).

Example 2. Plan O is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.75 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. The disparity provided under the plan satisfies this paragraph (b) because the offset percentage (0.75 percent) does not exceed the maximum offset allowance equal to the lesser of 0.75 percent or one-half of the gross benefit percentage (1 percent).

Example 3. Plan P is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 0.5 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.25 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The disparity provided under the plan exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage (1.25 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (0.5 percent) by more than the base benefit percentage (0.5 percent).

Example 4. Plan Q is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.75 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. The disparity under the plan exceeds the maximum offset allowance because the offset percentage exceeds one-half of the gross benefit percentage (0.5 percent).

Example 5. (a) Plan R is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.5 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of

service up to 35. The plan determines an employee's average annual compensation using an averaging period comprising five consecutive 12-month periods and taking into account the employee's compensation for the ten consecutive 12-month periods ending with the plan year. The plan does not provide that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation.

(b) Employee A has average annual compensation of $20,000, final average compensation of $25,000, and covered compensation of $32,000. The maximum offset allowance applicable to Employee A for the plan year under paragraph (b)(3) of this section is one-half of the gross benefit percentage multiplied by the ratio, not to exceed one, of Employee A's average annual compensation to Employee A's final average compensation up to the offset level. Thus, the maximum offset allowance is 0.4 percent (½ × 1 percent×$20,000/$25,000). With respect to Employee A, the benefit formula provides an offset that exceeds the maximum offset allowance. The plan must therefore reduce Employee A's offset percentage to 0.4 percent. (Under paragraph (c)(2)(viii) of this section, Employee A's adjusted disparity rate is deemed uniform.)

(c) Alternatively, under § 1.401(l)–1(c)(17)(ii) (the definition of final average compensation), the plan could specify that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the amount of the employee's average annual compensation. Thus, the ratio of average annual compensation to final average compensation would always be equal to at least one, and the maximum offset allowance under the plan would be one-half of the gross benefit percentage.

Example 6. Plan S is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a base benefit percentage of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level for each year of service. The plan also provides, for each of the first 10 years of service, an excess benefit percentage of 1.85 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level. For each year of service after 10, the plan provides an excess benefit percentage of 1.65 percent of the employee's average annual compensation in excess of the integration level. The disparity provided under the plan exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage for each of the first ten years of service (1.85 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (1 percent) by more than 0.75 percent.

Example 7. The facts are the same as in *Example 6,* except that the plan provides an excess benefit percentage of 1.65 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level for each of the first 10 years of service and an excess benefit percentage of 1.85 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level for each year of service after 10. The disparity provided under the plan exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage for each year of service after 10 (1.85 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (1 percent) by more than 0.75 percent.

Example 8. Plan T is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.0 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.7 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35, payable in the form of a joint and survivor annuity. The plan also allows an employee to receive the retirement benefit in the form of an actuarially equivalent straight life annuity. The actuarially equivalent straight life annuity equals 1.09 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.85 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The disparity provided under the plan with respect to the straight life annuity form of benefit (0.76 percent) exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage (1.85 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (1.09 percent) by more than 0.75 percent.

Example 9. Plan U is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.0 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.7 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35, payable in the form of a straight life annuity. Plan U provides a single sum optional form of benefit at normal retirement age equal to 100 times the monthly annuity payable at that age. Thus, if an employee elects the single sum optional form of benefit, the base portion of the single sum benefit is 8.33 percent (100 times 1.0 percent/12) of average annual compensation up to the integration level per year of service, and the excess portion of the single sum benefit is 14.17 percent (100 times 1.7 percent/12) of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level per year of service. Each respective portion of the single sum option is normalized to a straight life annuity commencing at normal retirement age, using 8-percent interest and the UP–84 mortality table. After normalization, the base portion of the benefit is 1.02 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, and the excess portion of the benefit is 1.73 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level. The single sum optional form of benefit satisfies this paragraph (b) because the disparity provided in the optional form of benefit does not exceed the maximum excess allowance.

(c) *Uniform disparity*—(1) *In general.* The disparity provided under a defined benefit excess plan is uniform only if the plan uses the same base benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees with the same number of years of service. The disparity provided under an offset plan is uniform only if the plan uses the same gross benefit percentage and the same offset percentage for all employees with the same number of years of service. The disparity provided under a plan that determines each employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C) is uniform only if the plan satisfies one of the deemed uniformity rules of paragraph (c)(2) (ii) or (iii) of this section.

(2) *Deemed uniformity*—(i) *In general.* The disparity provided under a plan does not fail to be uniform for purposes of this paragraph (c) merely because the plan contains one or more of the provisions described in paragraphs (c)(2) (ii) through (ix) of this section.

(ii) *Use of fractional accrual and disparity for 35 years.* The plan contains a benefit formula as described in paragraphs (c)(2)(ii) (A) and (B) of this section, and the plan determines each employee's accrued benefit under the method described in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(B), i.e., by multiplying the employee's fractional rule benefit (within the meaning of §1.411(b)–1(b)(3)(ii)(A)) by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's years of service determined as of the plan year, and the denominator of which is the employee's projected years of service as of normal retirement age.

(A) For each year of service at least up to 35, the benefit plan formula provides the same base benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees in the case of a defined benefit excess plan or the same gross benefit percentage and the same offset percentage for all employees in the case of an offset plan.

(B) For each additional year of service, the benefit formula provides a uniform percentage of all average annual compensation that is no greater than the excess benefit percentage or the gross benefit percentage under paragraph (c)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, whichever is applicable.

(iii) *Use of fractional accrual and disparity for fewer than 35 years.* The plan contains a benefit formula as described in paragraphs (c)(2)(iii) (A) through (C) of this section, and the plan determines each employee's accrued benefit under the method described in §1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(B).

(A) For each year in the employee's initial period of service comprising fewer than 35 years, the benefit formula provides the same base benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees in the case of a defined benefit excess plan or the same gross benefit percentage and the same offset percentage for all employees in the case of an offset plan.

(B) For each year of service after the initial period and at least up to 35, the benefit formula provides a uniform percentage of all average annual compensation, that is equal to the excess benefit percentage or the gross benefit percentage under paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section.

(C) For each year of service after the period described in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(B) of this section, the benefit formula provides a uniform percentage of all average annual compensation that is no greater than the excess benefit percentage or the gross benefit percentage under paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section.

(iv) *Different social security retirement ages.* The benefit formula uses the same excess benefit percentage or the same gross benefit percentage for all employees with the same number of years of service and, for employees with social security retirement ages later than age 65, adjusts the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance as required under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, by increasing the base benefit percentage in the case of a defined benefit excess plan, or reducing the offset percentage in the case of an offset plan.

(v) *Reduction for integration level.* The plan uses an integration level or offset level greater than each employee's covered compensation and makes individual reductions in the 0.75-percent factor, as permitted under paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(B) of this section, by increasing the base benefit percentage in the case of a defined benefit excess plan or

reducing the offset percentage in the case of an offset plan.

(vi) *Overall permitted disparity*—(A) *In general.* The benefit formula provides that, with respect to each employee's years of service after reaching the cumulative permitted disparity limit applicable to the employee under § 1.401(l)–5(c), employer-provided benefits are determined with respect to the employee's total average annual compensation at a rate equal to the nondisparate percentage. For purposes of this paragraph (c)(2)(vi), the nondisparate percentage is generally the excess benefit percentage or gross benefit percentage otherwise applicable under the benefit formula to an employee with the same number of years of service.

(B) *Unit credit plans.* In the case of a unit credit plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(3), if the 411(b)(1)(B) limit percentage is less than the nondisparate percentage, the 411(b)(1)(B) limit percentage must be substituted for the nondisparate percentage. For this purpose, the 411(b)(1)(B) limit percentage is 133⅓ percent of the smallest base benefit percentage, or 133⅓ percent of the smallest difference between the gross benefit percentage and the offset percentage, whichever is applicable, where the smallest base benefit percentage or difference is determined by reference to the benefit formula as applied to employees with no more years of service than the employee.

(C) *Fractional accrual plans.* In the case of a fractional accrual plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4), the benefit formula must provide for the nondisparate percentage with respect to years of service after the employee would reach the cumulative permitted disparity limit applicable to the employee under § 1.401(l)–5(c) as modified by this paragraph (c)(2)(vi)(C). Solely for purposes of this paragraph (c)(2)(vi)(C), the employee's annual disparity fractions (and thus the year in which the employee would reach the cumulative permitted disparity limit) are determined using the disparity provided under the benefit formula (rather than the special rule for fractional accrual plans in § 1.401(l)–5(b)(8)(v)).

(vii) *Non-FICA employees.* The plan provides that, in the case of each employee under the plan with respect to whom none of the taxes under section 3111(a), section 3221, or section 1401 is required to be paid, employer-provided benefits are determined with respect to the employee's total average annual compensation at the excess benefit percentage or gross benefit percentage applicable to an employee with the same number of years of service.

(viii) *Average annual compensation adjustment for offset plan.* In the case of each employee whose final average compensation exceeds the employee's average annual compensation, the plan adjusts the offset percentage as required under paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section in order to satisfy the maximum offset allowance.

(ix) *PIA offsets.* In the case of an offset plan, the plan provides that the offset applied to each employee's benefit is the lesser of a specified percentage of the employee's PIA and an offset that otherwise satisfies the requirements of this section (the ''section 401(l) overlay''). The specified percentage of PIA must be the same for all employees with the same number of years of service. In the case of a plan that determines each employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C), the specified percentage of PIA is deemed to be the same for all employees with the same number of years of service if the plan satisfies either of the deemed uniformity rules in paragraph (c)(2)(ii) or (iii) of this section, substituting ''offset, expressed as a percentage of PIA, per year of service'' for the term ''offset percentage'' (in addition to satisfying either of those rules with respect to the section 401(l) overlay).

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (c). Unless otherwise provided, the following facts apply. The plan is noncontributory and is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. The plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the integration level; in the case of an offset plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the offset level and

provides that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation. Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65.

Example 1. Plan M is a defined benefit excess plan that satisfies the 133⅓ percent accrual rule of section 411(b)(1)(B). The plan provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.0 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.65 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 25. The plan also provides a benefit of 1.0 percent of all average annual compensation for each year of service in excess of 25. The disparity provided under the plan is uniform because the plan uses the same base and excess benefit percentages for all employees with the same number of years of service. If the plan formula were the same except that it used a different excess benefit percentage for some of the years of service between one and 25, the disparity under the plan would continue to be uniform.

Example 2. Plan O is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 50 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level and 68.75 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the employee's service, up to 25 years, and the denominator of which is 25. The plan determines an employee's accrued benefit as described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(B). The benefit formula thus provides a base benefit percentage of 2 percent (50 percent×1/25) and an excess benefit percentage of 2.75 percent (68.75 percent×1/25) for each of an employee's first 25 years of service and no benefit for years of service after 25. The disparity provided under the plan is not uniform within the meaning of this paragraph (c) because the benefit formula does not satisfy either of the uniform disparity rules for fractional accrual plans under paragraphs (c)(2) (ii) and (iii) of this section.

Example 3. Plan P is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation for each year of service up to 35, minus 0.75 percent of the final average compensation up to the offset level for each year of service up to 25. The plan determines an employee's accrued benefit under the method described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4)(i)(B). Because the formula under the plan provides the same gross benefit percentage and offset percentage for 25 years of service (fewer than 35) and, for years of service after 25 and up to 35, provides a benefit at a uniform rate (equal to the gross benefit percentage) of all average annual compensation, and the plan accrues the benefit ratably, the disparity under the plan is deemed to be uniform under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

Example 4. Plan Q is an offset plan that benefits employees with social security retirement ages of 65, 66, and 67. For each year of service up to 35, the plan provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus an offset based on the employee's final average compensation up to the offset level. For employees with a social security retirement age of 65, the offset percentage is 0.75 percent; for employees with a social security retirement age of 66, the offset percentage is 0.70 percent; and for employees with a social security retirement age of 67, the offset percentage is 0.65 percent. The disparity under the plan is deemed to be uniform under paragraph (c)(2)(iv) of this section because the plan uses the same gross benefit percentage for all employees and reduces the offset percentage for employees with social security retirement ages of 66 and 67 to comply with the adjustments in the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance required under paragraph (e)(1) of this section. (Because Plan Q effectively provides unreduced benefits prior to the social security retirement age for employees with social security retirement ages of 66 and 67, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum offset allowance must be reduced to 0.70 percent and 0.65 percent, respectively.) Alternatively, Plan Q could satisfy this paragraph (c) if it provided a uniform offset percentage of 0.65 percent for all employees because 0.65 percent is the maximum offset allowance under the plan for an employee with a social security retirement age of 67.

Example 5. Plan R is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus an offset determined as a percentage of total final average compensation, for each year of service up to 35. For an employee whose final average compensation does not exceed the employee's covered compensation, the offset percentage is 0.75 percent. For an employee whose final average compensation exceeds the employee's covered compensation, the plan reduces the offset percentage, as required by paragraph (d) of this section. The reduced offset percentage is determined by comparing the employee's final average compensation to the employee's covered compensation as permitted under paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(B) of this section. The disparity provided under the plan is deemed uniform under paragraph (c)(2)(v) of this section because the plan uses the same gross benefit percentage for all employees and makes individual reductions in the 0.75-percent factor, as permitted under paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(B) of this section, by reducing the offset percentage in the case of an employee

whose final average compensation exceeds covered compensation.

(d) *Requirements for integration or offset level*—(1) *In general.* The integration level under a defined benefit excess plan or the offset level under an offset plan must satisfy paragraphs (d)(2), (d)(3), (d)(4), (d)(5) or (d)(6) of this section, as modified by paragraph (d)(7) of this section in the case of a short plan year. Paragraph (d)(8) of this section contains demographic tests that apply to certain defined benefit plans. Paragraph (d)(9) of this section explains certain reductions required in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. Paragraph (d)(10) of this section contains examples. If a reduction applies to the 0.75-percent factor under this paragraph (d), the reduced factor is used for all purposes in determining whether the permitted disparity rules for defined benefit plans are satisfied.

(2) *Covered compensation.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(2) is satisfied only if the integration or offset level under the plan for each employee is the employee's covered compensation.

(3) *Uniform percentage of covered compensation.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(3) is satisfied only if—

(i) The integration or offset level under the plan for each employee is a uniform percentage (greater than 100 percent) of each employee's covered compensation,

(ii) In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the integration level does not exceed the taxable wage base in effect for the plan year, and, in the case of an offset plan, the offset level does not exceed the employee's final average compensation, and

(iii) The plan adjusts the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance in accordance with paragraph (d)(9) of this section.

(4) *Single dollar amount.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(4) is satisfied only if the integration or offset level under the plan for all employees is a single dollar amount (either specified in the plan or determined under a formula specified in the plan) that does not exceed the greater of $10,000 or one-half of the covered compensation of an individual who attains social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins. In the case of a calendar year in which no individual could attain social security retirement age, for example, the year 2003, this rule is applied using covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the preceding calendar year.

(5) *Intermediate amount.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(5) is satisfied only if—

(i) The integration or offset level under the plan for all employees is a single dollar amount (either specified in the plan or determined under a formula specified in the plan) that is greater than the highest amount determined under paragraph (d)(4) of this section,

(ii) In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the single dollar amount does not exceed the taxable wage base in effect for the plan year, and, in the case of an offset plan, the single dollar amount does not exceed the employee's final average compensation,

(iii) The plan satisfies the demographic requirements of paragraph (d)(8) of this section, and

(iv) The plan adjusts the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance in accordance with paragraph (d)(9) of this section.

For purposes of this paragraph (d)(5), an offset level of each employee's final average compensation is considered a single dollar amount determined under a formula specified in the plan.

(6) *Intermediate amount safe harbor.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(6) is satisfied only if—

(i) The integration or offset level under the plan for all employees is a single dollar amount described in paragraph (d)(5) of this section, and

(ii) The 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section is reduced to the lesser of the adjusted factor determined under paragraph (d)(9) of this section or 80 percent of the otherwise applicable factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section, determined without regard to paragraph (d)(9) of this section.

(7) *Prorated integration level for short plan year.* If an accumulation plan uses paragraph (2) or (4) of the definition of

plan year compensation under § 1.401(a)(4)–12 (i.e., section 414(s) compensation for the plan year or the period of plan participation) and has a plan year that comprises fewer than 12 months, the integration or offset level under the plan for each employee must be an amount equal to the otherwise applicable integration or offset level described in paragraph (d)(2), (d)(3), (d)(4), (d)(5), or (d)(6) of this section, multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of months in the plan year and the denominator of which is 12. No adjustment to the maximum excess or offset allowance is required as a result of the application of this paragraph (d)(7), other than any adjustment already required under paragraph (d)(6) or (d)(9) of this section.

(8) *Demographic requirements*—(i) *In general.* A plan that satisfies the demographic requirements of paragraphs (d)(8)(ii) and (iii) of this section may use an integration level described in paragraph (d)(5) of this section.

(ii) *Attained age requirement.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(8)(ii) is satisfied only if the average attained age of the nonhighly compensated employees in the plan is not greater than the greater of—

(A) Age 50, or

(B) 5 plus the average attained age of the highly compensated employees in the plan. For purposes of this paragraph (d)(8)(ii), attained ages are determined as of the beginning of the plan year.

(iii) *Nondiscrimination requirement.* The requirement of this paragraph (d)(8)(iii) is satisfied only if at least one of the following tests in paragraphs (d)(8)(iii) (A) through (D) of this section is satisfied.

(A) *Minimum percentage test.* This test is satisfied only if more than 50 percent of the nonhighly compensated employees in the plan have average annual compensation at least equal to 120 percent of the integration or offset level.

(B) *Ratio test.* This test is satisfied only if the percentage of nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees, who are in the plan and who have average annual compensation at least equal to 120 percent of the integration or offset level, is at least 70 percent of the percentage of highly compensated nonexcludable employees who are employees in the plan.

(C) *High dollar amount test.* This test is satisfied only if the integration or offset level exceeds 150 percent of the covered compensation of an individual who attains social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins. In the case of a calendar year in which no individual could attain social security retirement age, for example, the year 2003, this rule is applied using covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the preceding calendar year.

(D) *Individual disparity reductions.* This test is satisfied only if the plan is an offset plan that uses an offset level of each employee's final average compensation and makes individual disparity reductions as permitted under paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(B) of this section.

(9) *Reduction in the 0.75-percent factor if integration or offset level exceeds covered compensation*—(i) *In general.* If the integration or offset level specified under the plan is each employee's covered compensation as of the plan year, no reduction in the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance is required for the plan year under this paragraph (d)(9). If a plan specifies an integration or offset level that exceeds an employee's covered compensation, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be reduced as required in paragraph (d)(9)(ii) or (iii) of this section. Paragraph (d)(9)(iv) of this section contains a table of the applicable reductions.

(ii) *Uniform percentage of covered compensation.* If a plan specifies an integration or offset level that is a uniform percentage (in excess of 100 percent) of each employee's covered compensation, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be reduced in accordance with the table in paragraph (d)(9)(iv) of this section. Thus, for example, if a plan specifies an integration or offset level of 120 percent of each employee's covered compensation, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be reduced to 0.69 percent in accordance with the table because the

specified integration or offset level is more than covered compensation but not more than 125 percent of covered compensation.

(iii) *Single dollar amount.* If a plan specifies an integration or offset level of a single dollar amount as permitted under paragraph (d)(5) of this section (for example, $30,000), the applicable reduction in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be determined under paragraph (d)(9)(iii) (A) or (B) of this section, as specified under the plan.

(A) *Plan-wide reduction.* The applicable reduction in the maximum excess or offset allowance under the table in paragraph (d)(9)(iv) of this section may be determined by comparing the single dollar amount specified in the plan to the covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins. Thus, for example, if a plan specifies a single integration or offset level of $30,000 that is uniformly applicable to all employees for a plan year and the covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins is $20,000, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be reduced to 0.60 percent for all employees in accordance with the table in paragraph (d)(9)(iv) of this section because the specified integration or offset level of $30,000 is more than 125 percent of $20,000 but not more than 150 percent of $20,000. In the case of a calendar year in which no individual could attain social security retirement age (for example, 2003), the comparison is made with covered compensation of an individual who attained social security retirement age in the preceding calendar year. If an offset plan uses an offset level of each employee's final average compensation, the reduction under this paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(A) is determined by comparing the highest possible amount of final average compensation to the covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins.

(B) *Individual reductions.* The applicable reduction in the maximum excess or offset allowance under the table in paragraph (d)(9)(iv) of this section may be determined by comparing the single dollar amount specified in the plan to the covered compensation of each employee under the plan. Thus, for example, if a plan specifies a single integration or offset level of $30,000 that is uniformly applicable to all employees for a plan year, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess or offset allowance must be reduced to 0.60 percent for an employee with covered compensation of $20,000, but need not be reduced for an employee whose covered compensation is $30,000 or greater.

(iv) *Reductions*—(A) *Table.*

TABLE

If the integration or offset level is	The permitted disparity factor is
100 percent of covered compensation	0.75 percent
125 percent of covered compensation	0.69 percent
150 percent of covered compensation	0.60 percent
175 percent of covered compensation	0.53 percent
200 percent of covered compensation	0.47 percent
The taxable wage base or final average compensation.	0.42 percent

(B) *Interpolation.* If the integration or offset level used under a plan is between the percentages of covered compensation in the table, the permitted disparity factor applicable to the plan can be determined either by straight-line interpolation between the permitted disparity factors in the table or by rounding the integration or offset level up to the next highest percentage of covered compensation in the table.

(10) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (d). Unless otherwise provided, the following facts apply. The plan is noncontributory and is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. The plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. In the case of an offset plan, the plan provides that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation. Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65.

Example 1. (a) Plan M is a defined benefit excess plan that uses the calendar year as its

plan year. For the 1989 plan year, the plan uses an integration level of $20,000, which is 118 percent of the 1989 covered compensation of $16,968 for an individual reaching social security retirement age in 1989. The plan may use that integration level without satisfying paragraph (d)(8) of this section, provided the adjustment to the 0.75-percent factor required under paragraph (d)(6) of this section is made. That adjustment is the lesser of the factor determined under paragraph (d)(9) of this section or 80 percent of the factor otherwise applicable under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section.

(b) The plan determines the factor under paragraph (d)(9) of this section by comparing the integration level to the covered compensation of an individual attaining social security retirement age in the calendar year in which the plan year begins and by rounding the integration level up to 125 percent of that covered compensation amount. The 0.75-percent factor is therefore replaced by 0.69 percent pursuant to the table in paragraph (d)(9) of this section. The 0.69–percent factor is 92 percent of the 0.75-percent factor. Because the lesser of 80 percent and 92 percent is 80 percent, the 0.75-percent factor is reduced to 0.6 percent (80 percent of 0.75 percent) under paragraph (d)(6) of this section. The 0.6–percent factor applies to benefits commencing at age 65 for an employee with a social security retirement age of 65. In determining normal retirement benefits for employees with social security retirement ages of 66 or 67, the applicable factors for benefits commencing at age 65 are, respectively, 0.56 percent (80 percent of 0.7 percent) and 0.52 percent (80 percent of 0.65 percent).

(c) The plan could also determine the factor under paragraph (d)(9) of this section by comparing the integration level to the covered compensation of each employee under the plan, or by straight line interpolation between the disparity factors contained in the table in paragraph (d)(9) of this section, or both. (Of course, if the plan satisfied paragraph (d)(8) of this section, the plan could use the factor determined under paragraph (d)(9) of this section.)

Example 2. (a) Plan N, an accumulation plan, is a defined benefit excess plan that, for each year of service up to 35, accrues a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of plan year compensation up to the taxable wage base, plus 1.75 percent of plan year compensation above the taxable wage base, for each year of service up to 35. An employee's total retirement benefit is the sum of the accruals for all years. The plan satisfies paragraph (d)(8) of this section.

(b) Because the plan uses the taxable wage base (an amount above covered compensation) as the integration level, it must reduce the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance as required under paragraphs (d)(5) and (d)(9) of this section. The reduced factor, if determined on a plan-wide basis under paragraph (d)(9)(iii)(A) of this section, is 0.42 percent. The plan must therefore reduce the disparity in the plan so that it does not exceed 0.42 percent.

Example 3. (a) For the 1990 plan year, Plan O provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus a percentage of final average compensation up to $48,000, for each year of service up to 35. The plan satisfies paragraph (d)(8) of this section. As permitted under paragraph (d)(9) of this section, the plan provides that each employee's offset percentage is determined by comparing $48,000 to the employee's covered compensation and by rounding the result up to the next highest percentage of covered compensation.

(b) Employee A has a social security retirement age of 66 and covered compensation of $40,000. Because the plan provides for commencement of Employee A's benefit at age 65, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum offset allowance is reduced to 0.7 percent under paragraph (e)(1) of this section (the ''paragraph (e) factor''). In addition, because $48,000 is rounded up to 125 percent of Employee A's covered compensation, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum offset allowance is reduced to 0.69 percent under paragraph (d)(9) of this section (the ''paragraph (d) factor''). The reductions are cumulative under paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section.

(c) The cumulative reductions can be made by multiplying the paragraph (e) facdtor by the ratio of the paragraph (d) factor to 0.75 percent or by multiplying the paragraph (d) factor by the ratio of the paragraph (e) factor to 0.75 percent. The disparity factor for Employee A is therefore 0.64 percent ((0.7 percent × 0.69 percent/0.75 percent) or (0.69 percent x 0.7 percent/0.75 percent)).

Example 4. Plan P is an offset plan that uses the calendar year as the plan year and uses an offset level of each employee's final average compensation. Assume that the taxable wage bases for 1990–1992 are the following:

1990—$51,300
1991—$53.400
1992—$58,000

Employee B's final average compensation, determined as of the close of the 1992 plan year, is the average of Employee B's annual compensation for the period 1990–1992. Employee B's annual compensation for each year is the following:

1990—$47,000

1991—$59,000
1992—$65,000

For purposes of determining the offset applied to Employee B's employer-provided benefit under the plan. Employee's B's final average compensation as of the close of the 1992 plan year is $52,800 ($47,000 + $53,400 + $58,000/3). This is because annual compensation in excess of the taxable wage base in effect at the beginning of the year may not be taken into account in determining an employee's final average compensation or in determining the employee's offset. If the plan determines the offset applied to Employee B's benefit by reference to compensation in excess of $52,800, the plan fails to satisfy this paragraph (d).

(e) *Adjustments to the 0.75-percent factor for benefits commencing at ages other than social security retirement age*—(1) *In general.* The 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance applies to a benefit commencing at an employee's social security retirement age. Except as provided in paragraph (g) of this section, if a benefit payable to an employee under a defined benefit excess plan or a defined benefit offset plan commences at an age before the employee's social security retirement age (including a benefit payable at the normal retirement age under the plan), the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance or in the maximum offset allowance, respectively, is reduced in accordance with paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section. If a benefit payable to an employee under a defined benefit excess plan or a defined offset plan commences at an age after the employee's social security retirement age, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance or in the maximum offset allowance, respectively, may be increased in accordance with paragraph (e)(2)(ii) of this section. Paragraph (e)(4) of this section provides rules on the age at which a benefit commences. See paragraph (f) of this section for the requirements applicable to optional forms of benefit.

(2) *Adjustments*—(i) *Benefits commencing on or after age 55 and before social security retirement age.* If benefits commence before an employee's social security retirement age, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance must be reduced for such early commencement of benefits in accordance with the tables set forth in paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

(ii) *Benefits commencing after social security retirement age and on or before age 70.* If benefits commence after an employee's social security retirement age, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance may be increased for such delayed commencement of benefits in accordance with the tables set forth in paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

(iii) *Benefits commencing before age 55.* If benefits commence before the employee attains age 55, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance is further reduced (on a monthly basis to reflect the month in which benefits commence) to a factor that is the actuarial equivalent of the 0.75-percent factor, as adjusted under the tables in paragraph (e)(3) of this section, applicable to a benefit commencing in the month in which the employee attains age 55. In determining actuarial equivalence for this purpose, a reasonable interest rate must be used. In addition, a reasonable mortality table must be used to determine the actuarial present value, as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12, of the benefits commencing at age 55 and at the earlier commencement age, and a reasonable mortality table may be used to determine the actuarial present value at the earlier commencement age of the benefits commencing at age 55. A standard interest rate and a standard mortality table, as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12, are considered reasonable.

(iv) *Benefits commencing after age 70.* If benefits commence after the employee attains age 70, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance may be further increased (on a monthly basis to reflect the month in which benefits commence) to a factor that is the actuarial equivalent of the 0.75-percent factor (as adjusted in accordance with this paragraph (e)) applicable to a benefit commencing in the month in which the employee attains age 70. In determining actuarial equivalence for this purpose, a reasonable interest rate must be used. In addition, a reasonable

mortality table must be used to determine the actuarial present value, as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12, of the benefits commencing at age 70 and at the later commencement age, and a reasonable mortality table may be used to determine the value at the later commencement age of the benefits commencing at age 70. A standard interest rate and a standard mortality table, as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12, are considered reasonable.

(3) *Tables.* Tables I, II, and III provide the adjustments in the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance applicable to benefits commencing on or after age 55 and on or before age 70 to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65, 66 or 67. Table IV is a simplified table for a plan that uses a single disparity factor of 0.65 percent for all employees at age 65. The factors in the following tables are applicable to benefits that commence in the month the employee attains the specified age. Accordingly, if benefits commence in a month other than the month in which the employee attains the specified age, appropriate adjustments in the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and the maximum offset allowance must be made. For this purpose, adjustments may be based on straight-line interpolation from the factors in the tables or in accordance with the methods of adjustment specified in paragraphs (e)(2)(iii) and (iv) of this section.

TABLE I

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
70	1.002
69	0.908
68	0.825
67	0.750
66	0.700
65	0.650
64	0.600
63	0.550
62	0.500
61	0.475
60	0.450
59	0.425
58	0.400
57	0.375
56	0.344
55	0.316

TABLE II

[Social security retirement age 66]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
70	1.101
69	0.998
68	0.907
67	0.824
66	0.750
65	0.700
64	0.650
63	0.600
62	0.550
61	0.500
60	0.475
59	0.450
58	0.425
57	0.400
56	0.375
55	0.344

TABLE III

[Social security retirement age 65]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
70	1.209
69	1.096
68	0.996
67	0.905
66	0.824
65	0.750
64	0.700
63	0.650
62	0.600
61	0.550
60	0.500
59	0.475
58	0.450
57	0.425
56	0.400
55	0.375

TABLE IV

[Simplified table]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
70	1.048
69	0.950
68	0.863
67	0.784
66	0.714
65	0.650
64	0.607
63	0.563
62	0.520
61	0.477
60	0.433
59	0.412
58	0.390
57	0.368
56	0.347
55	0.325

(4) *Benefit commencement date*—(i) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (e)(4)(ii) of this section, a benefit commences for purposes of this paragraph (e) on the first day of the period for which the benefit is paid under the plan.

(ii) *Qualified social security supplement.* If a plan uses a qualified social security supplement, as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12, to provide an aggregate benefit at retirement before social security retirement age that is a uniform percentage of average annual compensation, benefits will be considered to commence on the first day of the period for which the qualified social security supplement is no longer payable. In order for this paragraph (e)(4)(ii) to apply, the uniform percentage must be equal to the excess benefit percentage in the case of an excess plan or the gross benefit percentage in the case of an offset plan.

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (e). Unless otherwise provided, the following facts apply. The plan is noncontributory and is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. The plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the integration level; in the case of an offset plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the offset level and provides that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation. Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65.

Example 1. Plan M is a defined benefit excess plan that, for an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.25 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 2.0 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. For an employee with at least 20 years of service, the plan provides a benefit commencing at age 55 that is equal to the benefit payable at age 65. For that employee, the disparity provided under the plan at age 55 is 0.75 percent (2 percent–1.25 percent). Because this disparity exceeds the 0.375 percent factor provided in the table for a benefit payable at age 55 to an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, the plan fails to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (e) of this section with respect to the early retirement benefit.

Example 2. Assume the same facts as in *Example 1,* except that the base benefit percentage under the plan is 1.75 percent. Thus, the disparity provided under the plan at age 55 is 0.25 percent (2 percent–1.75 percent). Because the disparity does not exceed the 0.375 percent factor provided in the table for a benefit payable at age 55 to an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, the plan does not fail to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (e) of this section with respect to the early retirement benefit.

Example 3. Plan N is an offset plan that, for an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.75 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.75 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. For an employee with at least 20 years of service, the plan provides a benefit commencing at age 55 that is equal to the benefit payable at age 65. For that employee, the disparity provided under the plan at age 55 is 0.75 percent. Because this disparity exceeds the 0.375–percent factor provided in the table for an offset applied to a benefit payable at age 55 to an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, the plan fails to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (e) of this section with respect to the early retirement benefit. The plan would not fail to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (e) of this section with respect to the early retirement benefit if the applicable factor for determining the offset applied to the benefit were reduced to 0.375 percent.

Example 4. Plan O is a defined benefit excess plan that, for an employee with a social security retirement age of 65, provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.25 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 2.0 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan provides benefits commencing before normal retirement age with the following reductions:

Age	Percentage of normal retirement benefit (%)
64	90
63	85
62	80

Under the plan, a benefit payable at age 64 is equal to 90 percent of the normal retirement benefit payable at age 65. Thus, the excess benefit percentage under the plan is 1.8 percent, the base benefit percentage under the plan is 1.125 percent, and the disparity provided under the plan at age 64 is 0.675 percent. Similarly, a benefit payable at age 63 is equal to 85 percent of the normal retirement benefit payable at age 65. Thus, the excess benefit percentage under the plan is 1.7 percent, the base benefit percentage under the plan is 1.0625 percent, and the disparity provided under the plan at age 63 is 0.6375 percent. Finally, a benefit payable at age 62 is equal to 80 percent of the normal retirement benefit payable at age 65. Thus, the excess benefit percentage under the plan is 1.6 percent, the base benefit percentage under the plan is 1.0 percent, and the disparity provided under the plan at age 62 is 0.6 percent. Because the disparities provided under the plan at each early commencement age do not exceed the factors provided in the applicable table in paragraph (e)(3) of this section, the plan does not fail to satisfy paragraphs (b) and (e) of this section with respect to the early retirement benefits.

Example 5. Plan P is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 0.75 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.5 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan does not provide any benefits, other than normal retirement benefits, commencing before an employee's social security retirement age. Employee A, born in 1947, has a social security retirement age of 66. Because the plan provides for the distribution of normal retirement benefits before Employee A's social security retirement age, the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance applicable to Employee A must be reduced to 0.70 percent in accordance with this paragraph (e). Accordingly, the disparity provided to A under the plan exceeds the maximum excess allowance because the excess benefit percentage (1.5 percent) exceeds the base benefit percentage (0.75 percent) by more than the maximum excess allowance of 0.70 percent, as reduced in accordance with this paragraph (e).

Example 6. Assume the same facts as in *Example 5,* except that the plan also provides an early retirement benefit, commencing at age 62, to an employee who satisfies the conditions for early retirement specified in the plan. The early retirement benefit is based upon the employee's accrued benefit at early retirement age and equals the amount that would have been paid commencing at the employee's normal retirement age based upon the employee's average annual compensation, covered compensation and years of service at the date of the employee's early retirement. Employee B, who has a social security retirement age of 65, meets the conditions for early retirement under the plan and retires at age 62 with 30 years of service. At the time of early retirement, Employee B has average annual compensation of $20,000 and covered compensation of $16,000. Under the plan's benefit formula, Employee B has accrued a normal retirement benefit, commencing at age 65, of $5,400 ((22.5 percent × $16,000) + (45 percent × $4,000)) based on Employee B's average annual compensation, covered compensation and years of service at early retirement. Accordingly, under the plan's early retirement provisions, Employee B is entitled to receive, commencing at early retirement, a benefit of $5,400. Because the early retirement benefit is a benefit commencing at age 62 (before Employee B's social security retirement age), the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance must be reduced to 0.60 percent in accordance with this paragraph (e). Accordingly, the disparity provided to Employee B under the plan at early retirement exceeds the maximum excess allowance.

Example 7. (a) Plan Q is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1.35 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 2 percent of average annual compensation in excess of the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan provides that an employee with 10 years of service at age 55 may receive an unreduced retirement benefit. The plan also provides that employee with a supplemental benefit of 0.65 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level for each year of service up to 35, payable from early retirement until age 65. The supplemental benefit is a qualified social security supplement under § 1.401(a)(4)–12. The effect of the supplement is to provide an employee with a uniform benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation from early retirement until age 65, when the supplement is no longer payable. Therefore, for purposes of this paragraph (e), the employee's benefit will be considered to commence at age 65.

(b) Assume that Plan Q is instead an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.65 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan provides the same early retirement benefit on the same conditions, except that the supplement is 0.65 percent of an employee's final average compensation up to the offset level. An employee at age 55 thus receives a uniform benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation until age 65, when the supplement is no longer payable. Therefore, for purposes of this paragraph (e), the employee's benefit will be considered to commence at age 65.

(f) *Benefits, rights, and features*—(1) *Defined benefit excess plan.* In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, each benefit, right, or feature provided under the plan with respect to employer-provided benefits attributable to average annual compensation above the integration level (an ''excess benefit, right, or feature'') must also be provided on the same terms with respect to employer-provided benefits attributable to average annual compensation up to the integration level (a ''base benefit, right, or feature''). Alternatively, an excess benefit, right, or feature may be provided on different terms than the base benefit, right, or feature, if the terms used to determine the base benefit, right, or feature produce a benefit, right, or feature of inherently equal or greater value than the benefit, right, or feature that would be produced under the terms used to determine the excess benefit, right, or feature.

(2) *Offset plan.* In the case of an offset plan, each benefit, right, or feature provided under the plan with respect to employer-provided benefits before application of the offset (a ''gross benefit, right, or feature'') must be provided on the same terms as those used to determine the offset applied to the gross benefit, right, or feature. Alternatively, a gross benefit, right, or feature may be provided on different terms from those used to determine the offset applied to the gross benefit, right, or feature, if the terms used to determine the gross benefit, right, or feature produce a benefit, right, or feature of inherently equal or greater value than the benefit, right, or feature that would be produced under the terms used to determine the offset applied to the gross benefit, right, or feature. In addition, if benefits commence before an employee's normal retirement age, the gross benefit percentage under the plan must be reduced by a number of percentage points that is not less than the number of percentage points by which the offset percentage must be reduced, from normal retirement age to the age at which benefits commence, under the rules of paragraph (e) of this section.

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (f). Unless otherwise provided, the following facts apply. The plan is noncontributory and is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. The plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section. In the case of a defined benefit excess plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the integration level; in the case of an offset plan, the plan uses each employee's covered compensation as the offset level and provides that an employee's final average compensation is limited to the employee's average annual compensation. Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65. All optional forms of benefit under each plan are provided on the same terms.

Example 1. Plan M is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.65 percent of average annual compensation above the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan provides an early retirement benefit for any employee who terminates employment at or after age 55 with 10 or more years of service. In determining an employee's early retirement, the 1.65 percent excess benefit percentage is reduced in accordance with the table in paragraph (e)(3) of this section for a plan that uses a single disparity factor of 0.65 percent for all employees at age 65. However, a larger reduction factor is applied to determine the base benefit percentage at early retirement. The plan violates this paragraph (f) because the excess early retirement benefit is not provided on the same terms as the base early retirement benefit, nor do the terms used to determine the base early retirement benefit produce an early retirement benefit of inherently equal or greater value than the early retirement benefit that would be produced under the terms used to determine the excess benefit, right, or feature.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1* except that the plan determines the early retirement benefit by applying the same reduction factors under paragraph (e)(3) of this section to the base and excess benefit percentages. Furthermore, if an employee terminates employment at or after age 55 with 30 or more years of service, the plan provides that the base benefit percentage of 1 percent is not reduced. Although the excess early retirement benefit is provided

on different terms than the base early retirement benefit, the plan satisfies this paragraph (f) because the terms used to determine the base early retirement benefit produce an early retirement of inherently equal or greater value than the early retirement benefit that would be produced under the terms used to determine the excess benefit, right, or feature.

Example 3. Plan N is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.65 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. In determining the qualified joint and survivor (''QJSA'') form of the normal retirement benefit, the plan applies a factor of 80 percent to the gross benefit percentage and a factor of 100 percent to the offset percentage. Thus, the QJSA form is 1.6 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.65 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan violates this paragraph (f) because the gross QJSA form is not provided on the same terms as the terms used to determine the offset applied to the QJSA, nor does it produce a QJSA benefit that is of inherently equal or greater value than the QJSA benefit that would be produced under the terms used to determine the offset under the plan.

Example 4. Plan O is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.65 percent of average annual compensation above the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan also provides a single sum optional form of benefit determined by applying a single interest rate and mortality assumption to the entire normal retirement benefit. The plan satisfies this paragraph (f) because the excess optional form is provided on the same terms as the base optional form. The plan would also satisfy this paragraph (f) if it used a lower interest rate to determine the base optional form than used to determine the excess optional form because the lower interest rate would produce an optional form of inherently equal or greater value than the optional form produced by using the same interest rate.

Example 5. Plan R is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.65 percent of average annual compensation above the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. If an employee continues to work after normal retirement age, the plan provides that the employee receives credit for additional years of service up to the service limit of 35. The plan also provides that the disparity provided under the plan will increase as permitted under paragraph (e) of this section for benefits commencing after social security retirement age. However, the plan does not provide an increase in the base benefit percentage to reflect the fact that the employee has delayed commencement of benefits past normal retirement age. Thus, for example, for an employee at age 68, the plan provides a benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to the integration level, plus 1.86 percent of average annual compensation above the integration level, for each year of service up to 35. The plan violates this paragraph (f) because the excess benefit provided for an employee after normal retirement age is not provided on the same terms as the base benefit, nor do the terms used to determine the base benefit produce a benefit of inherently equal or greater value than the benefit that would be produced under the terms used to determine the excess benefit.

Example 6. Plan Q is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.65 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. In accordance with paragraph (e) of this section, the plan reduces the offset percentage under the plan for early retirement and provides a benefit at age 55 of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.325 percent of final average compensation up to the offset level, for each year of service up to 35. However, the early retirement benefit does not meet this paragraph (f) because an employee's gross benefit percentage is not reduced for early retirement.

Example 7. The facts are the same as in *Example 6* except that the plan reduces the gross benefit percentage for early retirement at age 55 to 1.675 percent. Because the gross benefit percentage is reduced by 0.325 percent (from 2.0 percent to 1.675 percent), the same percentage point reduction made in the offset percentage (from 0.65 percent to 0.325 percent), the early retirement benefit meets this paragraph (f).

(g) *No reductions in 0.75-percent factor for ancillary benefits.* For purposes of applying the maximum excess allowance or the maximum offset allowance under paragraph (b)(2) or (3) of this section, no reduction is made to the 0.75-percent factor merely because the plan provides disparity in qualified disability benefits (within the meaning of section 411(a)(9)) or preretirement death benefits and the relevant benefits are payable before an employee's social security retirement age.

(h) *Benefits attributable to employee contributions not taken into account.* Benefits attributable to employee contributions to a defined benefit plan are

not taken into account in determining whether the disparity provided under a defined benefit excess plan or an offset plan exceeds the maximum permitted disparity described in paragraph (b) of this section. See § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b) for methods of determining the employer-provided benefit under a plan that includes employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts (i.e., a contributory DB plan), including § 1.401(a)(4)–6(b)(2)(iii)(B) for adjustments to the base and excess benefit percentages or the gross benefit percentage under a section 401(l) plan. If, after adjustment, the employee's base benefit percentage or gross benefit percentage (whichever is applicable) is less than zero, such percentage is deemed to be zero for purposes of the maximum excess allowance or maximum offset allowance under paragraph (b)(2) or (3) of this section.

(i) *Multiple integration levels* [Reserved]

(j) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices or other documents of general applicability, prescribe additional rules as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this section, including updated tables under paragraphs (d) and (e) of this section providing for reductions in the 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance and rules in paragraph (h) of this section for determining the portion of an employee's benefit attributable to employee contributions.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47622, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10818, 10819, 10951, 10952, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46832, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(l)–4 Special rules for railroad plans.

(a) *In general.* Section 401(l)(6) provides that, in the case of a plan maintained by a railroad employer that covers employees who are entitled to benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974, in determining whether such a plan satisfies section 401(l), rules similar to the rules under section 401(l) apply and such rules take into account the employer-derived portion of tier 2 and supplemental annuity benefits provided under the railroad retirement system. In general, for purposes of determining whether a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan maintained by a railroad employer and covering employees described in te preceding sentence, satisfies section 401(l), the employer-derived portion of an employee's tier 2 benefits and supplementary annuity benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 are treated as though such benefits were provided by the railroad employer under a qualified plan. Paragraph (b) of this section contains rules for defined contribution plans. Paragraph (c) of this section contains rules for defined benefit excess plans. Paragraph (d) of this section contains rules for offset plans. Paragraph (e) of this section contains definitions and additional rules of application.

(b) *Defined contribution plans*—(1) *In general.* A defined contribution plan maintained by a railroad employer satisfies section 401(l) and § 1.401(l)–2 for a plan year only if the plan satisfies paragraph (b)(2) or (b)(3) of this section for the plan year.

(2) *Single integration level method*—(i) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) if—

(A) The plan specifies a single integration level for all employees that does not exceed the railroad retirement taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year,

(B) The plan uses the same base contribution percentage and the same excess contribution percentage for all employees, and

(C) The excess contribution percentage does not exceed the sum of 11.4 percentage points and the base contribution percentage.

(ii) *Definitions.* The following definitions govern for purposes of this paragraph (b)(2).

(A) *Base contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under the plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation at or below the railroad retirement taxable wage base (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(B) *Excess contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account

of an employee under the plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation above the railroad retirement taxable wage base (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(3) *Two integration level method*—(i) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(3) if—

(A) The plan specifies two integration levels for all employees, equal to the railroad retirement taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year and the taxable wage base in effect as of the beginning of the plan year, and

(B) The plan satisfies paragraphs (b)(3) (ii) and (iii) of this section.

(ii) *Total disparity requirement.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(3)(ii) if—

(A) The plan uses the same base contribution percentage and the same excess contribution percentage for all employees, and

(B) The excess contribution percentage does not exceed the sum of 11.4 percentage points and the base contribution percentage.

(iii) *Intermediate disparity requirement.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(3)(iii) if—

(A) The plan uses the same base contribution percentage and the same intermediate contribution percentage for all employees, and

(B) The intermediate contribution percentage does not exceed the sum of 5.7 percentage points and the base contribution percentage.

(iv) *Definitions.* The following definitions govern for purposes of this paragraph (b)(3).

(A) *Base contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under the plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation at or below the railroad retirement taxable wage base (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(B) *Intermediate contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under the plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation between the railroad retirement taxable wage base and the taxable wage base (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(C) *Excess contribution percentage* means the rate at which employer contributions are allocated to the account of an employee under the plan with respect to the employee's plan year compensation above the taxable wage base (expressed as a percentage of such plan year compensation).

(c) *Defined benefit excess plans*—(1) *In general.* A defined benefit excess plan maintained by a railroad employer satisfies section 401(l) and § 1.401(l)–3 for a plan year only if the plan satisfies paragraph (c)(2) or (c)(3) of this section for the plan year.

(2) *Single integration level method*—(i) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(2) if—

(A) The plan specifies a single integration level for all employees that does not exceed railroad retirement covered compensation,

(B) The plan uses the same base benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees, and

(C) The excess benefit percentage does not exceed the lesser of—

(*1*) Two times the sum of 0.56 percent and the base benefit percentage, or

(*2*) 0.56 percent plus the base benefit percentage plus 0.75 percent.

(ii) *Definitions.* The following definitions govern for purposes of this paragraph (c)(2).

(A) *Base benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under the plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation at or below the employee's railroad retirement covered compensation (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(B) *Excess benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under the plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation above the employee's railroad retirement covered compensation (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(3) *Two integration level method*—(i) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(3) for a plan year if—

(A) The plan specifies two integration levels for all employees, equal to

each employee's railroad retirement covered compensation and each employee's covered compensation, and

(B) The plan satisfies paragraph (c)(3)(ii) and (iii) of this section.

(ii) *Employee with lower covered compensation.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(3)(ii) if, with respect to each employee whose lower integration level is the employee's covered compensation—

(A) The plan uses the same base benefit percentage and the same intermediate benefit percentage for all employees,

(B) The intermediate benefit percentage does not exceed the base benefit percentage by more than the lesser of 0.75 percent or the base benefit percentage,

(C) The plan uses the same intermediate benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees, and

(D) The excess benefit percentage does not exceed the intermediate benefit percentage by more than 0.56 percent.

(iii) *Employee with lower railroad retirement covered compensation.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (c)(3)(iii) if, with respect to each employee whose lower integration level is the employee's railroad retirement covered compensation—

(A) The plan uses the same base benefit percentage and the same excess benefit percentage for all employees,

(B) The excess benefit percentage does not exceed the lesser of—

(*1*) Two times the sum of 0.56 percent and the base benefit percentage, or

(*2*) The sum of 0.56 percent plus the base benefit percentage plus 0.75 percent,

(C) The plan uses the same the base benefit percentage and the same intermediate benefit percentage for all employees, and

(D) The intermediate benefit percentage does not exceed the sum of 0.56 percent plus the base benefit percentage.

(iv) *Definitions.* The following definitions govern for purposes of this paragraph (c)(3).

(A) *Base benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under the plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation at or below the lower integration level specified in the plan (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(B) *Intermediate benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under the plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation between the lower and higher integration levels specified in the plan (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(C) *Excess benefit percentage* means the rate at which employer-provided benefits are determined under the plan with respect to an employee's average annual compensation above the higher integration level specified in the plan (expressed as a percentage of such average annual compensation).

(d) *Offset plans*—(1) *In general.* An offset plan maintained by a railroad employer satisfies section 401(l) and § 1.401(l)–3 for a plan year only if—

(i) The plan satisfies § 1.401(l)–3 for the plan year without regard to the offset for the employer-derived portion of tier 2 and supplementary annuity benefits provided under the railroad retirement system, and

(ii) The offset for the employer-derived portion of tier 2 and supplementary annuity benefits provided under the railroad retirement system does not exceed the maximum tier 2 and supplementary annuity offset allowance.

(2) *Maximum tier 2 and supplementary annuity offset allowance.* For purposes of paragraph (d)(1) of this section, the maximum tier 2 and supplementary annuity offset allowance for a plan year is equal to 0.56 percent of the employee's railroad retirement covered compensation for the plan year.

(e) *Additional rules*—(1) *Definitions.* The following definitions govern for purposes of this section.

(i) *Railroad retirement taxable wage base* means the applicable base, as determined under section 3231(e)(2)B)(ii), for purposes of the tax under section 3221(b) (the tier 2 tax).

(ii) *Railroad retirement covered compensation* for an employee means 12 multiplied by the average of the 60 highest monthly railroad retirement

taxable wage bases in effect for the employee's period of employment. The monthly railroad retirement taxable wage base is determined by dividing the railroad retirement taxable wage base for the calendar year in which the month occurs by 12. An employee's railroad retirement covered compensation for the plan year is determined as of the beginning of the plan year. A plan must provide that an employee's railroad retirement covered compensation is automatically adjusted for each plan year. See § 1.401(l)–1(b) for rules relating to prohibited decreases in an employee's accrued benefit within the meaning of section 411(d)(6) or section 411(b)(1)(G).

(2) *Adjustments to 0.75-percent factor.* The 0.75-percent factor in the maximum excess allowance and in the maximum offset allowance is subject to the reductions prescribed in § 1.401(l)–3 (d) and (e), except that in the case of an employee with at least 30 years of service with a railroad employer, the following tables are substituted for Tables I through III contained in § 1.401(l)–3(e)(3).

TABLE I

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
66	0.750
65	0.750
64	0.750
63	0.750
62	0.750
61	0.525
60	0.525
59	0.508
58	0.490
57	0.472
56	0.433
55	0.398

TABLE II

[Social security retirement age 66]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
65	0.750
64	0.750
63	0.750
62	0.750
61	0.563
60	0.563
59	0.544
58	0.525

TABLE II—Continued

[Social security retirement age 66]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
57	0.506
56	0.488
55	0.447

TABLE III

[Social security retirement age 65]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
64	0.750
63	0.750
62	0.750
61	0.600
60	0.600
59	0.580
58	0.560
57	0.540
56	0.520
55	0.500

(3) *Adjustments to 0.56-percent factor.* The 0.56-percent factor for defined benefit excess plans and offset plans under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section respectively is subject to the reductions prescribed in § 1.401(l)–3 (d) and (e), except that, for purposes of applying this paragraph (e)(3)—

(i) ''Railroad retirement covered compensation'' is substituted for ''covered compensation'' in § 1.401(l)–3(d),

(ii) The reductions under § 1.401(l)–3(d) are made by multiplying the 0.56-percent factor by the ratio of the applicable factor from the table in § 1.401(l)–(3)(d)(9)(iv)(A) to 0.75, and

(iii) The following tables are substituted for Tables I through III set forth in § 1.401(l)–3(e)(3).

(A) Tables applicable to 0.56% factor for employees covered by tier 2 of railroad retirement with 30 or more years of railroad service.

TABLE I

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
66	0.560
65	0.560
64	0.560
63	0.560
62	0.560
61	0.560

TABLE I—Continued

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
60	0.560
59	0.541
58	0.523
57	0.504
56	0.462
55	0.425

TABLE II

[Social security retirement age 66]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
65	0.560
64	0.560
63	0.560
62	0.560
61	0.560
60	0.560
59	0.541
58	0.523
57	0.504
56	0.485
55	0.445

TABLE III

[Social security retirement age 65]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
64	0.560
63	0.560
62	0.560
61	0.560
60	0.560
59	0.541
58	0.523
57	0.504
56	0.485
55	0.467

(B) Tables applicable to 0.56% factor for employees covered by tier 2 of railroad retirement with less than 30 years of railroad service.

TABLE I

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
66	0.523
65	0.485
64	0.448
63	0.420
62	0.392
61	0.379

TABLE I—Continued

[Social security retirement age 67]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
60	0.366
59	0.353
58	0.340
57	0.327
56	0.300
55	0.275

TABLE II

[Social security retirement age 66]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
65	0.523
64	0.485
63	0.448
62	0.420
61	0.392
60	0.378
59	0.364
58	0.350
57	0.336
56	0.322
55	0.295

TABLE III

[Social security retirement age 65]

Age at which benefits commence	Annual factor in maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance (percent)
64	0.523
63	0.485
62	0.448
61	0.418
60	0.388
59	0.373
58	0.358
57	0.343
56	0.329
55	0.314

(4) *Overall permitted disparity.* The overall permitted disparity rules of § 1.401(l)–5 apply to employees who benefit under a plan maintained by a railroad employer.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47632, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10819, 10952, Mar. 31, 1992]

§ 1.401(l)–5 Overall permitted disparity limits.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *In general.* The maximum excess allowance and maximum offset allowance limit the disparity that can be provided under a plan for a plan year. The overall permitted

disparity rules apply to limit the disparity provided for a plan year if an employee benefits under more than one plan maintained by the employer (the ''annual overall permitted disparity limit'') and to limit the disparity provided for an employee's total years of service, either in a single plan or in more than one plan of the employer (the ''cumulative overall permitted disparity limit''). The overall permitted disparity rules take into account the disparity provided under a section 401(l) plan and the permitted disparity imputed under a plan that satisfies section 401(a)(4) by relying on § 1.401(a)(4)–7. A plan that is not a section 401(l) plan is generally deemed to impute permitted disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7 unless established otherwise. Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules on the annual overall permitted disparity limit. Paragraph (c) of this section provides rules on the cumulative overall permitted disparity limit.

(2) *Plan requirements.* In order to satisfy section 401(l), a plan must provide that the overall permitted disparity limits may not be exceeded and must specify how employer-provided contributions or benefits under the plan are adjusted, if necessary, to satisfy the overall permitted disparity limits. Any adjustments made to satisfy the overall permitted disparity limits must be made in a uniform manner for all employees.

(3) *Plans taken into account.* For purposes of this section, all plans of the employer are taken into account. In addition, all plans of any other employer are taken into account for all periods of service with the other employer for which the employee receives credit for purposes of benefit accrual under any plan of the current employer.

(b) *Annual overall permitted disparity limit*—(1) *In general.* If, in the plan year, an employee benefits under more than one plan, the annual overall permitted disparity limit is satisfied only if the employee's total annual disparity fraction, as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, does not exceed one. Paragraphs (b)(3) through (b)(8) of this section explain the determination of an employee's annual disparity fractions. Paragraph (b)(9) of this section provides examples.

(2) *Total annual disparity fraction.* An employee's total annual disparity fraction is the sum of the employee's annual disparity fractions, as defined in paragraphs (b)(3) through (b)(7) of this section. An employee's total annual disparity fraction is determined as of the end of the current plan year, based on the employee's annual disparity fractions under all plans with plan years ending in the current plan year.

(3) *Annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction.* For a plan year, the annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction for an employee benefiting under a defined contribution plan that is a section 401(l) plan is a fraction—

(i) The numerator of which is the disparity provided under the plan for the plan year, and

(ii) The denominator of which is the maximum excess allowance under § 1.401(l)–2(b)(2) for the plan year.

(4) *Annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction.* For a plan year, the annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction for an employee benefiting under a defined benefit excess plan that is a section 401(l) plan is a fraction—

(i) The numerator of which is the disparity provided under the plan for the plan year, and

(ii) The denominator of which is the maximum excess allowance under § 1.401(l)–3(b)(2) for the plan year.

(5) *Annual offset plan disparity fraction*—(i) *In general.* For a plan year, the annual offset plan disparity fraction for an employee benefiting under an offset plan that is a section 401(l) plan is a fraction—

(A) The numerator of which is the disparity provided under the plan for the plan year; and

(B) The denominator of which is the maximum offset allowance under § 1.401(l)–3(b)(3) for the plan year.

(ii) *PIA offset plans.* In the case of an offset plan that applies an offset of a specified percentage of the employee's PIA, as permitted under § 1.401(l)–3(c)(2)(ix), the numerator of the annual offset plan disparity fraction is the offset percentage used in the section 401(l) overlay under the plan.

(6) *Annual imputed disparity fraction.* For a plan year, the annual imputed disparity fraction for an employee benefiting under a plan that imputes permitted disparity with respect to the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–7 is one.

(7) *Annual nondisparate fraction.* For a plan year, the annual nondisparate fraction for an employee benefiting under a plan that neither is a section 401(l) plan nor imputes permitted disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7 is zero.

(8) *Determination of fraction*—(i) *General rule.* A separate annual disparity fraction is generally determined for each plan under which the employee benefits. Thus, for example, if two plans are aggregated and treated as a single plan for purposes of section 401(a)(4), a single annual disparity fraction applies to the aggregated plan.

(ii) *Multiple formulas.* If a plan provides an allocation or benefit equal to the sum of two or more formulas, each formula is considered a separate plan for purposes of this section. If a plan provides an allocation or benefit equal to the greater of two or more formulas, an annual disparity fraction is calculated for the employee under each formula and the largest of the fractions is the employee's annual disparity fraction under the plan.

(iii) *Offset arrangements*—(A) *In general.* If an employee benefits under two plans taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section as described in paragraph (b)(8)(iii)(B) or (C) of this section, the employee's annual disparity fraction under both plans is the larger of the annual disparity fractions calculated separately under each plan.

(B) *Defined benefit plans.* The employee's employer-provided accrued benefit under a defined benefit plan is offset by the employee's total employer-provided accrued benefit under another defined benefit plan or by the actuarial equivalent (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12) of the employee's total account balance under a defined contribution plan that is attributable to employer contributions.

(C) *Defined contribution plans.* The amount allocated to the employee's account under a defined contribution plan is offset by the total amount allocated to the employee's account under another defined contribution plan.

(iv) *Applicable percentages.* The disparity provided under a plan is determined on the base and excess percentages under an excess plan and the offset percentage under an offset plan, regardless of whether the employee's plan year or average annual compensation exceeds the integration or offset level under the plan.

(v) *Fractional accrual plans.* If a section 401(l) plan determines each employee's accrued benefit under the fractional accrual method of section 411(b)(1)(C), the numerator of an employee's annual disparity fraction is based on the disparity provided in the benefit accrued for the employee for the plan year.

(9) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (b). Except as otherwise provided, each plan is a section 401(l) plan.

Example 1. (a) Employee A benefits for the plan year under a defined contribution excess plan, Plan X, and a defined benefit excess plan, Plan Y, of the employer. Plans X and Y have the same plan year. Employee A benefits under no other plan of the employer for the plan year of any other plan ending in the plan year of Plans X and Y. Plan X provides a base contribution percentage of 5 percent and an excess contribution percentage of 7 percent, thus providing Employee A with disparity of 2 percent for the plan year. The maximum excess allowance for the plan year under Plan X is 5 percent. Plan Y provides a base benefit percentage of 1 percent and an excess benefit percentage of 1.35 percent, thus providing Employee A with disparity of 0.35 percent for the plan year. The maximum excess allowance for the plan year under Plan Y is 0.75 percent.

(b) Employee A's annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction under Plan X for the plan year is 0.4 (2 percent divided by 5 percent). Employee A's annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction under Plan Y for the plan year is 0.47 (0.35 percent divided by 0.75 percent). Employee A's total annual disparity fraction is the sum of 0.4 and 0.47 or 0.87. Because Employee A's total annual disparity fraction does not exceed one, the plans satisfy the annual overall permitted disparity limit with respect to Employee A for the plan year.

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Plan Y is a defined contribution plan, rather than a defined benefit plan. Plan X and Plan Y cover the same employees and are identical in their terms except for the base and excess contribution percentages provided under the plans. Plan Y provides a base contribution percentage of 3

percent and an excess contribution percentage of 6 percent, thus providing Employee A with disparity of 3 percent for the plan year. The maximum excess allowance for the plan year under Plan Y is 3 percent.

(b) Employee A's annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction under Plan X for the plan year is 0.4 (2 percent divided by 5 percent). Employee A's annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction under Plan Y for the plan year is 1 (3 percent divided by 3 percent). Because Employee A's total annual disparity fraction (the sum of 0.4 and 1 or 1.4) exceeds one, the plans do not satisfy the annual overall permitted disparity requirements with respect to Employee A for the plan year.

(c) Plan X and Plan Y are aggregated for purposes of section 401(a)(4) and form a single section 401(l) plan. Under the plan, the base contribution percentage is 8 percent (5 percent plus 3 percent), and the excess contribution percentage is 13 percent (7 percent plus 6 percent). A single annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction is determined for Employee A for the plan year, the numerator of which is the disparity of 5 percent provided under the plan (13 percent minus 8 percent), and the denominator of which is 5.7 percent, the maximum excess allowance that applies to the plan. Because Employee A's only annual disparity fraction of 0.88 (5 percent divided by 5.7 percent) does not exceed one, Employee A's total annual disparity fraction also does not exceed one. The plan thus satisfies the annual overall permitted disparity limit with respect to Employee A for the plan year.

Example 3. Assume the same facts as in *Example 2,* except that Plan X and Plan Y use different integration levels. Therefore, when Plan X and Plan Y are aggregated to form a single plan for purposes of section 401(a)(4), the single plan does not satisfy section 401(l). In applying the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c), the plan imputes disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7. Employee A's only annual disparity fraction is the annual imputed disparity fraction of one. Employee A's total annual disparity fraction is also one, and the plan satisfies the annual overall permitted disparity limit with respect to Employee A for the plan year.

Example 4. (a) Employee B participates in two plans: Plan M, which is a section 401(l) plan, and Plan N, which is subject to the general test under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(c). Plan M provides that the disparity provided an employee for the plan year will be reduced to the extent necessary to satisfy the annual overall permitted disparity limits. The employer wishes to impute permitted disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7 in order for Plan N to satisfy section 401(a)(4). Employee B's imputed disparity fraction under Plan N is therefore one, and Plan M provides no disparity for Employee B for the plan year. As a result, Plan M provides disparity that is neither uniform nor deemed uniform under § 1.401(l)–3(c); Plan M therefore does not satisfy section 401(l).

(b) Assume instead that Plan M provides that the annual overall permitted disparity limits must be satisfied without reducing the disparity provided for an employee under Plan M, thus requiring a reduction in the employee's annual disparity fraction under another plan. In that case, the disparity provided under Plan M would be uniform for the plan year and Plan M would continue to satisfy section 401(l). However, imputation of permitted disparity with respect to Employee B would not be allowed under Plan N.

(c) *Cumulative permitted disparity limit*—(1) *In general*—(i) *Employees who benefit under defined benefit plans.* In the case of an employee who has benefited under one or more defined benefit plans for a plan year described in paragraph (c)(1)(v) of this section, the cumulative permitted disparity limit is satisfied if the employee's cumulative disparity fraction, as defined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, does not exceed 35.

(ii) *Employees who do not benefit under defined benefit plans.* In the case of an employee who has not benefited under a defined benefit plan for any plan year described in paragraph (c)(1)(v) of this section, the cumulative permitted disparity limit is satisfied.

(iii) *Certain plan years disregarded.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), an employee is not treated as benefiting under a defined benefit plan for a plan year described in paragraph (c)(1)(v) of this section if the employer can establish that for that plan year the defined benefit plan was not a section 401(l) plan and did not impute permitted disparity under § 1.401(a)(4)–7.

(iv) *Determination of type of plan.* For purposes of this paragraph (c), a target benefit plan that relies on the special rule of § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3) to satisfy section 401(a)(4) and a DB/DC plan within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–9(a) are treated as defined benefit plans. Similarly, a cash balance plan that relies on the special rule of § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3) to satisfy section 401(a)(4) is treated as a defined contribution plan.

(v) *Applicable plan years.* In applying paragraphs (c)(1) (i), (ii), and (iii) of this section, for purposes of determining whether an employee benefits

under a defined benefit plan, the applicable plan years are all plan years that begin on or after the regulatory effective date, as set forth in § 1.401(l)–6(b), or, in the case of governmental plans, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(b).

(vi) *Transition rule for defined contribution plans.* A defined contribution plan is deemed to satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit for the first plan year to which these regulations apply, as set forth in § 1.401(l)–6(b), or, in the case of governmental plans, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)–13(b).

(2) *Cumulative disparity fraction.* An employee's cumulative disparity fraction is the sum of the employee's total annual disparity fractions, as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, attributable to the employee's total years of service under all plans.

(3) *Determination of total annual disparity fractions for prior years.* For each of the employee's years of service credited as of the end of the last plan year beginning before January 1, 1989, not to exceed 35, under all plans as of that time that are taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section (whether or not terminated), the employee's total annual disparity fraction is one. Therefore, if, before the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1989, an employee never participated in or benefited under any plan taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section, the employee's total annual disparity fractions are determined without regard to this paragraph (c)(3). An employer may apply the rule in this paragraph (c)(3) with respect to all employees, using a year (including the current year) that is chosen by the employer and is later than 1989. Thus, for example, in lieu of calculating annual disparity fractions for all plan years, the employer may assume that the full disparity limit has been used in each prior plan year for which an employee has been credited with a year of service.

(4) *Special rules for greater of formulas and offset arrangements*—(i) *Greater of formulas*—(A) *In general.* A defined benefit plan that is a section 401(l) plan and that provides a benefit equal to the greater of the benefits determined under two or more formulas is deemed to satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit with respect to an employee if each of the requirements in paragraphs (c)(4)(i) (B) and (C) of this section is satisfied. For this purpose, a plan that uses a fresh-start formula that determines the accrued benefit as the greater of two amounts under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4) (ii) or (iii) provides a benefit equal to the greater of the benefits determined under two or more formulas.

(B) *Separate satisfaction by formulas.* Each formula under the plan would satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit if it were the only formula under the plan. In the case of a current formula that applies to the employee's total years of service (as, for example, under § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4) (ii)(B) or (iii)(B)), for purposes of determining whether that formula would satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit if it were the only formula under the plan, the special rule for prior years under paragraph (c)(3) of this section may be disregarded.

(C) *Single plan.* The employee has never benefited under another plan taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section that is a section 401(l) plan or that satisfies section 401(a)(4) by relying on § 1.401(a)(4)–7. For this purpose, if the benefit under the plan is offset in an offset arrangement described in paragraph (b)(8)(iii)(B) of this section, the other plan is disregarded. In addition, a plan does not fail the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(i)(C) merely because the employee benefits under another defined benefit plan, provided that—

(*1*) With respect to each benefit formula under the plan, no years of service taken into account under that benefit formula are taken into account under a benefit formula of the other plan; and

(*2*) Paragraph (c)(4)(i)(B) of this section would be satisfied if the plans were treated as a single plan that provided a benefit equal to the greater of the benefits provided under two or more formulas. For this purpose, a formula consists of the sum of a formula for the years of service taken into account under one plan and a formula for the years of service taken into account under the other plan. Thus, each possible combination of the formulas

under the plans must satisfy paragraph (c)(4)(i)(B) of this section.

(ii) *Offset arrangements*—(A) *In general.* If a defined benefit plan is a section 401(l) plan and the benefit under the plan (the gross benefit plan) is offset by the benefit under another plan (the offsetting plan) in an offset arrangement described in paragraph (b)(8)(iii)(B) of this section, the gross benefit plan is deemed to satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit with respect to an employee if each of the requirements in paragraphs (c)(4)(ii) (B) and (C) of this section is satisfied.

(B) *Separate satisfaction by plans.* This requirement is satisfied if the gross benefit plan would satisfy the cumulative disparity limit if no offset applied, and the offsetting plan satisfies the cumulative permitted disparity limit, not taking into account the gross benefit plan.

(C) *No other plan.* Except for the plans in the offset arrangement, the employee has never benefited under another plan taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section that is a section 401(l) plan or that satisfies section 401(a)(4) by relying on § 1.401(a)(4)–7. An offset arrangement does not fail the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(ii)(C) merely because the employee benefits under another defined benefit plan, provided no years of service taken into account under a benefit formula of any plan in the offset arrangement are also taken into account under a benefit formula of the other plan.

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate this paragraph (c). In each example the plan is noncontributory and, unless provided otherwise, is the only plan ever maintained by the employer. Each plan uses a normal retirement age of 65 and contains no provision that would require a reduction in the 0.75-percent factor under § 1.401(l)–3(b)(2) or (3). Each example discusses the benefit formula applicable to an employee who has a social security retirement age of 65.

Example 1. Plan M is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation, plus 1.75 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, for each year of service without limit. The disparity provided under the plan for the plan year is 0.75 percent, the excess benefit percentage of 1.75 percent minus the base benefit percentage of 1 percent. The maximum excess allowance for the plan year is 0.75 percent. Thus, each employee's annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction under the plan for each plan year is one. Because the plan contains no limit on the years of service taken into account under the plan, the sum of the total annual disparity fractions for a potential employee with more than 35 years of service will exceed 35. In addition, the plan does not provide that the overall permitted disparity limits may not be exceeded as required by paragraph (a)(2) of this section. The plan therefore does not satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit of this paragraph (c).

Example 2. Plan N is an offset plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 2 percent of average annual compensation, minus 0.75 percent of final average compensation up to the lesser of covered compensation and average annual compensation, for each year of service up to 35. The disparity provided under the plan for the plan year is 0.75 percent, the offset percentage. The maximum offset allowance for the plan year is 0.75 percent. Thus, each employee's annual offset plan disparity fraction under the plan for each plan year is one. Because the plan limits the years of service taken into account under the plan to 35, the sum of the total annual disparity fractions for an employee cannot exceed 35. The plan therefore satisfies the cumulative permitted disparity limit of this paragraph (c).

Example 3. Plan O is a defined benefit excess plan that provides a normal retirement benefit of 0.75 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation, plus 1.25 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, for each year of service up to 45. The disparity provided under the plan for the plan year is 0.5 percent, the excess benefit percentage of 1.25 percent minus the base benefit percentage of 0.75 percent. The maximum excess allowance for the plan year is 0.75 percent. Thus, each employee's annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction under the plan for each plan year is 0.67 (0.5 percent divided by 0.75 percent). Because the plan limits the years of service taken into account under the plan to 45, the sum of the total annual disparity fractions for an employee cannot exceed 30 (0.67 x 45). The plan therefore satisfies the cumulative permitted disparity limit of this paragraph (c).

Example 4. (a) Plan P is a defined contribution excess plan. Plan P provides a base contribution percentage of 6 percent and an excess contribution percentage of 11.7 percent, thus providing disparity of 5.7 percent for

the plan year. Because the maximum excess allowance for each plan year under Plan P is 5.7 percent, each employee's annual defined contribution plan disparity fraction under Plan P for each plan year is one. Plan Q is a defined benefit excess plan maintained by the same employer. Plan Q provides a base benefit percentage of 1 percent and an excess benefit percentage of 1.75 percent for each year of service up to 35, thus providing disparity of 0.75 percent for the plan year. Because the maximum excess allowance for each plan year under Plan Q is 0.75 percent, each employee's annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fraction under Plan Q for each plan year is one.

(b) Employee A benefits under Plan P for the 1980 through the 1994 plan years. The sum of Employee A's total annual disparity fractions under Plan P is 15. (Under paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section, Employee A's annual disparity fraction for each year of service as of the end of the 1988 plan year is one.) As of the 1995 plan year, Employee A no longer benefits under Plan P and begins to benefit under Plan Q for the first time. In order to satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit of this paragraph (c), Plan Q must provide that no disparity will be provided if the sum of an employee's total annual disparity fractions reaches 35, taking into account the employee's annual defined contribution plan disparity fractions under Plan P as well as the employee's annual defined benefit excess plan disparity fractions under Plan Q. Thus, after Employee A has benefited under Plan Q for 20 years, Plan Q may not provide any disparity in additional benefits accrued for Employee A.

Example 5. (a) Plan O is a noncontributory defined benefit excess plan. Plan O provides an employee whose social security retirement age is 65 with the greater of the benefits determined under two formulas. The first formula provides a benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation, plus 1.75 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, for each year of service up to 35. The second formula provides a benefit of 1 percent of average annual compensation up to covered compensation, plus 1.6 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, for each year of service up to 40.

(b) Under paragraph (b)(4) of this section, an employee's annual defined benefit excess plan fraction for each of the 35 years under the first formula is 0.75/0.75 or one, and an employee's annual defined benefit excess plan fraction for each of the 40 years under the second formula is 0.6/0.75 or 0.8. Under paragraph (b)(8)(ii) of this section, an employee's annual defined benefit excess plan fraction (and total annual disparity fraction because the employee benefits only under Plan O) for the plan year is the larger fraction under the two formulas or one. Therefore, after 35 years, the employee has a cumulative disparity fraction of 35. The disparity provided under the second formula for years of service after 35 thus exceeds the cumulative permitted disparity limit unless the plan qualifies for the special rule in paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.

(c) Assume the condition in paragraph (c)(4)(i)(C) of this section is satisfied because no employee has benefited under another plan taken into account under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. In addition, the largest cumulative disparity fraction possible under the first formula is 35 times one or 35, and the largest cumulative disparity fraction possible under the second formula is 40 times 0.8 or 32. Thus, the requirement of paragraph (c)(4)(i)(B) of this section is also satisfied because each formula would satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit if it were the only formula under the plan. Under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section, the plan is deemed to satisfy the cumulative permitted disparity limit with respect to an employee whose social security retirement age is 65.

(d) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may prescribe additional rules under this section as the Commissioner considers appropriate. Additional rules may include (without being limited to) rules for computing the fractions described in this section with respect to terminated plans, rules for applying the overall permitted disparity limits to employees who benefit under plans maintained by railroad employers, and rules for determining which plans do not satisfy section 401(l) if the overall permitted disparity limits are exceeded.

[T.D. 8359, 56 FR 47634, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10819, 10952, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46833, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.401(l)–6 Effective dates and transition rules.

(a) *Statutory effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, section 401(a)(5)(C) is effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989, and section 401(l) is effective with respect to plan years, and benefits attributable to plan years, beginning on or after January 1, 1989. The preceding sentence is applicable to a plan without regard to whether the plan was in existence as of a particular date.

(2) *Collectively bargained plans.* (i) In the case of a plan maintained pursuant

to 1 or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and 1 or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, sections 401(a)(5) and 401(l) are applicable for plan years beginning on or after the later of—

(A) January 1, 1989; or

(B) The date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension of any such agreement occurring on or after March 1, 1986). However, notwithstanding the preceding sentence, sections 401(a)(5) and 401(l) apply to plans described in this paragraph (a)(2) no later than the first plan year beginning after January 1, 1991.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (a)(2)(i)(B) of this section, a change made after October 22, 1986, in the terms or conditions of a collectively bargained plan, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement ratified before March 1, 1986, is not treated as a change in the terms and conditions of the plan.

(iii) In the case of a collectively bargained plan described in paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section, if the date in paragraph (a)(2)(i)(B) of this section precedes November 15, 1988, then the date in this paragraph (a)(2) is replaced with the date on which the last of any collective bargaining agreements in effect on November 15, 1988, terminates, provided that the plan complies during this period with a reasonable good faith interpretation of section 401(l).

(iv) Whether a plan is maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement is determined under the principles applied under section 1017(c) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. See H.R. Rep. No. 1280, 93d Cong., 2d Sess. 266 (1974). In addition, a plan is not treated as maintained under a collective bargaining agreement unless the employee representatives satisfy section 7701(a)(46) of the Internal Revenue Code after March 31, 1984. See § 301.7701–17T of this chapter for other requirements for a plan to be considered to be collectively bargained.

(b) *Regulatory effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by an organization exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–6 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

(3) *Defined contribution plans.* A defined contribution plan satisfies section 401(l) with respect to a plan year beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section, if it satisfies the applicable requirements of §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–5 for the plan year.

(4) *Defined benefit plans.* A defined benefit excess plan or offset plan satisfies section 401(l) with respect to all plan years, and benefits attributable to all plan years, beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section, by satisfying the applicable requirements of §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–5 and the requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) (and § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d), if applicable), using a fresh-start date that is on or after December 31, 1988, and before the effective date of these regulations. A defined benefit excess plan or offset plan that does not satisfy section 401(l) with respect to all plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations may, under the rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c) (and § 1.401(a)(4)–13(d), if applicable), satisfy section 401(l) for plan years beginning after a fresh-start date by satisfying the applicable requirements of §§ 1.401(l)–1 through 1.401(l)–5 after the fresh-start date.

(c) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989, and before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraph (b) of this section, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(l). Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(l) will generally be determined based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, including the extent to

which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 401(*l*) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of §§ 1.401(*l*)–1 through 1.401(*l*)–5.

[T.D. 8486, 58 FR 46835, Sept. 3, 1993]

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[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40534, Aug. 15, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8376, 56 FR 63432, Dec. 4, 1991; T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66175, Dec. 23, 1994]

§ 1.401(m)–1 Employee and matching contributions.

(a) General Rules—(1) *Nondiscriminatory amount of contributions.* A defined contribution plan does not satisfy section 401(a)(4) for a plan year unless the amount of employee and matching contributions to the plan for the plan year satisfies section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii). Except as specifically provided otherwise, for plan years beginning after December 31, 1986 (or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section) the amount of employee and matching contributions under a plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4) only if the employee and matching contributions under the plan satisfy the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2) and paragraph (b) of this section. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B). Also, except as specifically provided otherwise, for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988 (or such later date provided in § 1.401(m)–2(d)), the amount of employee and matching contributions under a plan satisfies the requirements of sections 401(m) and 401(a)(4) only if any multiple use of the alternative methods of compliance with sections 401 (k) and (m) (contained in sections 401(k)(3)(A)(ii)(II) and 401(m)(2)(A)(ii), respectively) is corrected under § 1.401(m)– 2(c). See section 401(m)(9) and § 1.401(m)–2. For these purposes, the employee and matching contributions are combined with the elective and qualified nonelective contributions, if any, that are treated as matching contributions, and the recharacterized elective contributions, if any, that are treated as employee contributions for purposes of section 401(m).

(2) *Other nondiscrimination rules.* Nondiscrimination requirements in addition to those described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section apply to employee and matching contributions under sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b). For example, under section 401(a)(4) a plan may not discriminate with respect to the availability of benefits, rights, and features under the plan. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(3). The right to make each level of employee contributions, and the right to each level of matching contributions, are benefits, rights, or features subject to this requirement, and each level must therefore generally be available to a group of employees that satisfies section 410(b). See § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(3) (i) and (iii) (F) through (G). Thus, for example, a plan does not satisfy section 401(a)(4) if it provides a higher rate of matching contributions for highly compensated employees than for nonhighly compensated employees. See paragraph (e)(4) of this section for rules relating to the application of section 401(a)(4) to the correction of excess aggregate contributions. See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii) for special rules relating to

correction of violations of the minimum coverage requirements or discriminatory rates of match in a section 401(m) plan. For special rules governing the application of section 410(b) to employee and matching contributions, see §§ 1.410(b)–7(c)(1) and 1.410(b)–8(a)(1).

(3) *Rules applicable to collectively bargained plans.* The requirements of this section are treated as satisfied by employee and matching contributions under a collectively bargained plan (or the portion of a plan) that automatically satisfies section 410(b). See §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(5) and 1.410(b)–2(b)(7). There are no excess aggregate contributions under a plan (or a portion of a plan) that is treated under this paragraph (a)(3) as satisfying the requirements of this section. Thus, the provisions of section 4979 and § 54.4979–1 of this chapter do not apply to contributions described in the first sentence of this paragraph (a)(3).

(b) *Actual contribution percentage test*—(1) *General rule.* (i) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, the actual contribution percentage test is satisfied if—

(A) The actual contribution percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees is not more than the actual contribution percentage for the group of all other eligible employees multiplied by 1.25; or

(B) The excess of the actual contribution percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees over the actual contribution percentage for the group of all other eligible employees is not more than two percentage points, and the actual contribution percentage for the group of eligible highly compensated employees is not more than the actual contribution percentage for the group of all other eligible employees multiplied by two.

(ii) A plan does not fail to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (b)(1) merely because all of the eligible employees under the plan for a year are highly compensated employees.

(2) *Plan provision requirement.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, a plan that permits employee or matching contributions does not satisfy the requirements of section 401(a) unless it provides that the actual contribution percentage test of section 401(m)(2) will be met. For purposes of this paragraph (b)(2), the plan may incorporate the provisions of section 401(m)(2), this paragraph (b), and, if applicable, section 401(m)(9) and § 1.401(m)–2.

(3) *Aggregation of plans*—(i) *General rule.* See § 1.401(m)–1(f)(14) for the definition of a plan used for purposes of this section and § 1.401(m)–2. That definition contains the exclusive rules for aggregation and disaggregation of plans for purposes of this section and § 1.401(m)–2.

(ii) *Restructuring and Permissive Disaggregation.* Effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1991, restructuring under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c) may not be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of section 401(m). See § 1.401(a)(4)– 9(c)(3)(ii). For plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, see § 1.401(m)–1(g)(5)(ii). An employer may, however, treat a plan benefiting otherwise excludable employees as two separate plans for purposes of sections 401(m) and 410(b) in accordance with §§ 1.410(b)–6(b)(3) and 1.410(b)–7(c)(3).

(4) *Employee and matching contributions taken into account under the actual contribution percentage test*—(i) *Employee contributions*—(A) *General rule.* An employee contribution is taken into account under paragraph (b)(1) of this section for the plan year in which the contribution is made to the trust. For this purpose, a payment by the employee to an agent of the plan is treated as a contribution to the trust at the time of payment to the agent if the funds paid are transmitted to the trust within a reasonable period after the payment to the agent.

(B) *Recharacterized elective contributions.* An excess contribution that is recharacterized under § 1.401(k)–1(f)(3) is taken into account as an employee contribution for the plan year that includes the time at which the excess contribution is includible in the gross income of the employee under § 1.401(k)–1(f)(3)(ii).

(ii) *Matching contributions*—(A) *General rule.* A matching contribution is taken into account under paragraph (b)(1) of this section for a plan year

only if the contribution is allocated to the employee's account under the terms of the plan as of any date within the plan year, is actually paid to the trust no later than 12 months after the close of the plan year, and is made on behalf of an employee on account of the employee's elective contributions or employee contributions for the plan year. Matching contributions that do not satisfy these requirements are not taken into account under paragraph (b)(1) of this section for any plan year. Instead, the amount of these matching contributions must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4) (without regard to the special nondiscrimination rule in paragraph (b)(1) of this section) for the plan year for which they are allocated under the plan, as if they were nonelective contributions and were the only nonelective employer contributions for that year. See §§ 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)(ii)(B); 1.410(b)–7(c)(1).

(B) *Matching contributions and qualified nonelective contributions used to satisfy actual deferral percentage test.* A matching contribution that is treated as an elective contribution is subject to the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) and is not taken into account under paragraph (b)(1) of this section. See § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5)(iii) for the rule relating to years before January 1, 1987. A qualified nonelective contribution that is treated as an elective contribution is subject to the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) and is not taken into account as a matching contribution under paragraph (b)(1) or (5) of this section.

(C) *Treatment of forfeited matching contributions.* A matching contribution that is forfeited to correct excess aggregate contributions, or because the contribution to which it relates is treated as an excess contribution, excess deferral, or excess aggregate contribution, is not taken into account under paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(5) *Qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions that may be taken into account under the actual contribution percentage test.* Except as specifically provided otherwise, for purposes of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, all or part of the qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions made with respect to any or all employees who are eligible employees under the plan of the employer being tested may be treated as matching contributions provided that each of the following requirements (to the extent applicable) is satisfied:

(i) The amount of nonelective contributions, including those qualified nonelective contributions treated as matching contributions for purposes of the actual contribution percentage test, satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2).

(ii) The amount of nonelective contributions, excluding those qualified nonelective contributions treated as matching contributions for purposes of the actual contribution percentage test and those qualified nonelective contributions treated as elective contributions under § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5) for purposes of the actual deferral percentage test, satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2).

(iii) The elective contributions, including those treated as matching contributions for purposes of the actual contribution percentage test, satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3).

(iv) The qualified nonelective contributions are allocated to the employee under the plan as of a date within the plan year (within the meaning of § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(i)(A)), and the elective contributions satisfy § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(i) for the plan year.

(v) For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, the plan that takes qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions into account in determining whether employee and matching contributions satisfy the requirements of section 401(m)(2)(A), and the plans to which the qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions are made, could be aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(d) after application of the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c), as modified in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(11). If the plan year of the section 401(m) plan is changed to satisfy the requirement under § 1.410(b)–7(d)(5) that the aggregated plans have the same plan year, the elective contributions may be taken into account in the resulting short plan year only if these contributions satisfy the requirements

of § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4) with respect to the short year, and the qualified nonelective contributions may be taken into account in the resulting short plan year only if these contributions satisfy the requirements of § 1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(i)(A) with respect to the short year as if they were elective contributions.

(c) *Additional requirements*—(1) *Coordination with other plans.* Except as expressly permitted under section 401(k) or 401(m), for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, employee or matching contributions (or elective contributions treated as matching contributions under paragraph (b)(5) of this section) may not be taken into account for purposes of determining whether any other contributions under any plan (including the plan to which the employee or matching contributions are made) satisfy the requirements of section 401(a). Indeed, the portion of a plan that consists of employee and matching contributions is treated as a separate plan for purposes of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b). See § 1.410(b)–7(c)(1). Similarly, although matching contributions and qualified nonelective contributions may be used to enable a plan to satisfy the minimum contribution or benefit requirements under section 416, matching contributions that are used in this way are not treated as matching contributions, and must therefore satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4) without regard to section 401(k) or 401(m). See § 1.416–1, M–18 & M–19 and paragraph (f)(12)(iii) of this section. See also § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5) for circumstances under which matching contributions may be used to determine whether a plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(k). This paragraph does not apply for purposes of determining whether a plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test of section 410(b)(2)(A)(ii).

(2) *Recordkeeping requirement.* A plan satisfies this section only if the employer maintains the records necessary to demonstrate compliance with the applicable nondiscrimination requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, including records showing the extent to which qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions are taken into account.

(3) *Consistent application of separate line of business rules.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b), and applies the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to the portion of the plan that consists of matching contributions or to the portion of the plan that consists of employee contributions (the ''matching and employee contribution portions''), then the requirements of this section, section 401(m), and § 1.401(m)–2 must be applied on an employer-wide rather than a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis to all of the plans or portions of plans taken into account in determining whether those requirements are satisfied by the matching and employee contribution portions of the plan (regardless of whether the other plans or portions of plans also satisfy the requirements necessary to apply the special rule in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii)). Conversely, if an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b), and does not apply the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)1–(c)(2)(ii) to either the matching or employee contribution portions of the plan, then the requirements of this section, section 401(m) and § 1.401(m)–2 must be applied on a qualified-separate-line-of-business rather than an employer-wide basis to all of the plans or portions of plans taken into account in determining whether those requirements are satisfied by the matching and employee contribution portions of the plan (regardless of whether one or more of the other plans or portions of plans is tested under the special rule § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii)). This requirement applies solely for purposes of determining whether the requirements of this section, section 401(m), and § 1.401(m)–2 are satisfied by the matching and employee contribution portions of the plan. The rules of this paragraph are illustrated by the following example.

Example. (i) Employer A maintains a profit-sharing plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement in which all of the employees of Employer A are eligible to participate. Under the profit-sharing plan, each $1.00 of elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement is matched by $0.50 of employer contributions. Employer A is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) for purposes of applying section 410(b). However, Employer A applies the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to the portion of its profitsharing plan that consists of matching contributions. Employer A makes qualified nonelective contributions to the profit-sharing plan for the 1995 plan year.

(ii) Under these facts, the requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b) must be applied on an employer-wide rather than a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis in determining whether these qualified nonelective contributions (and any elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement) satisfy the requirements of § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5), and thus whether they may be taken into account under the actual contribution percentage test. Thus, in order for the nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, both (1) the total amount of nonelective contributions under the profit-sharing plan, including the qualified nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, and (2) the total amount of nonelective contributions under the profit-sharing plan, excluding the qualified nonelective contributions to be used to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4) on an employer-wide basis. Further, in order for any elective contributions under the cash or deferred arrangement to be used to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, the total amount of elective contributions, including any treated as matching contributions under the actual contribution percentage test, must satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3) on an employer-wide basis. Of course, in order for the profit-sharing plan to satisfy section 401(a), it must still satisfy sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis.

(d) *Examples.* The provisions of paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section are illustrated by the following examples. Assume in each case that the employer is a corporation, and that the employer's taxable year and plan year are the calendar year. Also assume that the employee contributions, elective contributions, matching contributions and qualified nonelective contributions meet the applicable requirements of sections 401(a)(4) and 410. For methods to be used to correct excess aggregate contributions, see paragraph (e) of this section.

Example 1. (i) Employer L maintains a profit-sharing plan providing for voluntary employee contributions. L does not maintain a plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. For the 1988 plan year, the actual contribution percentages (ACPs) for the highly compensated employees and nonhighly compensated employees are shown in the following chart:

	Actual contribution percentage
Highly compensated	10
Nonhighly compensated	5

(ii) This plan fails to qualify under either of the tests of section 401(m)(2)(A) because the ACP for highly compensated employees is more than 125 percent of the ACP for nonhighly compensated employees, and exceeds the ACP for the nonhighly compensated employees by more than two percentage points. L must either reduce the ACP for the highly compensated employees to seven percent (to satisfy the 200 percent/two percentage point test) or increase the ACP of the nonhighly compensated employees to eight percent (to satisfy the 125 percent test).

Example 2. (i) Employer M maintains a plan under which each dollar of employee contributions is matched with $.50 of employer contributions. M maintains no other plan. For the 1988 plan year, the average percentage of compensation contributed to the plan for the employees is shown in the following chart:

	Employee contributions (percent)	Matching contributions (percent)	Actual contribution percentage
Highly compensated	10	5	15
Nonhighly compensated	5	2.5	7.5

(ii) This plan fails to satisfy either of the tests of section 401(m)(2)(A). Employer M must either reduce the actual contribution percentage of the highly compensated employees to 9.5 percent (to satisfy the 200 percent/two percentage point test) or increase the actual contribution percentage of the nonhighly compensated employees to 12 percent (to satisfy the 125 percent test).

Example 3. (i) Employer N maintains a plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement and permits employee contributions. Employer N includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). For the 1988 plan year, the average percentages of compensation contributed to the plan by the

highly compensated and nonhighly compensated employees as elective contributions and employee contributions are shown in the chart below. Elective contributions meet the requirements of paragraph (b)(5) of this section.

	Elective Contributions (percent)	Employee Contributions (percent)
Highly compensated	10	10
Nonhighly compensated	10	6

(ii) The plan fails to meet the requirements of section 401(m) because the actual contribution percentage (ACP) of highly compensated employees is more than 125 percent of the ACP of the other employees, and exceeds the ACP of the other employees by more than two percentage points.

(iii) The plan provides that elective contributions made by nonhighly compensated employees may be used to meet the requirements of section 401(m) to the extent needed under that section. Under this provision, the plan uses elective contributions equal to two percent of the compensation of the nonhighly compensated employees in the ACP test. After this adjustment, the actual deferral percentages (ADPs) and ACPs are as follows:

	ADP (percent)	ACP (percent)
Highly compensated	10	10
Nonhighly compensated	8	8

(iv) The ACP of the highly compensated employees meets the requirements of section 401(m)(2)(A)(i) because it is 125 percent of that for nonhighly compensated employees. The ADP of the highly compensated employees similarly satisfies the 125 percent test. The plan would also meet the requirements of section 401(m) if all elective contributions were used in the ACP test. This is because the ACP for the highly compensated employees (20 percent) would be 125 percent of the ACP for the nonhighly compensated employees (16 percent).

Example 4. (i) Employer P maintains a plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Elective contributions, qualified nonelective contributions (QNCs), employee contributions, and matching contributions are made to the plan. Employer P includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). The elective contributions and QNCs meet the requirements of paragraph (b)(5) of this section. For the 1989 plan year, the QNCs, elective contributions, and employee and matching contributions, expressed as a percentage of compensation, are shown in the following table:

	QNCs (percent)	Elective Contributions (percent)	Employee/ Matching Contributions (percent)
Highly compensated	3	5	6
Nonhighly compensated	3	4	2

(ii) The elective contributions meet the test of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii). The employee and matching contributions, however, do not meet the actual contribution percentage (ACP) test. P may not use any QNCs of the nonhighly compensated employees to meet the ACP test because the remaining QNCs would discriminate in favor of the highly compensated employees. However, P could make additional QNCs or matching contributions of two percent of compensation on behalf of the nonhighly compensated employees. Alternatively, P could treat all QNCs for all employees and elective contributions equal to one percent of compensation for nonhighly compensated employees as matching contributions and make additional QNCs of 1.2 percent of compensation on behalf of nonhighly compensated employees. The ACPs for highly and nonhighly compensated employees would then be nine percent and 7.2 percent, respectively, thus satisfying the 125 percent test. The actual deferral percentages would be five and three percent, respectively, which would satisfy the 200 percent/two percentage point test.

Example 5. (i) Employer P maintains a cash or deferred arrangement. Elective contributions, qualified nonelective contributions (QNCs), employee contributions, and matching contributions are made to the plan. The elective contributions and the QNCs meet the requirements of paragraph (b)(5) of this section. For the 1989 plan year, the contributions are shown in the following table:

	QNCs (percent)	Elective contributions (percent)	Employee/ matching contributions (percent)
Highly compensated	0	6	6
Nonhighly compensated	3	3	3

(ii) The QNCs may be used in the actual deferral percentage (ADP) test, the actual contribution percentage (ACP) test, or a combination of the two. If P treats one-third of the QNCs as elective contributions and two-thirds as matching contributions, the ADPs for the highly compensated and nonhighly compensated employees are six and four percent, respectively, and satisfy the 200 percent/two percentage point test. Similarly, the ACPs for the two groups are six and five percent, respectively, and satisfy the 125 percent test.

(e) *Correction of excess aggregate contributions*—(1) *General rule*—(i) *Permissible correction methods.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 401(m)(2) and paragraph (b)(1) of this section with respect to the amount of employee and matching contributions under the plan if the employer, in accordance with the terms of the plan and paragraph (b)(5) of this section, makes qualified nonelective contributions or elective contributions that, in combination with employee and matching contributions, satisfy the actual contribution percentage test. In addition, a plan subject to the requirements of section 401(m) satisfies section 401(m)(2) and paragraph (b)(1) of this section if, in accordance with the terms of the plan, excess aggregate contributions on behalf of highly compensated employees (and the income allocable to these contributions) are distributed in accordance with paragraph (e)(3) of this section. Matching contributions (and the income allocable to matching contributions) that are not vested (determined without regard to any increase in vesting that may occur after the date of the forfeiture) may also be forfeited to correct excess aggregate contributions. Finally, a plan may limit employee or matching contributions in a manner that prevents excess aggregate contributions from being made.

(ii) *Combination of correction methods.* The plan may permit a combination of the methods listed in paragraph (e)(1)(i) of this section to avoid or correct excess aggregate contributions.

(iii) *Impermissible correction methods.* Excess aggregate contributions may not be corrected by forfeiting vested matching contributions, recharacterizing matching contributions, or not making matching contributions required under the terms of the plan. Excess aggregate contributions for a plan year may not remain unallocated or be allocated to a suspense account for allocation to one or more employees in any future year. In addition, excess aggregate contributions may not be corrected using the retroactive correction rules of § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g). See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii) and (5). See paragraph (e)(5) of this section for the effects of a failure to correct excess aggregate contributions. See § 1.411(a)–4(b)(7) regarding permissible forfeitures of matching contributions.

(iv) *Partial correction.* Any distribution of less than the entire amount of excess aggregate contributions (and income) is treated as a pro rata distribution of excess aggregate contributions and income.

(2) *Amount of excess aggregate contributions*—(i) *General rule.* The amount of excess aggregate contributions for a highly compensated employee for a plan year is the amount (if any) by which the employee's employee and matching contributions must be reduced for the employee's actual contribution ratio to equal the highest permitted actual contribution ratio under the plan. To calculate the highest permitted actual contribution ratio under a plan, the actual contribution ratio of the highly compensated employee with the highest actual contribution ratio is reduced by the amount required to cause the employee's actual contribution ratio to equal the ratio of the highly compensated employee with the next highest actual contribution ratio. If a lesser reduction would enable the arrangement to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, only this lesser reduction may be made. This process must be repeated until the plan satisfies the actual contribution percentage test. The highest actual contribution ratio remaining under the plan after leveling is the highest permitted actual contribution ratio. For each highly compensated employee, the amount of excess aggregate contributions for a plan year is equal to the total employee and matching contributions, plus qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions taken into account in determining the employee's actual contribution ratio under paragraph (f)(1) of this section, minus the amount determined by multiplying the employee's actual contribution ratio (determined after application of this paragraph (e)(2)) by the compensation used in determining the ratio. In no case may the amount of excess aggregate contributions with respect to any highly compensated employee exceed the amount of employee and matching contributions made on

behalf of the highly compensated employee for the plan year.

(ii) *Coordination with correction of excess contributions.* The amount of excess aggregate contributions with respect to an employee for a plan year is calculated after determining the excess contributions to be recharacterized as employee contributions for the plan year.

(iii) *Correction of family members.* The determination and correction of excess aggregate contributions of a highly compensated employee whose actual contribution ratio is determined under the family aggregation rules of paragraph (f)(1)(ii)(C) of this section, is accomplished by reducing the actual contribution ratio as required under this paragraph (e)(2) and allocating the excess aggregate contributions for the family group among the family members in proportion to the employee and matching contributions of each family member that are combined to determine the actual contribution ratio.

(3) *Corrective distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income)*—(i) *Genera1 rule.* Excess aggregate contributions (and income allocable thereto) are distributed in accordance with this paragraph (e)(3) only if the excess aggregate contributions and allocable income are designated by the employer as a distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income), and are distributed to the appropriate highly compensated employees after the close of the plan year in which the excess aggregate contributions arose and within 12 months after the close of that plan year. In the event of a complete termination of the plan during the plan year in which an excess aggregate contribution arose, the corrective distribution must be made as soon as administratively feasible after the date of termination of the plan, but in no event later than 12 months after the date of termination. If the entire account balance of a highly compensated employee is distributed during the plan year in which the excess aggregate contribution arose, the distribution is deemed to have been a corrective distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) to the extent that a corrective distribution would otherwise have been required.

(ii) *Income allocable to excess aggregate contributions*—(A) *General rule.* The income allocable to excess aggregate contributions is equal to the sum of the allocable gain or loss for the plan year and, if the plan so provides, the allocable gain or loss for the period between the end of the plan year and the date of distribution (the ''gap period'').

(B) *Method of allocating income.* A plan may use any reasonable method for computing the income allocable to excess aggregate contributions, provided that the method does not violate section 401(a)(4), is used consistently for all participants and for all corrective distributions under the plan for the plan year, and is used by the plan for allocating income to participants' accounts. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(8).

(C) *Alternative method of allocating income.* A plan may allocate income to excess aggregate contributions by multiplying the income for the plan year (and the gap period, if the plan so provides) allocable to employee contributions, matching contributions, and amounts treated as matching contributions by a fraction. The numerator of the fraction is the excess aggregate contributions for the employee for the plan year. The denominator of the fraction is equal to the sum of:

(*1*) The total account balance of the employee attributable to employee and matching contributions, and amounts treated as matching contributions as of the beginning of the plan year; plus

(*2*) The employee and matching contributions, and amounts treated as matching contributions for the plan year and for the gap period if gap period income is allocated.

(D) *Safe harbor method of allocating gap period income.* Under the safe harbor method, income on excess aggregate contributions for the gap period is equal to 10 percent of the income allocable to excess aggregate contributions for the plan year (calculated under the method described in paragraph (e)(3)(ii)(C) of this section), multiplied by the number of calendar months that have elapsed since the end of the plan year. For purposes of calculating the number of calendar months that have elapsed under the safe harbor method, a corrective distribution that is made on or before the fifteenth day of the

month is treated as made on the last day of the preceding month. A distribution made after the fifteenth day of the month is treated as made on the first day of the next month.

(E) *Allocable income for recharacterized elective contributions.* If recharacterized elective contributions are distributed as excess aggregate contributions, the income allocable to the excess aggregate contributions is determined as if recharacterized elective contributions had been distributed as excess contributions. Thus, income must be allocated to the recharacterized amounts distributed using the methods in § 1.401(k)–1(f)(4)(ii).

(iii) *No employee or spousal consent required.* A distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) may be made under the terms of the plan without regard to any notice or consent otherwise required under sections 411(a)(11) and 417.

(iv) *Treatment of corrective distributions and forfeited contributions as employer contributions.* Excess aggregate contributions, including forfeited matching contributions, are treated as employer contributions for purposes of sections 404 and 415 even if distributed from the plan. Forfeited matching contributions that are reallocated to the accounts of other participants for the plan year in which the forfeiture occurs are treated under section 415 as annual additions for the participants to whose accounts they are reallocated and for the participants from whose accounts they are forfeited.

(v) *Tax treatment of corrective distributions*—(A) *Genera1 rule.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (e)(3)(v), a corrective distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) that is made within 2½ months after the end of the plan year for which the excess aggregate contributions were made is includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year of the employee ending with or within the plan year for which the excess aggregate contributions were made. A corrective distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) that is made more than 2½ months after the plan year for which the excess aggregate contributions were made is includible in the employee's gross income in the taxable year of the employee in which distributed. The portion of the distribution that is treated as an investment in the contract under section 72 is determined without regard to any plan contributions other than those distributed as excess aggregate contributions. Regardless of when the corrective distribution is made, it is not subject to the early distribution tax of section 72(t) and is not treated as a distribution for purposes of applying the excise tax under section 4980A. See paragraph (e)(5) of this section for additional rules relating to the employer excise tax on amounts distributed more than 2½ months after the end of the plan year.

(B) *Rule for de minimis distributions.* If the total excess contributions and excess aggregate contributions distributed to a recipient under a plan for any plan year are less than $100 (excluding income), a corrective distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) is includible in gross income in the recipient's taxable year in which the corrective distribution is made.

(C) *Rule for certain 1987 and 1988 excess aggregate contributions.* Distributions for plan years beginning in 1987 and 1988 to which the de minimis rule of this paragraph (e)(3)(v) of this section would otherwise apply may be reported by the recipient, at the recipient's option, either in the year described in paragraph (e)(3)(v)(A) of this section, or in the year described in paragraph (e)(3)(v)(B) of this section. This special rule may be used only for distributions made within 2½ months after the close of the plan year, but not later than April 17, 1989.

(vi) *No reduction of required minimum distribution.* A distribution of excess aggregate contributions (and income) is not treated as a distribution for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies the minimum distribution requirements of section 401(a)(9).

(vii) *No corrective distribution of matching contributions other than excess aggregate contributions.* A matching contribution that is an excess aggregate contribution may be distributed as provided in section 401(m)(6) and

§ 1.401(m)–1(e)(3). A matching contribution may not be distributed merely because the contribution to which it relates is treated as an excess contribution, excess deferral, or excess aggregate contribution. See §§ 1.401(k)–1(f)(5)(iii) and 1.411(a)–4(b)(7) regarding permissible forfeitures of matching contributions that relate to excess contributions, excess deferrals, or excess aggregate contributions.

(4) *Coordination with section 401(a)(4).* A matching contribution is taken into account under section 401(a)(4) even if it is distributed, unless the distributed contribution is an excess aggregate contribution. However, the method of distributing excess aggregate contributions provided in the plan must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(4). This requires that after correction each level of matching contributions be currently and effectively available to a group of employees that satisfies section 410(b). See § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e)(3)(iii)(G). Thus, a plan that provides the same rate of matching contributions to all employees will not meet the requirements of section 401(a)(4) if employee contributions are distributed under this paragraph (e) to highly compensated employees to the extent needed to meet the requirements of section 401(m)(2), while matching contributions attributable to employee contributions remain allocated to the highly compensated employees' accounts. See § 1.411(a)–4(b)(7) for a rule that allows forfeiture of these matching contributions to avoid a violation of section 401(a)(4). See also § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii)(B) regarding the use of additional allocations to the accounts of nonhighly compensated employees for the purpose of correcting a discriminatory rate of matching contributions. A method of distributing excess aggregate contributions will not be considered discriminatory solely because, in accordance with the terms of the plan, unmatched employee contributions that exceed the highest rate at which employee contributions are matched are distributed before matched employee contributions, or matching contributions are distributed (or forfeited) prior to employee contributions. See *Example 6* in paragraph (e)(6) of this section.

(5) *Failure to correct*—(i) *Failure to correct within 2½ months after end of plan year.* If a plan does not correct excess aggregate contributions within 2½ months after the close of the plan year for which the excess aggregate contributions are made, the employer will be liable for a 10 percent excise tax on the amount of the excess aggregate contributions. See section 4979 and § 54.4979–1. Qualified nonelective contributions properly taken into account under paragraph (b)(5) of this section for a plan year may enable a plan to avoid having excess aggregate contributions, even if the contributions are made after the close of the 2½ month period.

(ii) *Failure to correct within 12 months after end of plan year.* If excess aggregate contributions are not corrected within 12 months after the close of the plan year for which they were made, the plan will fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a)(4) for the plan year for which the excess aggregate contributions were made and all subsequent plan years in which the excess aggregate contributions remain in the plan.

(6) *Examples.* The principles of this paragraph (e) are illustrated by the following examples. Assume in each example that no income or loss is allocable to elective, employee, or matching contributions.

Example 1. (i) Employer A maintains a thrift plan that does not include a cash or deferred arrangement. In 1990, the actual contribution percentage (ACP) for nonhighly compensated employees is four percent. Thus, the ACP for the group of highly compensated employees may not exceed six percent. The three highly compensated employees who participate have the following compensation, contributions, and actual contribution ratios (ACRs):

Employee	Compensation	Employee and matching contributions	Actual contribution ratio (percent)
A	100,000	10,000	10
B	90,000	6,300	7

Employee	Compensation	Employee and matching contributions	Actual contribution ratio (percent)
C	75,000	3,750	5
Average			7.33

(ii) The maximum amount of employee and matching contributions permitted on behalf of A, B, and C is determined by reducing contributions in order of their ACRs, beginning with the highest ACR. Thus, A's contribution is first reduced to $7,000 or 7.0 percent. Since the resulting ACP of 6.33 percent still exceeds the permitted highly compensated ACP of six percent, the contributions allocated to A and B must be further reduced to 6.5 percent. This results in an ACP of six percent, which meets the 200 percent/two percentage point test. The excess aggregate contributions for A and B are $3,500 and $450, respectively.

Example 2. (i) Employee A is the sole highly compensated participant in a cash or deferred arrangement maintained by Employer X. The plan that includes the arrangement, Plan X, provides a fully vested matching contribution equal to 50 percent of elective contributions. Plan X is a calendar year plan. Employer X includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). Plan X corrects excess contributions by recharacterization. For the 1988 plan year, A's compensation is $58,333, and A's elective contributions are $7,000. The actual deferral percentages and actual contribution percentages of A and other employees under Plan X are shown below:

	Actual deferral percentage	Actual contribution percentage
Employee A	12	6
Nonhighly compensated	8	4

(ii) In February 1989, Employer X determines that A's actual deferral ratio must be reduced to 10 percent, or $5,833, which requires a recharacterization of $1,167 as an employee contribution. This increases A's actual contribution ratio to eight percent ($3,500 in matching contributions plus $1,167 recharacterized as employee contributions, divided by $58,333 in compensation). Since A's actual contribution ratio must be limited to six percent for Plan X to satisfy the actual contribution percentage test, Plan X must distribute $1,167 of A's employee and matching contributions. If $1,167 in matching contributions is distributed, this will correct the excess aggregate contributions and will not result in a discriminatory rate of matching contributions. See *Example 8.*

Example 3. Same as *Example 2,* except that in 1988 A also had elective contributions of $1,313 under Plan Y, maintained by an employer unrelated to X. In January 1989, A requests and receives a distribution of $1,000 in excess deferrals from Plan X. Pursuant to the terms of Plan X, A forfeits the $500 match on the excess deferrals to correct a discriminatory rate of match (see *Example 8*). The $1,167 that would otherwise have been recharacterized for Plan X to satisfy the actual deferral percentage test is reduced by the $1,000 already distributed as an excess deferral, leaving $167 to be recharacterized. See § 1.401(k)–1(f)(5)(i). Pursuant to the terms of Plan X, A forfeits the $83.50 match on the recharacterized $167 to correct a discriminatory rate of match. A's actual contribution ratio is now 5.29 percent ($2,916.50 ($3,500–$500–$83.50)) in matching contributions plus $167 in employee contributions, divided by $58,333 in compensation. Since Plan X satisfies the actual contribution percentage test, no further distribution is required or permitted.

Example 4. Same as *Example 3,* except that A does not request a distribution of excess deferrals until March 1989. Employer X has already recharacterized $1,167 as employee contributions. Under § 1.402(g)–1(e)(6), the amount of excess deferrals is reduced by the amount of excess contributions that are recharacterized. Because the amount recharacterized is greater than the excess deferrals, Plan X is neither required nor permitted to make a distribution of excess deferrals, and the recharacterization has corrected the excess deferrals.

Example 5. For the 1987 plan year, Employee B defers $7,000 under Plan C and $1,000 under plan D. Plans C and D are maintained by unrelated Employers C and D; both Plans C and D have calendar plan years. Plan C provides a fully vested, 100 percent matching contribution and does not take elective contributions into account under section 401(m) or take matching contributions into account under section 401(k). Employer C determines that B has excess contributions of $600 and excess aggregate contributions of $1,600. B timely requests and receives a distribution of the $1,000 excess deferral from Plan C, and pursuant to the terms of Plan C, forfeits the corresponding $1,000 matching contribution to correct a discriminatory rate of match (see *Example 8*). Plan C provides that excess

contributions and excess aggregate contributions are corrected by distribution. No distribution is required or permitted to correct the excess contributions because $1,000 has been distributed from this plan as excess deferrals. The distribution required to correct the excess aggregate contributions (after forfeiting the matching contribution) is $600 ($1,600 in excess aggregate contributions minus $1,000 in forfeited matching contributions). If B had corrected the excess deferrals of $1,000 by withdrawing $1,000 from Plan D, Plan C would have had to correct the $600 excess contributions in Plan C by distributing $600. Since B then would have forfeited $600 (instead of $1,000) in matching contributions, B would have had $1,000 ($1,600 in excess aggregate contributions minus $600 in forfeited matching contributions) remaining of excess aggregate contributions in Plan C. These would have been corrected by distributing an additional $1,000 from Plan C.

Example 6. Employee B is the sole highly compensated employee in a thrift plan under which the employer matches 100 percent of employee contributions up to two percent of compensation, and 50 percent of employee contributions up to the next four percent of compensation. For the 1988 plan year, B has compensation of $100,000. B makes an employee contribution of $7,000, or seven percent, and receives a four percent matching contribution of $4,000. Thus, B's actual contribution ratio (ACR) is 11 percent. The actual contribution percentage for the nonhighly compensated employees is five percent, and the employer determines that B's ACR must be reduced to seven percent to comply with the rules of section 401(m). In this case, the plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph if it distributes the unmatched employee contributions of $1,000, and $2,000 of matched employee contributions with their related matches of $1,000. This would leave B with four percent employee contributions, and three percent matching contributions, for an ACR of seven percent. The plan could instead distribute all matching contributions. The plan would fail to meet the requirements of this paragraph if it distributed $4,000 (four percent) of B's employee contributions and none of B's matching contributions because this would result in a discriminatory rate of matching contributions. See § 1.401(m)–1(e)(2) and (4). See also *Example 8.*

Example 7. (i) Employee C is a highly compensated employee in Employer X's thrift plan, which matches 100 percent of employee contributions up to five percent of compensation. The matching contribution is vested at the rate of 20 percent per year. In 1991, C makes $5,000 in employee contributions and receives $5,000 of matching contributions. C is 60 percent vested in the matching contributions at the end of the 1991 plan year.

(ii) In February 1992, X determines that C has excess aggregate contributions of $1,000. The plan provides that only matching contributions will be distributed as excess aggregate contributions.

(iii) X has two options available in distributing C's excess contributions. The first option is to distribute $600 of vested matching contributions and forfeit $400 of nonvested matching contributions. These amounts are in proportion to C's vested and nonvested interests in all matching contributions. The second option is to distribute $1,000 of vested matching contributions, leaving the nonvested matching contributions in the plan.

(iv) If the second option is chosen, the plan must also provide a separate vesting schedule for vesting these nonvested matching contributions. This is necessary because the nonvested matching contributions must vest as rapidly as they would have had no distribution been made. Thus, 50 percent must vest in each of the next two years.

(v) The plan will not satisfy the nondiscriminatory availability requirement of section 401(a)(4) if only nonvested matching contributions are distributed because the effect is that matching contributions for highly compensated employees vest more rapidly than those for nonhighly compensated employees. See § 1.401(m)–1(e)(4).

Example 8. (i) Employer B maintains a calendar year profit sharing plan that includes a cash or deferred arrangement. Elective contributions are matched at the rate of 100 percent. After-tax employee contributions are permitted under the plan only for nonhighly compensated employees and are matched at the same rate. No employees make excess deferrals. Employee A, a highly compensated employee, makes an $8,000 elective contribution and receives an $8,000 matching contribution.

(ii) Employer B performs the actual deferral percentage (ADP), the actual contribution percentage (ACP), and the multiple use tests. To correct failures of the ADP and ACP tests, the plan distributes to A $1,000 of excess contributions and $500 of excess aggregate contributions. After the distributions, A's contributions for the year are $7,000 of elective contributions and $7,500 of matching contributions. As a result, A has received a higher effective rate of matching contributions than nonhighly compensated employees ($7,000 of elective contributions matched by $7,500 is an effective matching rate of 107 percent). If this amount remains in A's account without correction, it will cause the plan to fail to satisfy section 401(a)(4), because only a highly compensated employee receives the higher matching contribution rate. The remaining $500 matching contribution may be forfeited (but not distributed) under section 411(a)(3)(G), if the plan so provides. The plan could instead correct the discriminatory rate of matching contributions

by making additional allocations to the accounts of nonhighly compensated employees. See § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g)(3)(vii)(B) and (6), *Example 7.*

(f) *Definitions.* The following definitions apply for purposes of this section and § 1.401(m)–2 except as otherwise specifically provided:

(1) *Actual contribution percentage*—(i) *General rule.* The actual contribution percentage for a group of employees for a plan year is the average of the actual contribution ratios of the employees in the group. For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, actual contribution ratios and the actual contribution percentage for a group are calculated to the nearest one-hundredth of a percentage point.

(ii) *Actual contribution ratio*—(A) *General rule.* An employee's actual contribution ratio is the sum of the employee and matching contributions allocated to the employee's account for the plan year, and the qualified nonelective and elective contributions treated as matching contributions for the plan year, divided by the employee's compensation for the plan year. If an eligible employee makes no employee contributions and no matching, qualified nonelective contributions, or elective contributions are taken into account with respect to the employee, the actual contribution ratio of the employee is zero. See paragraphs (b)(4), (b)(5), and (f)(2) of this section for rules regarding the employee and matching contributions, qualified nonelective and elective contributions, and compensation that are taken into account in calculating this fraction.

(B) *Highly compensated employee eligible under more than one plan.* The actual contribution ratio of a highly compensated employee who is eligible to participate in more than one plan of an employer to which employee or matching contributions are made is calculated by treating all the plans in which the employee is eligible to participate as one plan. However, plans that are not permitted to be aggregated under § 1.410(b)–7(c), as modified in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(11), are not aggregated for this purpose. For example, if a highly compensated employee with compensation of $80,000 may receive matching contributions under two plans of an employer, the employee's actual contribution ratio under each plan is calculated by dividing the employee's total matching contributions under both plans by $80,000, unless the plans are required to be disaggregated. In that case, the actual contribution ratio of the employee under each plan is to be calculated by dividing the employee's matching contributions under that plan by $80,000. See paragraph (b)(3) of this section for the treatment of certain multiple plans. For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, if a highly compensated employee participates in two or more plans that have different plan years, this paragraph (f)(1)(ii) is applied by treating all plans whose plan years end with or within the same calendar year as a single plan.

(C) *Employees subject to family aggregation rules—(1)* Aggregation of employee contributions and other amounts. For plan years beginning after December 31, 1986, or such later date provided in paragraph (g) of this section, if a highly compensated employee is subject to the family aggregation rules of section 414(q)(6) because that employee is either a five-percent owner or one of the 10 most highly compensated employees, the combined actual contribution ratio for the family group (treated as one highly compensated employee) must be determined by combining the employee contributions, matching contributions, amounts treated as matching contributions, and compensation of all family members.

(*2*) *Effect on actual contribution percentage of nonhighly compensated employees.* The employee and matching contributions, amounts treated as matching contributions, and compensation of all family members are disregarded for purposes of determining the actual contribution percentage for the group of highly compensated employees, and the group of nonhighly compensated employees.

(*3*) *Multiple family groups.* If an employee is required to be aggregated as a member of more than one family group in a plan, all eligible employees who

are members of those family groups that include that employee are aggregated as one family group.

(2) *Compensation.* The term *compensation* means compensation as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i).

(3) *Elective contributions.* The term ''elective contribution'' means elective contribution as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(3).

(4) *Eligible employee*—(i) *General rule.* The term ''eligible employee'' means an employee who is directly or indirectly eligible to make an employee contribution or to receive an allocation of matching contributions (including matching contributions derived from forfeitures) under the plan for a plan year. For example, if an employee must perform ministerial or mechanical acts (e.g., formal application for participation or consent to payroll withholding) in order to be eligible to make an employee contribution for a plan year, the employee is an eligible employee for the plan year without regard to whether the employee performs these acts. An employee who is unable to make an employee contribution or to receive an allocation of matching contributions because the employee has not contributed to another plan is also an eligible employee. By contrast, if an employee must perform additional service (e.g., satisfy a minimum period of service requirement) in order to be eligible to make an employee contribution or to receive an allocation of matching contributions for a plan year, the employee is not an eligible employee for the plan year unless the service is actually performed. An employee who would be eligible to make employee contributions but for a suspension due to a distribution, a loan, or an election not to participate in the plan, is an eligible employee for purposes of section 401(m) for a plan year even though the employee may not make an employee contribution or receive an allocation of matching contributions by reason of the suspension. Finally, an employee does not fail to be an eligible employee merely because the employee may receive no additional annual additions because of section 415(c)(1) or 415(e).

(ii) *Certain one-time elections.* An employee is not an eligible employee merely because the employee, upon commencing employment with the employer or upon the employee's first becoming eligible under any plan of the employer providing for employee or matching contributions, is given a one-time opportunity to elect, and the employee does in fact elect, not to be eligible to make employee contributions or to receive allocations of matching contributions under the plan or any other plan maintained by the employer (including plans not yet established) for the duration of the employee's employment with the employer. In no event is an election made after December 23, 1994 treated as a one-time irrevocable election under this paragraph if the election is made by an employee who previously became eligible under another plan (whether or not terminated) of the employer.

(5) *Employee.* The term ''employee'' means an employee as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(5).

(6) *Employee contributions.* The term ''employee contribution'' means any mandatory or voluntary contribution to the plan that is treated at the time of contribution as an after-tax employee contribution (e.g., by reporting the contribution as taxable income subject to applicable withholding requirements) and is allocated to a separate account to which the attributable earnings and losses are allocated. See § 1.401(k)–1(a)(2)(ii). The term includes:

(i) Employee contributions to the defined contribution portion of a plan described in section 414(k);

(ii) Employee contributions to a qualified cost-of-living arrangement described in section 415(k)(2)(B);

(iii) Employee contributions applied to the purchase of whole life insurance protection or survivor benefit protection under a defined contribution plan;

(iv) Amounts attributable to excess contributions within the meaning of section 401(k)(8)(B) that are recharacterized as employee contributions; and

(v) Employee contributions to an annuity contract described in section 403(b).

The term does not include repayment of loans, repayment of distributions described in section 411(a)(7)(C), or employee contributions that are transferred to a plan from another plan. For

purposes of this paragraph (f)(6), employee contributions described in paragraph (f)(6)(ii) of this section are deemed contributed to a defined contribution plan.

(7) *Employer.* The term ''employer'' means the employer as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(6).

(8) *Excess aggregate contributions.* The term ''excess aggregate contribution'' means, with respect to any plan year, the excess of the aggregate amount of the employee and matching contributions (and any qualified nonelective contribution or elective deferral taken into account in computing the contribution percentage) actually made on behalf of highly compensated employees for the plan year, over the maximum amount of contributions permitted under the limitations of section 401(m)(2)(A). The amount of excess aggregate contributions for each highly compensated employee is determined by using the method described in paragraph (e)(2) of this section. For purposes of this paragraph, qualified matching contributions treated as elective contributions in accordance with § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5) are disregarded.

(9) *Excess contributions.* The term ''excess contribution'' means an excess contribution as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(7)(i).

(10) *Excess deferrals.* The term ''excess deferrals'' means excess deferral as defined in § 1.402(g)–1(e)(1)(iii).

(11) *Highly compensated employee.* The term ''highly compensated employee'' means a highly compensated employee as defined in section 414(q).

(12) *Matching contributions*—(i) *In general.* The term ''matching contribution'' means:

(A) Any employer contribution (including a contribution made at the employer's discretion) to a defined contribution plan on account of an employee contribution to a plan maintained by the employer;

(B) Any employer contribution (including a contribution made at the employer's discretion) to a defined contribution plan on account of an elective deferral (as defined in § 1.402(g)–1(b)); and

(C) Any forfeiture allocated on the basis of employee contributions, matching contributions, or elective contributions.

(ii) *Employer contributions made on account of employee or elective contributions.* For purposes of paragraph (f)(12)(i) of this section, whether an employer contribution is made on account of an employee contribution or an elective contribution is determined on the basis of all relevant facts and circumstances, including the relationship between the employer contribution and employee actions outside the plan. Thus, for example, an employer contribution made to a defined contribution plan on account of contributions made by an employee under an employer-sponsored savings arrangement that are not held in a plan that is intended to be a qualified plan or a plan described in § 1.402(g)–1(b) is not a matching contribution. Notwithstanding the foregoing, for plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, an employer may elect to take into account as matching contributions, contributions made to a plan pursuant to an arrangement under which the employer makes contributions to the plan on account of either employee contributions to the plan or contributions made by an employee to an employer-sponsored savings arrangement that are not held in the plan, provided that the arrangement was in effect prior to August 8, 1988.

(iii) *Contributions used to meet the requirements of section 416.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, a contribution or allocation that is used to meet the minimum contribution or benefit requirement of section 416 is not treated as made on account of an employee or elective contribution and therefore is not a matching contribution.

(13) *Nonelective contributions.* The term ''nonelective contribution'' means nonelective contributions as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(10).

(14) *Plan.* The term ''plan'' means a plan as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(11).

(15) *Qualified nonelective contributions.* The term ''qualified nonelective contribution'' means qualified nonelective contributions as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(g)(13)(ii).

(16) *Section 401(k) plan.* The term *section 401(k) plan* means a section 401(k) plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(17) *Section 401(m) plan.* The term *section 401(m) plan* means a section 401(m) plan within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–9.

(g) *Effective dates*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraphs (g)(2), (g)(3), (g)(4), and (g)(5) of this section, or as specifically provided otherwise in this section, this section is effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1986.

(2) *Collectively bargained plans.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, this section does not apply to years beginning before the earlier of—

(i) January 1, 1989, or

(ii) The date on which the last collective bargaining agreement terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986).

(3) *Certain annuity contracts*—(i) In the case of an annuity contract under section 403(b), not maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (g)(5) of this section, this section applies to plan years beginning after December 31, 1988.

(ii) In the case of an annuity contract described in section 403(b) maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement described in paragraph (g)(2)(i) of this section, this section does not apply to years beginning before the earlier of

(A) The later of—

(*1*) January 1, 1989, or

(*2*) The date determined under paragraph (g)(2)(ii) of this section; or

(B) January 1, 1991.

(4) *State and local government plans.* A governmental plan described in section 414(d), including a plan subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plan) is treated as satisfying section 401(m) for plan years beginning before the later of January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously. For purposes of this paragraph (g)(4), the term *governing body with authority to amend the plan* means the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan.

(5) *Transition rule for plan years beginning before 1992*—(i) *General rule.* For plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, a reasonable interpretation of the rules set forth in section 401 (k) and (m) of the Internal Revenue Code (as in effect during those years) may be relied upon to determine whether a plan was qualified during those years.

(ii) *Restructuring*—(A) *General rule.* In determining whether the requirements of section 401(m) are satisfied for plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, a plan may be treated as consisting of two or more component plans, each consisting of all of the allocations and other benefits, rights, and features provided to a group of employees under the plan. See § 1.401(a)(4)–9(c). An employee may not be included in more than one component plan of the same plan for a plan year under this method. If this method is used for a plan year, the requirements of section 401(m) are applied separately with respect to each component plan for the plan year. Thus, for example, the actual contribution ratio and the amount of excess aggregate contributions, if any, of each eligible employee under each component plan must be determined as if the component plan were a separate plan. This method applies solely for purposes of section 401(m). Thus, for example, the requirements of section 410(b) must still be satisfied by the entire plan.

(B) *Identification of component plans*—(*1*) *Minimum coverage requirement.* The group of eligible employees described in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(4) under each component plan must separately satisfy the requirements of section 410(b) as if the component plan were a separate plan. Component plans may not be aggregated to satisfy this requirement.

(*2*) *Commonality requirement.* The group of employees used to identify a component plan must share some common attribute or attributes, other than similar actual contribution ratios. Permissible common attributes include, for example, employment at the same work site, in the same job category, for the same division or subsidiary, or for

a unit acquired in a specific merger or acquisition, employment for the same number of years, compensation under the same method (e.g., salaried or hourly), coverage under the same contribution formula, and attributes that could be used as the basis of a classification that would be treated as reasonable under § 1.410(b)–4(b). Employees whose only common attribute is the same or similar actual contribution ratios, or another attribute having substantially the same effect as the same or similar actual contribution ratios, are not considered as sharing a common attribute for this purpose. This rule applies regardless of whether the component plan or the plan of which it is a part satisfies the ratio or percentage test of section 410(b).

[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40534, Aug. 15, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8376, 56 FR 63432, Dec. 4, 1991; T.D. 8357, 57 FR 10290, Mar. 25, 1992; T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66175, Dec. 23, 1994; TD 8581, 60 FR 12416, Mar. 7, 1995]

§ 1.401(m)–2 Multiple use of alternative limitation.

(a) *In general.* The rules in this section prevent the multiple use of the alternative methods of compliance with sections 401 (k) and (m) contained in section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii)(II) and 401(m)(2)(A)(ii) respectively. Paragraph (b) of this section discusses the scope of this section and contains the general rule for determination of a multiple use of the alternative limitation. Paragraph (c) of this section contains rules for the correction of multiple use. The consequences of multiple use of the alternative methods of compliance are described in § 1.401(m)–1(a)(1).

(b) *General rule for determination of multiple use*—(1) *In general.* (i) Multiple use of the alternative limitation occurs if all of the conditions of this paragraph (b)(1) are satisfied:

(A) One or more highly compensated employees of the employer are eligible employees in both a cash or deferred arrangement subject to section 401(k) and a plan maintained by the employer subject to section 401(m).

(B) The sum of the actual deferral percentage of the entire group of eligible highly compensated employees under the arrangement subject to section 401(k) and the actual contribution percentage of the entire group of eligible highly compensated employees under the plan subject to section 401(m) exceeds the aggregate limit of paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(C) The actual deferral percentage of the entire group of eligible highly compensated employees under the arrangement subject to section 401(k) exceeds the amount described in section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii)(I).

(D) The actual contribution percentage of the entire group of eligible highly compensated employees under the arrangement subject to section 401(m) exceeds the amount described in section 401(m)(2)(A)(i).

(ii) The actual deferral percentage and actual contribution percentage of the group of eligible highly compensated employees are determined after use of qualified nonelective contributions and qualified matching contributions to meet the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii) and after use of qualified nonelective contributions and elective contributions to meet the requirements of section 401(m)(2)(A). The actual deferral percentage and actual contribution percentage of the group of eligible highly compensated employees are determined after any corrective distribution or forfeiture of excess deferrals, excess contributions, or excess aggregate contributions and after any recharacterization of excess contributions required without regard to this section. Only plans and arrangements maintained by the same employer are taken into account under this paragraph (b)(1). If the employer maintains two or more plans after application of the rules under § 1.401(k)– 1(g)(11), multiple use is tested separately with respect to each plan. Thus, for example, if an employer maintains a cash or deferred arrangement with matching contributions, under which elective contributions may be made under either an ESOP or a non-ESOP, multiple use is tested separately with respect to elective contributions and matching contributions under the ESOP, and with respect to elective contributions and matching contributions under the non-ESOP.

(2) *Alternative limitation.* For purposes of this section, the term ''alternative limitation'' means the 200 percent or 2

percentage point limits in sections 401(k)(3)(A)(ii)(ii) and 401(m)(2)(A)(ii).

(3) *Aggregate limit*—(i) *In general.* For purposes of this section, the aggregate limit is the greater of:

(A) The sum of—

(*1*) 1.25 times the greater of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage, and

(*2*) Two percentage points plus the lesser of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage. In no event, however, may this amount exceed twice the lesser of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage; or

(B) The sum of—

(*1*) 1.25 times the lesser of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage, and

(*2*) Two percentage points plus the greater of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage. In no event, however, may this amount exceed twice the greater of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage.

(ii) *Relevant actual deferral percentage and relevant actual contribution percentage defined.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section, the term ''relevant actual deferral percentage'' means the actual deferral percentage of the group of nonhighly compensated employees eligible under the arrangement subject to section 401(k) for the plan year, and the term ''relevant actual contribution percentage'' means the actual contribution percentage of the group of nonhighly compensated employees eligible under the plan subject to section 401(m) for the plan year beginning with or within the plan year of the arrangement subject to section 401(k).

(iii) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (b) are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. (i) Assume that Employer G maintains a plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement under which the actual deferral percentages of highly compensated and nonhighly compensated employees are 5.5 and four percent respectively. The plan also permits employee contributions, and the actual contribution percentages for the two groups are 4.2 and three percent respectively. The multiple use of the alternative limitation is tested as follows:

(1) Greater of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage	4.00
(2) 1.25 times (1)	5.00
(3) Lesser of the relevant actual deferral percentage or the relevant actual contribution percentage	3.00
(4) (3) plus two percentage points	5.00
(5) (2)+(4)	10.00
(6) 1.25 times (3)	3.75
(7) (1) plus two percentage points	6.00
(8) (6)+(7)	9.75
(9) Aggregate limit greater of (5) or (8)	10.00

(ii) In this case, the sum of the actual deferral percentage and the actual contribution percentage of highly compensated employees is 9.70 percent, which is less than the aggregate limit. Therefore, there is no multiple use of the alternative limitation.

Example 2. Employer F maintains a plan subject to section 401(k) with a plan year beginning January 1, and a plan subject to section 401(m) with a plan year beginning July 1. The plan subject to section 401(k) does not correct excess contributions by recharacterization. The first actual deferral percentage taken into account is that for the plan year beginning January 1, 1989. The first actual contribution percentage taken into account is that for the plan year beginning July 1, 1989.

Example 3. (i) Employer E maintains a plan that contains a cash or deferred arrangement and provides for matching contributions. The actual deferral and contribution percentages for a plan year are as follows:

	Actual deferral percentage	Actual contribution percentage
Highly compensated	3.6	1.69
Nonhighly compensated	1.8	1.35

(ii) The actual deferral percentage of the highly compensated employees exceeds the normal limit (1.25 times 1.8, or 2.25%) but not the alternative limit (two plus 1.8, but not more than twice 1.8, or 3.6%). The actual contribution percentage of the highly compensated employees does not exceed the normal limit (1.25 times 1.35, or 1.69%). Accordingly, the plan satisfies both the actual deferral and contribution percentage tests. Since the actual contribution percentage of the highly compensated employees does not exceed the normal limit, condition (iv) of paragraph (b)(1) of this section is not satisfied. Therefore, there is no multiple use of the alternative limitation.

(c) *Correction of multiple use*—(1) *In general.* If multiple use of the alternative limitation occurs with respect to two or more plans or arrangements maintained by an employer, it must be corrected by reducing the actual deferral percentage, the actual contribution percentage of highly compensated employees, or a combination of the two, in the manner described in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Instead of making this reduction, the employer may eliminate the multiple use of the alternative limitation by making qualified nonelective contributions in accordance with § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5) and (f)(1) or § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5) and (e)(1).

(2) *Treatment of required reduction.* The required reduction is treated as an excess contribution under the arrangement subject to section 401(k) or excess aggregate contribution under the plan subject to section 401(m). However, if an excess contribution arising under this section is recharacterized as an employee contribution, the recharacterized amount is treated as an excess aggregate contribution.

(3) *Required reduction.* The amount of the reduction of the actual deferral percentage of the entire group of highly compensated employees eligible in the arrangement subject to section 401(k) is calculated in the manner described in § 1.401(k)–1(f)(2) or the amount of the reduction of the actual contribution percentage of the entire group of highly compensated employees eligible in the plan subject to section 401(m) is calculated in the manner described in § 1.401(m)–1(e)(2), as designated in the plan, so that there is no multiple use of the alternative limitation. The employer may elect to reduce the actual deferral ratios or the actual contribution ratios, as designated in the plan, either for all highly compensated employees under the plan or arrangements subject to reduction or for only those highly compensated employees who are eligible in both the arrangement subject to section 401(k) and the plan subject to section 401(m).

(4) *Examples.* The principles of this paragraph (c) are illustrated by the following examples. In all cases, the employer maintains both an arrangement subject to section 401(k) and a plan subject to section 401(m). Assume that there is no income or loss allocable to the elective, employee, or matching contributions.

Example 1. (i) All employees of Employer Q are eligible in both an arrangement subject to section 401(k) and a plan subject to section 401(m). Both plans have a calendar plan year. The plans provide that multiple use of the alternative limitation will be corrected in the plan subject to section 401(m) and that any required reduction in actual contribution ratios will apply only to employees eligible to participate in both arrangements. Employer Q includes elective contributions in compensation as permitted under § 1.414(s)–1(c)(4)(i). See § 1.401(k)–1(g)(2)(i). Employees X and Y are highly compensated. Each received compensation of $100,000, deferred $6,000, received a $3,000 matching contribution, and made employee contributions of $3,000. Actual deferral and contribution percentages under the arrangement and plan for the 1989 plan year are shown below. No excess deferrals, excess contributions, or excess aggregate contributions have yet been required to be distributed, forfeited, or recharacterized under the plan.

	Actual deferral percentage	Actual contribution percentage
Highly compensated	6	6
Nonhighly compensated	4	4

(ii) The aggregate limit and amount required, to be corrected are determined as follows:

Step 1: Determination of Aggregate Limit

(1) Greater of relevant actual deferral percentage or relevant actual contribution percentage	4.0
(2) 1.25 times (1)	5.0
(3) Lesser of relevant actual deferral percentage or relevant actual contribution percentage	4.0
(4) (3) plus two percentage points	6.0
(5) (2)+(4)	11.0
(6) 1.25 times (3)	5.0
(7) (1) plus two percentage points	6.0
(8) (6)+(7)	11.0
(9) Aggregate limit Greater of (5) or (8)	11.0

Step 2: Calculation of Correction Amount

(10) Actual deferral percentage of highly compensated	6.0
(11) Maximum permitted actual contribution percentage of highly compensated ((9)–(10))	5.0
(12) Amount taken into account in determining actual contribution percentage of highly compensated Employee X	$6,000

(13) Maximum amount permitted without use of alternative limitation ((11)×compensation of Employee X) $5,000
(14) Excess aggregate contribution ((12)–(13)) $1,000

(iii) A similar correction must be made for Employee Y.

Example 2. Same as *Example 1,* but the plan corrects the multiple use in the arrangement subject to section 401(k) and provides that excess contributions are recharacterized. In this case, the aggregate limit for the plans will be 11 percent. Similarly, the excess contributions for Employees X and Y, determined in a manner analogous to that used in *Example 1,* will be $1,000. When this is recharacterized, the actual contribution percentage for these employees will increase to seven percent, resulting in an excess aggregate contribution of $1,000 that must be distributed.

Example 3. Same as *Example 1,* except that Employee Y is not eligible to participate in the arrangement subject to section 401(k). No reduction of Y's actual contribution ratio is required because Y is only in the plan subject to section 401(m). In order to reduce the actual contribution percentage of the entire group of highly compensated employees eligible for the plan subject to section 401(m) to five percent, the plan must reduce X's actual contribution percentage to four percent. X's employee and matching contributions are limited to $4,000. Therefore X has an excess aggregate contribution of $2,000.

(d) *Effective date*—(1) *General rule.* This section is effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988, or such later date provided in §1.402(m)–1(g).

(2) *Transition rule.* For plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, a reasonable interpretation of the rules set forth in sections 401 (k) and (m) of the Internal Revenue Code (as in effect during those years) may be relied upon to determine whether a plan was qualified during those years. For plan years beginning before January 1, 1992, a plan may be restructured only in accordance with §1.401(k)–1(h)(3)(iii) or §1.401(m)–1(g)(5)(ii).

[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40543, Aug. 15, 1991, as amended at 57 FR 10290, Mar. 25, 1992; T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66179, Dec. 23, 1994]

§1.402(a)–1 Taxability of beneficiary under a trust which meets the requirements of section 401(a).

(a) *In general.* (1)(i) Section 402 relates to the taxation of the beneficiary of an employees' trust. If an employer makes a contribution for the benefit of an employee to a trust described in section 401(a) for the taxable year of the employer which ends within or with a taxable year of the trust for which the trust is exempt under section 501(a), the employee is not required to include such contribution in his income except for the year or years in which such contribution is distributed or made available to him. It is immaterial in the case of contributions to an exempt trust whether the employee's rights in the contributions to the trust are forfeitable or nonforfeitable either at the time the contribution is made to the trust or thereafter.

(ii) The provisions of section 402(a) relate only to a distribution by a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt under section 501(a) for the taxable year of the trust in which the distribution is made. With two exceptions, the distribution from such an exempt trust when received or made available is taxable to the distributee to the extent provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). First, for taxable years beginning before January 1, 1964, section 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to such distributions. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, such distributions may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). Secondly, certain total distributions described in section 402(a)(2) are taxable as long-term capital gains. For the treatment of such total distributions, see subparagraph (6) of this paragraph. Under certain circumstances, an amount representing the unrealized appreciation in the value of the securities of the employer is excludable from gross income for the year of distribution. For the rules relating to such exclusion, see paragraph (b) of this section. Furthermore, the exclusion provided by section 105(d) is applicable to a distribution from a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a) if such distribution constitutes wages or payments in lieu of wages for a period during which an employee is absent from work on account of a personal injury or

sickness. See § 1.72–15 for the rules relating to the tax treatment of accident or health benefits received under a plan to which section 72 applies.

(iii) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, a distribution of property by a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a) shall be taken into account by the distributee at its fair market value.

(iv) If a trust is exempt for the taxable year in which the distribution occurs, but was not so exempt for one or more prior taxable years under section 501(a) (or under section 165(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1939 for years to which such section was applicable), the contributions of the employer which were includible in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year when made shall, in accordance with section 72(f), also be treated as part of the consideration paid by the employee.

(v) If the trust is not exempt at the time the distribution is received by or made available to the employee, see section 402(b) and paragraph (b) of § 1.402(b)–1.

(vi) For the treatment of amounts paid to provide medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14, see paragraph (h) of § 1.72–15.

(2) If a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a) purchases an annuity contract for an employee and distributes it to the employee in a year for which the trust is exempt, the contract containing a cash surrender value which may be available to an employee by surrendering the contract, such cash surrender value will not be considered income to the employee unless and until the contract is surrendered. For the rule as to nontransferability of annuity contracts issued after 1962, see paragraph (b)(2) of § 1.401–9. If, however, the contract distributed by such exempt trust is a retirement income, endowment, or other life insurance contract and is distributed after October 26, 1956, the entire cash value of such contract at the time of distribution must be included in the distributee's income in accordance with the provisions of section 402(a), except to the extent that, within 60 days after the distribution of such contract, all or any portion of such value is irrevocably converted into a contract under which no part of any proceeds payable on death at any time would be excludable under section 101(a) (relating to life insurance proceeds). If the contract distributed by such trust is a transferable annuity contract issued after 1962, or a retirement income, endowment, or other life insurance contract which is distributed after 1962 (whether or not transferable), then notwithstanding the preceding sentence the entire cash value of the contract is includible in the distributee's gross income, unless within such 60 days such contract is also made nontransferable.

(3) For the rules applicable to premiums paid by a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a) for the purchase of retirement income, endowment, or other contracts providing life insurance protection payable upon the death of the employee-participant, see paragraph (b) of § 1.72–16.

(4) For the rules applicable to the amounts payable by reason of the death of an employee under a contract providing life insurance protection, or an annuity contract, purchased by a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a), see paragraph (c) of § 1.72–16.

(5) If pension or annuity payments or other benefits are paid or made available to the beneficiary of a deceased employee or a deceased retired employee by a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt under section 501(a), such amounts are taxable in accordance with the rules of section 402(a) and this section. In case such amounts are taxable under section 72, the ''investment in the contract'' shall be determined by reference to the amount contributed by the employee and by applying the applicable rules of sections 72 and 101(b)(2)(D). In case the amounts paid to, or includible in the gross income of, the beneficiaries of the deceased employee or deceased retired employee constitute a distribution to which subparagraph (6) of this paragraph is applicable, the extent to which the distribution is taxable is determined by reference to the contributions of the employee, by reference to

any prior distributions which were excludable from gross income as a return of employee contributions, and by applying the applicable rules of sections 72 and 101(b).

(6)(i) If the total distributions payable with respect to any employee under a trust described in section 401(a) which in the year of distribution is exempt under section 501(a) are paid to, or includible in the gross income of, the distributee within one taxable year of the distributee on account of the employee's death or other separation from the service, or death after such separation from service, the amount of such distribution, to the extent it exceeds the net amount contributed by the employee, shall be considered a gain from the sale or exchange of a capital asset held for more than six months. The total distributions payable are includible in the gross income of the distributee within one taxable year if they are made available to such distributee and the distributee fails to make a timely election under section 72(h) to receive an annuity in lieu of such total distributions. The ''net amount contributed by the employee'' is the amount actually contributed by the employee plus any amounts considered to be contributed by the employee under the rules of section 72(f), 101(b), and subparagraph (3) of this paragraph, reduced by any amounts theretofore distributed to him which were excludable from gross income as a return of employee contributions. See, however, paragraph (b) of this section for rules relating to the exclusion of amounts representing net unrealized appreciation in the value of securities of the employer corporation. In addition, all or part of the amount otherwise includible in gross income under this paragraph by a non-resident alien individual in respect of a distribution by the United States under a qualified pension plan may be excludable from gross income under section 402(a)(4). For rules relating to such exclusion, see paragraph (c) of this section. For additional rules relating to the treatment of total distributions described in this subdivision in the case of a nonresident alien individual, see sections 871 and 1441 and the regulations thereunder.

(ii) The term ''total distributions payable'' means the balance to the credit of an employee which becomes payable to a distributee on account of the employee's death or other separation from the service or on account of his death after separation from the service. Thus, distributions made before a total distribution (for example, annuity payments received by the employee after retirement), will not defeat application of the capital gains treatment with respect to the total distributions received by a beneficiary upon the death of the employee after retirement. However, a distribution on separation from service will not receive capital gains treatment unless it constitutes the total amount in the employee's account at the time of his separation from service. If the total amount in the employee's account at the time of his death or other separation from the service or death after separation from the service is paid or includible in the gross income of the distributee within one taxable year of the distributee, such amount is entitled to the capital gains treatment notwithstanding that in a later taxable year an additional amount, attributable to the last year of service, is credited to the account of the employee and distributed.

(iii) If an employee retires and commences to receive an annuity but subsequently, in some succeeding taxable year, is paid a lump sum in settlement of all future annuity payments, the capital gains treatment does not apply to such lump sum settlement paid during the lifetime of the employee since it is not a payment on account of separation from the service, or death after separation, but is on account of the settlement of future annuity payments.

(iv) If the ''total distributions payable'' are paid or includible in the gross income of several distributees within one taxable year on account of the employee's death or other separation from the service or on account of his death after separation from the service, the capital gains treatment is applicable. The total distributions payable are paid within one taxable year of the distributees when, for example, a portion of such total is distributed in cash

to one distributee and the balance is used to purchase an annuity contract which is distributed to the other distributee. However, if the share of any distributee is not paid or includible in his gross income within the same taxable year in which the shares of the other distributees are paid or includible in their gross income, none of the distributees is entitled to the capital gains treatment, since the total distributions payable are not paid or includible in the distributees' gross income within one taxable year. For example, if the total distributions payable are made available to each of two distributees and one elects to receive his share in cash while the other makes a timely election under section 72(h) to receive his share in installment payments from the trust, the capital gains treatment does not apply to either distributee.

(v) For regulations as to certain plan terminations, see § 1.402(e)–1.

(vi) The term ''total distributions payable'' does not include United States Retirement Plan Bonds held by a trust to the credit of an employee. Thus, a distribution by a qualified trust may constitute a total distributions payable with respect to an employee even though the trust retains retirement plan bonds registered in the name of such employee. Similarly, the proceeds of a retirement plan bond received as a part of the total amount to the credit of an employee will not be entitled to capital gains treatment. See section 405(e) and paragraph (a)(4) of § 1.405–3.

(vii) For purposes of determining whether the total distributions payable to an employee have been distributed within one taxable year, the term ''total distributions payable'' includes amounts held by a trust to the credit of an employee which are attributable to contributions on behalf of the employee while he was a self-employed individual in the business with respect to which the plan was established. Thus, a distribution by a qualified trust is not a total distributions payable with respect to an employee if the trust retains amounts which are so attributable.

(viii) The term ''total distributions payable'' does not include any amount which has been placed in a separate account for the funding of medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14. Thus, a distribution by a qualified trust may constitute a total distributions payable with respect to an employee even though the trust retains amounts attributable to the funding of medical benefits described in section 401(h).

(7) The capital gains treatment provided by section 402(a)(2) and subparagraph (6) of this paragraph is not applicable to distributions paid to a distributee to the extent such distributions are attributable to contributions made on behalf of an employee while he was a self-employed individual in the business with respect to which the plan was established. For the taxation of such amounts, see § 1.72–18. For the rules for determining the amount attributable to contributions on behalf of an employee while he was self-employed, see paragraphs (b)(4) and (c)(2) of such section.

(8) For purposes of this section, the term ''employee'' includes a self-employed individual who is treated as an employee under section 401(c)(1), and paragraph (b) of § 1.401–10, and the term ''employer'' means the person treated as the employer of such individual under section 401(c)(4).

(b) *Distributions including securities of the employer corporation*—(1) *In general.* (i) If a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt under section 501(a) makes a distribution to a distributee, and such distribution includes securities of the employer corporation, the amount of any net unrealized appreciation in such securities shall be excluded from the distributee's income in the year of such distribution to the following extent:

(A) If the distribution constitutes a total distribution to which the regulations of paragraph (a)(6) of this section are applicable, the amount to be excluded is the entire net unrealized appreciation attributable to that part of the total distribution which consists of securities of the employer corporation; and

(B) If the distribution is other than a total distribution to which paragraph (a)(6) of this section is applicable, the

amount to be excluded is that portion of the net unrealized appreciation in the securities of the employer corporation which is attributable to the amount considered to be contributed by the employee to the purchase of such securities.

The amount of net unrealized appreciation which is excludable under the regulations of (A) and (B) of this subdivision shall not be included in the basis of the securities in the hands of the distributee at the time of distribution for purposes of determining gain or loss on their subsequent disposition. In the case of a total distribution the amount of net unrealized appreciation which is not included in the basis of the securities in the hands of the distributee at the time of distribution shall be considered as a gain from the sale or exchange of a capital asset held for more than six months to the extent that such appreciation is realized in a subsequent taxable transaction. However, if the net gain realized by the distributee in a subsequent taxable transaction exceeds the amount of the net unrealized appreciation at the time of distribution, such excess shall constitute a long-term or short-term capital gain depending upon the holding period of the securities in the hands of the distributee.

(ii) For purposes of section 402(a) and of this section, the term ''securities'' means only shares of stock and bonds or debentures issued by a corporation with interest coupons or in registered form, and the term ''securities of the employer corporation'' includes securities of a parent or subsidiary corporation (as defined in subsections (e) and (f) of section 425) of the employer corporation.

(2) *Determination of net unrealized appreciation*. (i) The amount of net unrealized appreciation in securities of the employer corporation which are distributed by the trust is the excess of the market value of such securities at the time of distribution over the cost or other basis of such securities to the trust. Thus, if a distribution consists in part of securities which have appreciated in value and in part of securities which have depreciated in value, the net unrealized appreciation shall be considered to consist of the net increase in value of all of the securities included in the distribution. For this purpose, two or more distributions made by a trust to a distributee in a single taxable year of the distributee shall be treated as a single distribution.

(ii) For the purpose of determining the net unrealized appreciation on a distributed security of the employer corporation, the cost or other basis of such security to the trust shall be computed in accordance with whichever of the following rules is applicable:

(A) If a security was earmarked for the account of a particular employee at the time it was purchased by or contributed to the trust so that the cost or other basis of such security to the trust is reflected in the account of such employee, such cost or other basis shall be used.

(B) If as of the close of each taxable year of the trust (or other specified period of time not in excess of 12 consecutive calendar months) the trust allocates among the accounts of participating employees all securities acquired by the trust during the period (exclusive of securities unallocated under a plan providing for allocation in whole shares only), the cost or other basis to the trust of any securities allocated as of the close of a particular allocation period shall be the average cost or other basis to the trust of all securities of the same type which were purchased or otherwise acquired by the trust during such allocation period. For purposes of determining the average cost to the trust of securities included in a subsequent allocation, the actual cost to the trust of the securities unallocated as of the close of a prior allocation period shall be deemed to be the average cost or other basis to the trust of securities of the same type allocated as of the close of such prior allocation period.

(c) In a case where neither *(a)* nor *(b)* of this subdivision is applicable, if the trust fund, or a specified portion thereof, is invested exclusively in one particular type of security of the employer corporation, and if during the period the distributee participated in the plan none of such securities has been sold except for the purpose of paying benefits under the trust or for the purpose

of enabling the trustee to obtain funds with which to exercise rights which have accrued to the trust, the cost or other basis to the trust of all securities distributed to such distributee shall be the total amount credited to the account of such distributee (or such portion thereof as was available for investment in such securities) reduced by the amount available for investment but uninvested on the date of distribution. If at the time of distribution to a particular distributee a portion of the amount credited to his account is forfeited, appropriate adjustment shall be made with respect thereto in determining the cost or other basis to the trust of the securities distributed.

(d) *Salary reduction, cash or deferred arrangements*—(1) *Inclusion in income.* Whether a contribution to an exempt trust or plan described in section 401(a) or 403(a) is made by the employer or the employee is determined on the basis of the particular facts and circumstances of each case. Nevertheless, an amount contributed to a plan or trust will, except as otherwise provided under paragraph (d)(2) of this section, be treated as contributed by the employee if it was contributed at the employee's election, even though the election was made before the year in which the amount was earned by the employee or before the year in which the amount became currently available to the employee. Any amount treated as contributed by the employee is includible in the gross income of the employee for the year in which the amount would have been received by the employee but for the election. Thus, for example, amounts contributed to an exempt trust or plan by reason of a salary reduction agreement under a cash or deferred arrangement are treated as received by the employee when they would have been received by the employee but for the election to defer. Accordingly, they are includible in the gross income of the employee for that year (except as provided under paragraph (d)(2) of this section). See § 1.401(k)–1(a)(3)(iii) and (2)(i) for the meaning of currently available and cash or deferred arrangement, respectively.

(2) *Amounts not included in income*—(i) *Qualified cash or deferred arrangement.* Elective contributions as defined in § 1.401(k)–l (g)(3) for a plan year made by an employer on behalf of an employee pursuant to a cash or deferred election under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement, as defined in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(4)(i), are not treated as received by or distributed to the employee or as employee contributions. For plan years beginning after December 31, 1992, whether a cash or deferred election is made under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement is determined without regard to the special rules for certain collectively bargained plans contained in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(7). As a result, elective contributions under these plans are treated as employee contributions for purposes of this section if the cash or deferred arrangement does not satisfy the actual deferral percentage test of section 401(k)(3) or otherwise fails to be a qualified cash or deferred arrangement.

(ii) *Matching contributions.* Matching contributions described in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(12) and section 401(m)(4) are not treated as contributed by an employee merely because they are made by the employer as a result of an employee's election.

(iii) *Effect of certain one-time elections.* Amounts contributed to an exempt plan or trust described in section 401(a) or 403(a) pursuant to the one-time irrevocable employee election to participate in a plan described in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(3)(iv) are not treated as contributed by an employee. Similarly, amounts contributed to an exempt plan or trust described in section 401(a) or 403(a) in which self-employed individuals may participate pursuant to the one-time irrevocable election described in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(6)(ii)(C) are not treated as contributed by an employee.

(3) *Effective date and transition rules*—(i) *Effective date.* In the case of a plan or trust that does not include a salary reduction or cash or deferred arrangement in existence on June 27, 1974, this paragraph applies to taxable years ending after that date.

(ii) *Transition rule for cash or deferred arrangements in existence on June 27, 1974*—(A) *General rule.* In the case of a plan or trust that includes a salary reduction or a cash or deferred arrangement in existence on June 27, 1974, this

paragraph applies to plan years beginning after December 31, 1979 (or, in the case of a pre-ERISA money purchase plan, as defined in §1.401(k)–1(g)(12), plan years beginning after July 18, 1984). For plan years beginning prior to January 1, 1980 (or, in the case of a pre-ERISA money purchase plan, plan years beginning before July 19, 1984), the taxable year of inclusion in gross income of the employee of any amount so contributed by the employer to the trust is determined in a manner consistent with Rev. Rul. 56–497, 1956–2 CB 284, Rev. Rul. 63–180, 1963–2 CB 189, and Rev. Rul. 68–89, 1968–1 CB 402.

(B) *Meaning of cash or deferred arrangement in existence on June 27, 1974.* A cash or deferred arrangement is considered as in existence on June 27, 1974, if, on or before that date, it was reduced to writing and adopted by the employer (including, in the case of a corporate employer, formal approval by the employer's board of directors and, if required, shareholders), even though no amounts had been contributed pursuant to the terms of the arrangement as of that date.

(iii) *Reasonable interpretation for plan years beginning after 1979 and before 1992.* For plan years beginning after December 31, 1979 (or in the case of a pre-ERISA money purchase plan, plan years beginning after July 18, 1984) and before January 1, 1992, a reasonable interpretation of the rules set forth in section 401(k) (as in effect during those years) may be relied upon to determine whether contributions were made under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement.

(iv) *Special rule for collectively bargained plans.* For plan years beginning before January 1, 1993, a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement will be treated as satisfying section 401(k)(3) solely for purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section if it is part of a plan (or portion of a plan) that automatically satisfies section 401(a)(4) under §1.401(k)–1(a)(7), relating to certain collectively bargained plans.

(v) *Special rule for governmental plans.* For plan years beginning before the later of January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously, in the case of governmental plans described in section 414(d), a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement will be treated as satisfying section 401(k)(3) solely for purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section if it is part of a plan adopted by a state or local government before May 6, 1986. For purposes of this paragraph (d)(3)(v), the term *governing body with authority to amend the plan* means the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan.

[T.D. 8217, 53 FR 29673, Aug. 8, 1988, as amended by T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40545, Aug. 15, 1991; 57 FR 10290, Mar. 25, 1992; T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66180, Dec. 23, 1994]

§1.402(a)(5)–1T Rollovers of partial distributions from qualified trusts and annuities. (Temporary)

Q–1: Can an employee or the surviving spouse of a deceased employee roll over to an individual retirement account or annuity, described in section 408 (a) or (b), the taxable portion of a partial distribution from a qualified trust described in section 401(a), a qualified plan described in section 403(a), or a tax-sheltered annuity contract under section 403(b)?

A–1: Yes. For distributions made after July 18, 1984, the taxable portion of a partial distribution may be rolled over within 60 days of the distribution to an individual retirement account or annuity.

Q–2: Are there special requirements applicable to rollovers of partial distributions?

A–2: Yes. Section 402(a)(5)(D)(i) specifies that no part of a partial distribution may be rolled over unless the distribution is equal to at least 50 percent of the balance to the credit of the employee in the contract or plan immediately before the distribution, and the distribution is not one of a series of periodic payments. For purposes of this section, the balance to the credit of an employee does not include any accumulated deductible employee contributions (within the meaning of section 72(o)). In addition, in calculating the balance to the credit for purposes of the 50 percent test, qualified plans are

not to be aggregated with other qualified plans and tax-sheltered annuity contracts are not to be aggregated with other tax-sheltered annuity contracts. Also, in applying the 50 percent test to a surviving spouse, the balance to the credit is the maximum amount the spouse is entitled to receive under the plan or contract, rather than the total balance to the credit of the employee. The rollover of a partial distribution may result in adverse tax consequences; see section 402(a)(5)(D) (iii) and (iv).

Q–3: Are there any other requirements applicable to rollovers of partial distribution?

A–3: Yes. Section 402(a)(5)(D)(i)(III) requires the employee to elect, in conformance with Treasury regulations, to treat a contribution of a partial distribution to an IRA as a rollover contribution. An election is made by designating, in writing, to the trustee or issuer of the IRA at the time of the contribution that the contribution is to be treated as a rollover contribution. This requirement of a written designation to the trustee or issuer of the IRA is effective for contributions paid to the trustee or issuer of the IRA after March 20, 1986. For contributions paid to the trustee or issuer before March 21, 1986, an election is made by computing the individual's income tax liability on the income tax return for the taxable year in which the distribution occurs in a manner consistent with not including the distribution (or portion thereof) in gross income. Both such elections are irrevocable, except that an election made on an income tax return filed before March 21, 1986 is revocable.

Q–4: Does the election requirement apply to rollovers of qualified total distributions or rollover contributions described in section 402(a) (5) or (7), 403(a)(4), 403(b)(8), 405(d)(3), or 408(d)(3) to individual retirement accounts and annuities (IRAs)?

A–4: Yes. No amounts may be treated as a rollover contribution to an IRA under section 402(a)(5), 402(a)(7), 403(a)(4), 403(b)(8), 405(d)(3) (as amended by section 491(c) of the TRA of 1984), or 408(d)(3) unless the requirements described in Q & A–3 of this section are satisfied. Thus, once any portion of a total distribution is irrevocably designated as a rollover contribution, such distribution is not taxable under section 402 or 403 and, therefore, is not eligible for the special capital gains and separate tax treatment under section 402 (a) and (e). Election requirements for rollover contributions to IRAs described in this Q &A–4 are subject to the same effective date rules set forth in Q &A–3.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4320, Feb. 4, 1986]

§ 1.402(b)–1 Treatment of beneficiary of a trust not exempt under section 501(a).

(a) *Taxation by reason of employer contributions made after August 1, 1969*—(1) *Taxation of contributions.* Section 402(b) provides rules for taxing an employee on contributions made on his behalf by an employer to an employees' trust that is not exempt under section 501(a). In general, any such contributions made after August 1, 1969, during a taxable year of the employer which ends within or with a taxable year of the trust for which it is not so exempt shall be included as compensation in the gross income of the employee for his taxable year during which the contribution is made, but only to the extent that the employee's interest in such contribution is substantially vested at the time the contribution is made. The preceding sentence does not apply to contracts referred to in the transitional rule of paragraph (d)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section. For the definition of the terms ''substantially vested'' and ''substantially nonvested'' see § 1.83–3(b).

(2) *Determination of amount of employer contributions.* If, for an employee, the actual amount of employer contributions referred to in paragraph (a)(1) of this section for any taxable year of the employee is not known, such amount shall be either an amount equal to the excess of—

(i) The amount determined in accordance with the formula described in § 1.403(b)–1(d)(4) as the end of such taxable year, over

(ii) The amount determined in accordance with the formula described in § 1.403(b)–1(d)(4) as of the end of the prior taxable year,

or the amount determined under any other method utilizing recognized actuarial principles that are consistent with the provisions of the plan under which such contributions are made and the method adopted by the employer for funding the benefits under the plan.

(b) *Taxability of employee when rights under nonexempt trust change from nonvested to vested*—(1) *In general.* If rights of an employee under a trust become substantially vested during a taxable year of the employee (ending after August 1, 1969), and a taxable year of the trust for which it is not exempt under section 501(a) ends with or within such year, the value of the employee's interest in the trust on the date of such change shall be included in his gross income for such taxable year, to the extent provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section. When an employees' trust that was exempt under section 501(a) ceases to be so exempt, an employee shall include in his gross income only amounts contributed to the trust during a taxable year of the employer that ends within or with a taxable year of the trust in which it is not so exempt (to the same extent as if the trust had not been so exempt in all prior taxable years).

(2) *Value of an employee's interest in a trust.* (i) For purposes of this section, the term ''the value of an employee's interest in a trust'' means the amount of the employee's beneficial interest in the net fair market value of all the assets in the trust as of any date on which some or all of the employee's interest in the trust becomes substantially vested. The net fair market value of all the assets in the trust is the total amount of the fair market values (determined without regard to any lapse restriction, as defined in § 1.83–3(h)) of all the assets in the trust, less the amount of all the liabilities (including taxes) to which such assets are subject or which the trust has assumed (other than the rights of any employee in such assets), as of the date on which some or all of the employee's interest in the trust becomes substantially vested.

(ii) If a separate account in a trust for the benefit of two or more employees is not maintained for each employee, the value of an employee's interest in such trust shall be determined in accordance with the formula described in § 403(b)–1(d)(4) or any other method utilizing recognized actuarial principles that are consistent with the provisions of the plan under which the contributions are made and the method adopted by the employer for funding the benefits under the plan.

(iii) If there is no valuation of a nonexempt trust's assets on the date of the change referred to in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the value of an employee's interest in such trust is determined by taking the weighted average of the values on the nearest valuation dates occurring before and after the date of such change. The average is to be determined in the manner described in § 20.2031–2(b)(1).

(3) *Extent to which value of an employee's interest is includible in gross income.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, there shall be included in the gross income of the employee for his taxable year in which his rights under the trust become substantially vested only that portion of the value of his interest in the trust that is attributable to contributions made by the employer after August 1, 1969. However, the preceding sentence shall not apply—

(i) To the extent such value is attributable to a contribution made on the date of such change, and

(ii) To the extent such value is attributable to contributions described in paragraph (d)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section (relating to contributions made pursuant to a binding contract entered into before April 22, 1969).

For purposes of this (3), if the value of an employee's interest in a trust which is attributable to contributions made by the employer after August 1, 1969, is not known, it shall be deemed to be an amount which bears the same ratio to the value of the employee's interest as the contributions made by the employer after such date bear to the total contributions made by the employer.

(4) *Partial vesting.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, if only part of an employee's interest in the trust becomes substantially vested during any taxable year, then only the corresponding part of the value of the employee's interest in such trust is includible in his gross income for such

year. In such a case, it is first necessary to compute, under the rules in paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section, the amount that would be includdible if his entire interest had changed to a substantially vested interest during such a year. The amount that is includible under this paragraph (4) is the amount determined under the preceding sentence multiplied by the percent of the employee's interest which became substantially vested during the taxable year.

(5) *Basis.* The basis of any employee's interest in a trust to which this section applies shall be increased by the amount included in his gross income under this section.

(6) *Treatment as owner of trust.* In general, a beneficiary of a trust to which this section applies may not be considered to be the owner under subpart E, part I, subchapter J, chapter I of the Code of any portion of such trust which is attributable to contributions to such trust made by the employer after August 1, 1969, or to incidental contributions made by the employee after such date. However, where contributions made by the employee are not incidental when compared to contributions made by the employer, such beneficiary shall be considered to be the owner of the portion of the trust attributable to contributions made by the employee, if the applicable requirements of such subpart E are satisfied. For purposes of this paragraph (6), contributions made by an employee are not incidental when compared to contributions made by the employer if the employee's total contributions as of any date exceed the employer's total contributions on behalf of the employee as of such date.

(7) *Example.* The provisions in this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. On January 1, 1968 M corporation establishes an employees' trust, which is not exempt under section 501(a), for some of its employees, including A, reserving the right to discontinue contributions at any time. M corporation contributes $5,000 on A's behalf to the trust on February 1, 1968. At the time of contribution 50 percent of A's interest was substantially vested. On January 1, 1971, and January 1, 1974, M corporation makes additional $5,000 contributions to the trust on A's behalf. A's interest in the trust changed from a 50 percent substantially vested to a 100 percent substantialy vested interest in the trust on December 31, 1974. Assume that the value of A's interest in the trust on December 31, 1974, which is attributable to employer contributions made after August 1, 1969, is calculated to be $11,000 under paragraph (b)(3) of this section. The amount includible in A's gross income for 1971 and 1974 is computed as follows:

(i) Amount of M corporation's contribution made on January 1, 1971, to the trust which is includible in A's gross income under paragraph (b)(1) of this section (50 percent substantially vested interest in the trust times $5,000 contribution)—$2,500.

1974

(i) Amount of M corporation's contribution made on January 1, 1974, to the trust which is includible in A's gross income under paragraph (b)(1) of this section (50 percent substantially vested interest in the trust times $5,000 contribution)—$2,500.

(ii) Amount which would have been includible if A's entire interest had changed to a substantially vested interest (value of employee's interest in the trust attributable to employer contributions made after August 1, 1969—$11,000.

(iii) Percent of A's interest that became substantially vested on December 31, 1974—50 percent.

(iv) Amount includible in A;s gross income for 1974 in respect of his percentage change from a substantially nonvested to a substantially vested interest in the trust (50 percent of $11,000)—$5,500.

(v) Total amount includible in A's gross income for 1974 ((i) plus (iv))—$8,000.

(c) *Taxation of distributions from trust not exempt under section 501(a)*—(1) *In general.* Any amount actually distributed or made available to any distributee by an employees' trust in a taxable year in which it is not exempt under section 501(a) shall be taxable under section 72 (relating to annuities) to the distributee in the taxable year in which it is so distributed or made available. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, such amounts may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). If, for example, the distribution from such a trust consists of an annuity contract, the amount of the distribution shall be considered to be the entire value of the contract at the time of distribution. Such value is includible in the gross income of the distributee to the extent that such value exceeds the investment

in the contract, determined by applying sections 72 and 101(b). The distributions by such a trust shall be taxed as provided in section 72 whether or not the employee's rights to the contributions become substantially vested beforehand. For rules relating to the treatment of employer contributions to a nonexempt trust as part of the consideration paid by the employee, see section 72(f). For rules relating to the treatment of the limited exclusion allowable under section 101(b)(2)(D) as additional consideration paid by the employee, see the regulations under that section.

(2) *Distributions before annuity starting date.* Any amount distributed or made available to any distributee before the annuity starting date (as defined in section 72(c)(4)) by an employees' trust in a taxable year in which it is not exempt under section 501(a) shall be treated as distributed in the following order—

(i) First, from that portion of the employee's interest in the trust attributable to contributions made by the employer after August 1, 1969 (other than those referred to in paragraph (d)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section) that has not been previously includible in the employee's gross income, to the extent that such a distribution is permitted under the trust (or the plan of which the trust is a part);

(ii) Second, from that portion of the employee's interest in the trust attributable to contributions made by the employer on or before August 1, 1969 (or contributions referred to in paragraph (d)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section);

(iii) Third, from the remaining portion of the employee's interest in the trust attributable to contributions made by the employer.

If the employee has made contributions to the trust, amounts attributable thereto shall be treated as distributed prior to any amounts attributable to the employer's contributions, to the extent provided by the trust (or the plan of which the trust is a part). However, the portion of such amounts attributable to income earned on the employee's contributions made after August 1, 1969, shall be treated as distributed prior to any return of such contributions.

(d) *Taxation by reason of employer contributions made on or before August 1, 1969.* (1) Except as provided in section 402(d) (relating to taxable years beginning before January 1, 1977), any contribution to a trust made by an employer on behalf of an employee—

(i) On or before August 1, 1969, or

(ii) After such date, pursuant to a binding contract (as defined in § 1.83–3(b)(2)) entered into before April 22, 1969, or

(iii) After August 1, 1969, pursuant to a written plan in which the employee participated on April 22, 1969, and under which the obligation of the employer on such date was essentially the same as under a binding written contract, during a taxable year of the employer which ends within or with a taxable year of the trust for which the trust is not exempt under section 501(a) shall be included in income of the employee for his taxable year during which the contribution is made, if the employee's beneficial interest in the contribution is nonforfeitable at the time the contribution is made. If the employee's beneficial interest in the contribution is forfeitable at the time the contribution is made, even though his interest becomes nonforfeitable later the amount of such contribution is not required to be included in the income of the employee at the time his interest becomes nonforfeitable.

(2)(i) An employee's beneficial interest in the contribution is nonforfeitable, within the meaning of sections 402(b), 403(c), and 404(a)(5) prior to the amendments made thereto by the Tax Reform Act of 1969 and section 403(b), at the time the contribution is made if there is no contingency under the plan that may cause the employee to lose his rights in the contribution. Similarly, an employee's rights under an annuity contract purchased for him by his employer change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights within the meaning of section 403(d) prior to the repeal thereof by the Tax Reform Act of 1969 at that time when, for the first time, there is no contingency which may cause the employee to lose his rights under the contract. For example, if under the terms of a pension plan, an employee upon termination of his services before the retirement date,

whether voluntarily or involuntarily, is entitled to a deferred annuity contract to be purchased with the employer's contributions made on his behalf, or is entitled to annuity payments which the trustee is abligated to make under the terms of the trust instrument based on the contributions made by the employer on his behalf, the employee's beneficial interest in such contributions is nonforfeitable.

(ii) On the other hand, if, under the terms of a pension plan, an employee will lose the right to any annuity purchased from or to be provided by, contributions made by the employer if his services should be terminated before retirement, his beneficial interest in such contributions is nonforfeitable.

(iii) The mere fact that an employee may not live to the retirement date, or may live only a short period after the retirement date, and may not be able to enjoy the receipt of annuity or pension payments, does not make his beneficial interest in the contributions made by the employer on his behalf forfeitable. If the employer's contributions have been irrevocably applied to purchase an annuity contract for the employee, or if the trustee is obligated to use the employer's contributions to provide an annuity for the employee provide only that the employee is alive on the dates the annuity payments are due, the employee's rights in the employer's contributions are nonforfeitable.

(Secs. 83 and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (83 Stat. 588; 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 83 and 7805))

[T.D. 7554, 43 FR 31922, July 24, 1978]

§ 1.402(c)–1 Taxability of beneficiary of certain foreign situs trusts.

Section 402(c) has the effect of treating, for purposes of section 402, the distributions from a trust which at the time of the distribution is located outside the United States in the same manner as distributions from a trust which is located in the United States. If the trust would qualify for exemption from tax under section 501(a) except for the fact that it fails to comply with the provisions of paragraph (a)(3)(i) of § 1.401–1, which restricts qualification to trusts created or organized in the United States and maintained here, section 402(a) and § 1.402(a)–1 are applicable to the distributions from such a trust. Thus, for example, a total distribution from such a trust is entitled to the long-term capital gains treatment of section 402(a)(2), except in the case of a nonresident alien individual (see section 871 and 1441 and the regulations thereunder). However, if the plan fails to meet any requirement of section 401 and the regulations thereunder in addition to paragraph (a)(3)(i) of § 1.401–1, section 402(b) and § 1.402(b)–1 are applicable to the distributions from such a trust.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11679, Nov. 26, 1960]

§ 1.402(c)–2 Eligible rollover distributions; questions and answers.

The following questions and answers relate to the rollover rules under section 402(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as added by sections 521 and 522 of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102–318, 106 Stat. 290 (UCA). For additional UCA guidance under sections 401(a)(31), 402(f), 403(b)(8) and (10), and 3405(c), see §§ 1.401(a)(31)–1, 1.402(f)–1, and 1.403(b)–2, and § 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter, respectively.

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Q–1: What is the rule regarding distributions that may be rolled over to an eligible retirement plan?

Q–2: What is an *eligible retirement plan* and a *qualified plan*?

Q–3: What is an *eligible rollover distribution*?

Q–4: Are there other amounts that are not eligible rollover distributions?

Q–5: For purposes of determining whether a distribution is an eligible rollover distribution, how is it determined whether a series of payments is a series of substantially equal periodic payments over a period specified in section 402(c)(4)(A)?

Q–6: What types of variations in the amount of a payment cause the payment to be independent of a series of substantially equal periodic payments and thus not part of the series?

Q–7: When is a distribution from a plan a required minimum distribution under section 401(a)(9)?

Q–8: How are amounts that are not includible in gross income allocated for purposes of determining the required minimum distribution?

Q–9: What is a distribution of a plan loan offset amount and is it an eligible rollover distribution?

Q–10: What is a qualified plan distributed annuity contract, and is an amount paid under such a contract a distribution of the balance to the credit of the employee in a qualified plan for purposes of section 402(c)?

Q–11: If an eligible rollover distribution is paid to an employee, and the employee contributes all or part of the eligible rollover distribution to an eligible retirement plan within 60 days, is the amount contributed not currently includible in gross income?

Q–12: How does section 402(c) apply to a distributee who is not the employee?

Q–13: Must an employee's (or spousal distributee's) election to treat a contribution of an eligible rollover distribution to an individual retirement plan as a rollover contribution be irrevocable?

Q–14: How is the $5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b) treated for purposes of determining the amount that is an eligible rollover distribution?

Q–15: May an employee (or spousal distributee) roll over more than the plan administrator determines to be an eligible rollover distribution using an assumption described in § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–17?

Q–16: Is a rollover from a qualified plan to an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity treated as a rollover contribution for purposes of the one-year look-back rollover limitation of section 408(d)(3)(B)?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q–1: What is the rule regarding distributions that may be rolled over to an eligible retirement plan?

A–1: (a) *General rule.* Under section 402(c), as added by UCA, any portion of a distribution from a qualified plan that is an eligible rollover distribution described in section 402(c)(4) may be rolled over to an eligible retirement plan described in section 402(c)(8)(B). For purposes of section 402(c) and this section, a rollover is either a direct rollover as described in § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–3 or a contribution of an eligible rollover distribution to an eligible retirement plan that satisfies the time period requirement in section 402(c)(3) and Q&A–11 of this section and the designation requirement described in Q&A–13 of this section. See Q&A–2 of this section for the definition of an eligible retirement plan and a qualified plan.

(b) *Related Internal Revenue Code provisions*—(1) *Direct rollover option.* Section 401(a)(31), added by UCA, requires qualified plans to provide a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution the option to elect to have the distribution paid directly to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover. See § 1.401(a)(31)–1 for further guidance concerning this direct rollover option.

(2) *Notice requirement.* Section 402(f) requires the plan administrator of a qualified plan to provide, within a reasonable time before making an eligible rollover distribution, a written explanation to the distributee of the distributee's right to elect a direct rollover and the withholding consequences of not making that election. The explanation also is required to provide certain other relevant information relating to the taxation of distributions. See § 1.402(f)–1 for guidance concerning the written explanation required under section 402(f).

(3) *Mandatory income tax withholding.* If a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution does not elect to have the eligible rollover distribution paid directly from the plan to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover under section 401(a)(31), the eligible rollover distribution is subject to 20-percent income tax withholding under section 3405(c). See § 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter for provisions relating to the withholding requirements applicable to eligible rollover distributions.

(4) *Section 403(b) annuities.* See § 1.403(b)–2 for guidance concerning the direct rollover requirements for distributions from annuities described in section 403(b).

(c) *Effective date*—(1) *Statutory effective date.* Section 402(c), added by UCA, applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993, even if the event giving rise to the distribution occurred on or before January 1, 1993 (e.g. termination of the employee's employment with the employer maintaining the plan before January 1, 1993), and even if the eligible rollover distribution is part of a series of payments that began before January 1, 1993.

(2) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to any distribution made on or after October 19, 1995. For eligible rollover distributions made on or after January 1, 1993 and before October 19,

1995, § 1.402(c)–2T (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1), applies. However, for any distribution made on or after January 1, 1993 but before October 19, 1995, any or all of the provisions of this section may be substituted for the corresponding provisions of § 1.402(c)–2T, if any.

Q–2: What is an *eligible retirement plan* and a *qualified plan*?

A–2: An eligible retirement plan, under section 402(c)(8)(B), means a qualified plan or an individual retirement plan. For purposes of section 402(c) and this section, a qualified plan is an employees' trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or an annuity plan described in section 403(a). An individual retirement plan is an individual retirement account described in section 408(a) or an individual retirement annuity (other than an endowment contract) described in section 408(b).

Q–3: What is an *eligible rollover distribution*?

A–3: (a) *General rule.* Unless specifically excluded, an eligible rollover distribution means any distribution to an employee (or to a spousal distributee described in Q&A–12(a) of this section) of all or any portion of the balance to the credit of the employee in a qualified plan. Thus, except as specifically provided in Q&A–4(b) of this section, any amount distributed to an employee (or such a spousal distributee) from a qualified plan is an eligible rollover distribution, regardless of whether it is a distribution of a benefit that is protected under section 411(d)(6).

(b) *Exceptions.* An eligible rollover distribution does not include the following:

(1) Any distribution that is one of a series of substantially equal periodic payments made (not less frequently than annually) over any one of the following periods—

(i) The life of the employee (or the joint lives of the employee and the employee's designated beneficiary);

(ii) The life expectancy of the employee (or the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the employee and the employee's designated beneficiary); or

(iii) A specified period of ten years or more;

(2) Any distribution to the extent the distribution is a required minimum distribution under section 401(a)(9); or

(3) The portion of any distribution that is not includible in gross income (determined without regard to the exclusion for net unrealized appreciation described in section 402(e)(4)). Thus, for example, an eligible rollover distribution does not include the portion of any distribution that is excludible from gross income under section 72 as a return of the employee's investment in the contract (e.g., a return of the employee's after-tax contributions), but does include net unrealized appreciation.

Q–4: Are there other amounts that are not eligible rollover distributions?

A–4: Yes. The following amounts are not eligible rollover distributions:

(a) Elective deferrals, as defined in section 402(g)(3), that, pursuant to § 1.415–6(b)(6)(iv), are returned as a result of the application of the section 415 limitations, together with the income allocable to these corrective distributions.

(b) Corrective distributions of excess deferrals as described in § 1.402(g)–1(e)(3), together with the income allocable to these corrective distributions.

(c) Corrective distributions of excess contributions under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement described in § 1.401(k)–1(f)(4) and excess aggregate contributions described in § 1.401(m)–1(e)(3), together with the income allocable to these distributions.

(d) Loans that are treated as deemed distributions pursuant to section 72(p).

(e) Dividends paid on employer securities as described in section 404(k).

(f) The costs of life insurance coverage (P.S. 58 costs).

(g) Similar items designated by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

Q–5: For purposes of determining whether a distribution is an eligible rollover distribution, how is it determined whether a series of payments is a series of substantially equal periodic payments over a period specified in section 402(c)(4)(A)?

A–5: (a) *General rule.* Generally, whether a series of payments is a series

of substantially equal periodic payments over a specified period is determined at the time payments begin, and by following the principles of section 72(t)(2)(A)(iv), without regard to contingencies or modifications that have not yet occurred. Thus, for example, a joint and 50-percent survivor annuity will be treated as a series of substantially equal payments at the time payments commence, as will a joint and survivor annuity that provides for increased payments to the employee if the employee's beneficiary dies before the employee. Similarly, for purposes of determining if a disability benefit payment is part of a series of substantially equal payments for a period described in section 402(c)(4)(A), any contingency under which payments cease upon recovery from the disability may be disregarded.

(b) *Certain supplements disregarded.* For purposes of determining whether a distribution is one of a series of payments that are substantially equal, social security supplements described in section 411(a)(9) are disregarded. For example, if a distributee receives a life annuity of $500 per month, plus a social security supplement consisting of payments of $200 per month until the distributee reaches the age at which social security benefits of not less than $200 a month begin, the $200 supplemental payments are disregarded and, therefore, each monthly payment of $700 made before the social security age and each monthly payment of $500 made after the social security age is treated as one of a series of substantially equal periodic payments for life. A series of payments that are not substantially equal solely because the amount of each payment is reduced upon attainment of social security retirement age (or, alternatively, upon commencement of social security early retirement, survivor, or disability benefits) will also be treated as substantially equal as long as the reduction in the actual payments is level and does not exceed the applicable social security benefit.

(c) *Changes in the amount of payments or the distributee.* If the amount (or, if applicable, the method of calculating the amount) of the payments changes so that subsequent payments are not substantially equal to prior payments, a new determination must be made as to whether the remaining payments are a series of substantially equal periodic payments over a period specified in Q&A–3(b)(1) of this section. This determination is made without taking into account payments made or the years of payment that elapsed prior to the change. However, a new determination is not made merely because, upon the death of the employee, the spouse or former spouse of the employee becomes the distributee. Thus, once distributions commence over a period that is at least as long as either the first annuitant's life or 10 years (e.g., as provided by a life annuity with a five-year or ten-year-certain guarantee), then substantially equal payments to the survivor are not eligible rollover distributions even though the payment period remaining after the death of the employee is or may be less than the period described in section 402(c)(4)(A). For example, substantially equal periodic payments made under a life annuity with a five-year term certain would not be an eligible rollover distribution even when paid after the death of the employee with three years remaining under the term certain.

(d) *Defined contribution plans.* The following rules apply in determining whether a series of payments from a defined contribution plan constitute substantially equal periodic payments for a period described in section 402(c)(4)(A):

(1) *Declining balance of years.* A series of payments from an account balance under a defined contribution plan will be considered substantially equal payments over a period if, for each year, the amount of the distribution is calculated by dividing the account balance by the number of years remaining in the period. For example, a series of payments will be considered substantially equal payments over 10 years if the series is determined as follows. In year 1, the annual payment is the account balance divided by 10; in year 2, the annual payment is the remaining account balance divided by 9; and so on until year 10 when the entire remaining balance is distributed.

(2) *Reasonable actuarial assumptions.* If an employee's account balance under a

defined contribution plan is to be distributed in annual installments of a specified amount until the account balance is exhausted, then, for purposes of determining if the period of distribution is a period described in section 402(c)(4)(A), the period of years over which the installments will be distributed must be determined using reasonable actuarial assumptions. For example, if an employee has an account balance of $100,000, elects distributions of $12,000 per year until the account balance is exhausted, and the future rate of return is assumed to be 8% per year, the account balance will be exhausted in approximately 14 years. Similarly, if the same employee elects a fixed annual distribution amount and the fixed annual amount is less than or equal to $10,000, it is reasonable to assume that a future rate of return will be greater than 0% and, thus, the account will not be exhausted in less than 10 years.

(e) *Series of payments beginning before January 1, 1993.* Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this Q&A, if a series of periodic payments began before January 1, 1993, the determination of whether the post-December 31, 1992 payments are a series of substantially equal periodic payments over a specified period is made by taking into account all payments made, including payments made before January 1, 1993. For example, if a series of substantially equal periodic payments beginning on January 1, 1983, is scheduled to be paid over a period of 15 years, payments in the series that are made after December 31, 1992, will not be eligible rollover distributions even though they will continue for only five years after December 31, 1992, because the pre- January 1, 1993 payments are taken into account in determining the specified period.

Q–6: What types of variations in the amount of a payment cause the payment to be independent of a series of substantially equal periodic payments and thus not part of the series?

A–6: (a) *Independent payments.* Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this Q&A, a payment is treated as independent of the payments in a series of substantially equal payments, and thus not part of the series, if the payment is substantially larger or smaller than the other payments in the series. An independent payment is an eligible rollover distribution if it is not otherwise excepted from the definition of eligible rollover distribution. This is the case regardless of whether the payment is made before, with, or after payments in the series. For example, if an employee elects a single payment of half of the account balance with the remainder of the account balance paid over the life expectancy of the distributee, the single payment is treated as independent of the payments in the series and is an eligible rollover distribution unless otherwise excepted. Similarly, if an employee's surviving spouse receives a survivor life annuity of $1,000 per month plus a single payment on account of death of $7,500, the single payment is treated as independent of the payments in the annuity and is an eligible rollover distribution unless otherwise excepted (e.g., $5,000 of the $7,500 might qualify to be excluded from gross income as a death benefit under section 101(b)).

(b) *Special rules*—(1) *Administrative error or delay.* If, due solely to reasonable administrative error or delay in payment, there is an adjustment after the annuity starting date to the amount of any payment in a series of payments that otherwise would constitute a series of substantially equal payments described in section 402(c)(4)(A) and this section, the adjusted payment or payments will be treated as part of the series of substantially equal periodic payments and will not be treated as independent of the payments in the series. For example, if, due solely to reasonable administrative delay, the first payment of a life annuity is delayed by two months and reflects an additional two months worth of benefits, that payment will be treated as a substantially equal payment in the series rather than as an independent payment. The result will not change merely because the amount of the adjustment is paid in a separate supplemental payment.

(2) *Supplemental payments for annuitants.* A supplemental payment from a defined benefit plan to annuitants (e.g., retirees or beneficiaries) will be treated as part of a series of substantially equal payments, rather than as an

independent payment, provided that the following conditions are met—

(i) The supplement is a benefit increase for annuitants;

(ii) The amount of the supplement is determined in a consistent manner for all similarly situated annuitants;

(iii) The supplement is paid to annuitants who are otherwise receiving payments that would constitute substantially equal periodic payments; and

(iv) The aggregate supplement is less than or equal to the greater of 10% of the annual rate of payment for the annuity, or $750 or any higher amount prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

(3) *Final payment in a series.* If a payment in a series of payments from an account balance under a defined contribution plan represents the remaining balance to the credit and is substantially less than the other payments in the series, the final payment must nevertheless be treated as a payment in the series of substantially equal payments and may not be treated as an independent payment if the other payments in the series are substantially equal and the payments are for a period described in section 402(c)(4)(A) based on the rules provided in paragraph (d)(2) of Q&A–5 of this section. Thus, such final payment will not be an eligible rollover distribution.

Q–7: When is a distribution from a plan a required minimum distribution under section 401(a)(9)?

A–7: (a) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Q&A, if a minimum distribution is required for a calendar year, the amounts distributed during that calendar year are treated as required minimum distributions under section 401(a)(9), to the extent that the total required minimum distribution under section 401(a)(9) for the calendar year has not been satisfied. Accordingly, these amounts are not eligible rollover distributions. For example, if an employee is required under section 401(a)(9) to receive a required minimum distribution for a calendar year of $5,000 and the employee receives a total of $7,200 in that year, the first $5,000 distributed will be treated as the required minimum distribution and will not be an eligible rollover distribution and the remaining $2,200 will be an eligible rollover distribution if it otherwise qualifies. If the total section 401(a)(9) required minimum distribution for a calendar year is not distributed in that calendar year (e.g., when the distribution for the calendar year in which the employee reaches age 70½ is made on the following April 1), the amount that was required but not distributed is added to the amount required to be distributed for the next calendar year in determining the portion of any distribution in the next calendar year that is a required minimum distribution.

(b) *Distribution before age 70½.* Any amount that is paid before January 1 of the year in which the employee attains (or would have attained) age 70½ will not be treated as required under section 401(a)(9) and, thus, is an eligible rollover distribution if it otherwise qualifies.

(c) *Special rule for annuities.* In the case of annuity payments from a defined benefit plan, or under an annuity contract purchased from an insurance company (including a qualified plan distributed annuity contract (as defined in Q&A–10 of this section)), the entire amount of any such annuity payment made on or after January 1 of the year in which an employee attains (or would have attained) age 70½ will be treated as an amount required under section 401(a)(9) and, thus, will not be an eligible rollover distribution.

Q–8: How are amounts that are not includible in gross income allocated for purposes of determining the required minimum distribution?

A–8: If section 401(a)(9) has not yet been satisfied by the plan for the year with respect to an employee, a distribution is made to the employee that exceeds the amount required to satisfy section 401(a)(9) for the year for the employee, and a portion of that distribution is excludible from gross income, the following rule applies for purposes of determining the amount of the distribution that is an eligible rollover distribution. The portion of the distribution that is excludible from gross income is first allocated toward

satisfaction of section 401(a)(9) and then the remaining portion of the required minimum distribution, if any, is satisfied from the portion of the distribution that is includible in gross income. For example, assume an employee is required under section 401(a)(9) to receive a minimum distribution for a calendar year of $4,000 and the employee receives a $4,800 distribution, of which $1,000 is excludible from income as a return of basis. First, the $1,000 return of basis is allocated toward satisfying the required minimum distribution. Then, the remaining $3,000 of the required minimum distribution is satisfied from the $3,800 of the distribution that is includible in gross income, so that the remaining balance of the distribution, $800, is an eligible rollover distribution if it otherwise qualifies.

Q–9: What is a distribution of a plan loan offset amount, and is it an eligible rollover distribution?

A–9: (a) *General rule.* A distribution of a plan loan offset amount, as defined in paragraph (b) of this Q&A, is an eligible rollover distribution if it satisfies Q&A–3 of this section. Thus, an amount equal to the plan loan offset amount can be rolled over by the employee (or spousal distributee) to an eligible retirement plan within the 60-day period under section 402(c)(3), unless the plan loan offset amount fails to be an eligible rollover distribution for another reason. See § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–15 for guidance concerning the offering of a direct rollover of a plan loan offset amount. See § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–11 of this chapter for guidance concerning special withholding rules with respect to plan loan offset amounts.

(b) *Definition of plan loan offset amount.* For purposes of section 402(c), a distribution of a plan loan offset amount is a distribution that occurs when, under the plan terms governing a plan loan, the participant's accrued benefit is reduced (offset) in order to repay the loan (including the enforcement of the plan's security interest in a participant's accrued benefit). A distribution of a plan loan offset amount can occur in a variety of circumstances, e.g., where the terms governing a plan loan require that, in the event of the employee's termination of employment or request for a distribution, the loan be repaid immediately or treated as in default. A distribution of a plan loan offset amount also occurs when, under the terms governing the plan loan, the loan is cancelled, accelerated, or treated as if it were in default (e.g., where the plan treats a loan as in default upon an employee's termination of employment or within a specified period thereafter). A distribution of a plan loan offset amount is an actual distribution, not a deemed distribution under section 72(p).

(c) *Examples.* The rules with respect to a plan loan offset amount in this Q&A–9, § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–15 and § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–11 of this chapter are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. (a) In 1996, Employee A has an account balance of $10,000 in Plan Y, of which $3,000 is invested in a plan loan to Employee A that is secured by Employee A's account balance in Plan Y. Employee A has made no after-tax employee contributions to Plan Y. Plan Y does not provide any direct rollover option with respect to plan loans. Upon termination of employment in 1996, Employee A, who is under age 70½ , elects a distribution of Employee A's entire account balance in Plan Y, and Employee A's outstanding loan is offset against the account balance on distribution. Employee A elects a direct rollover of the distribution.

(b) In order to satisfy section 401(a)(31), Plan Y must pay $7,000 directly to the eligible retirement plan chosen by Employee A in a direct rollover. When Employee A's account balance was offset by the amount of the $3,000 unpaid loan balance, Employee A received a plan loan offset amount (equivalent to $3,000) that is an eligible rollover distribution. However, under § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–15 Plan Y satisfies section 401(a)(31), even though a direct rollover option was not provided with respect to the $3,000 plan loan offset amount.

(c) No withholding is required under section 3405(c) on account of the distribution of the $3,000 plan loan offset amount because no cash or other property (other than the plan loan offset amount) is received by Employee A from which to satisfy the withholding. Employee A may roll over $3,000 to an eligible retirement plan within the 60 day period provided in section 402(c)(3).

Example 2. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1*, except that the terms governing the plan loan to Employee A provide that, upon termination of employment, Employee A's account balance is automatically offset by the amount of any unpaid loan balance to

repay the loan. Employee A terminates employment but does not request a distribution from Plan Y. Nevertheless, pursuant to the terms governing the plan loan, Employee A's account balance is automatically offset by the amount of the $3,000 unpaid loan balance.

(b) The $3,000 plan loan offset amount attributable to the plan loan in this example is treated in the same manner as the $3,000 plan loan offset amount in *Example 1.*

Example 3. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 2,* except that, instead of providing for an automatic offset upon termination of employment to repay the plan loan, the terms governing the plan loan require full repayment of the loan by Employee A within 30 days of termination of employment. Employee A terminates employment, does not elect a distribution from Plan Y, and also fails to repay the plan loan within 30 days. The plan administrator of Plan Y declares the plan loan to Employee A in default and executes on the loan by offsetting Employee A's account balance by the amount of the $3,000 unpaid loan balance.

(b) The $3,000 plan loan offset amount attributable to the plan loan in this example is treated in the same manner as the $3,000 plan loan offset amount in *Example 1* and in *Example 2.* The result in this *Example 3* is the same even though the plan administrator treats the loan as in default before offsetting Employee A's accrued benefit by the amount of the unpaid loan.

Example 4. (a) The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Employee A elects to receive the distribution of the account balance that remains after the $3,000 offset to repay the plan loan, instead of electing a direct rollover of the remaining account balance.

(b) In this case, the amount of the distribution received by Employee A is $10,000, not $3,000. Because the amount of the $3,000 offset attributable to the loan is included in determining the amount that equals 20 percent of the eligible rollover distribution received by Employee A, withholding in the amount of $2,000 (20 percent of $10,000) is required under section 3405(c). The $2,000 is required to be withheld from the $7,000 to be distributed to Employee A in cash, so that Employee A actually receives a check for $5,000.

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4,* except that the $7,000 distribution to Employee A after the offset to repay the loan consists solely of employer securities within the meaning of section 402(e)(4)(E). In this case, no withholding is required under section 3405(c) because the distribution consists solely of the $3,000 plan loan offset amount and the $7,000 distribution of employer securities. This is the result because the total amount required to be withheld does not exceed the sum of the cash and the fair market value of other property distributed, excluding plan loan offset amounts and employer securities. Employee A may roll over the employer securities and $3,000 to an eligible retirement plan within the 60-day period provided in section 402(c)(3).

Example 6. Employee B, who is age 40, has an account balance in Plan Z, a profit sharing plan qualified under section 401(a) that includes a qualified cash or deferred arrangement described in section 401(k). Plan Z provides for no after-tax employee contributions. In 1990, Employee B receives a loan from Plan Z, the terms of which satisfy section 72(p)(2), and which is secured by elective contributions subject to the distribution restrictions in section 401(k)(2)(B). In 1996, the loan fails to satisfy section 72(p)(2) because Employee B stops repayment. In that year, pursuant to section 72(p), Employee B is taxed on a deemed distribution equal to the amount of the unpaid loan balance. Under Q&A–4 of this section, the deemed distribution is not an eligible rollover distribution. Because Employee B has not separated from service or experienced any other event that permits the distribution under section 401(k)(2)(B) of the elective contributions that secure the loan, Plan Z is prohibited from executing on the loan. Accordingly, Employee B's account balance is not offset by the amount of the unpaid loan balance at the time Employee B stops repayment on the loan. Thus, there is no distribution of an offset amount that is an eligible rollover distribution in 1996.

Q–10: What is a qualified plan distributed annuity contract, and is an amount paid under such a contract a distribution of the balance to the credit of the employee in a qualified plan for purposes of section 402(c)?

A–10: (a) *Definition of a qualified plan distributed annuity contract.* A qualified plan distributed annuity contract is an annuity contract purchased for a participant, and distributed to the participant, by a qualified plan.

(b) *Treatment of amounts paid as eligible rollover distributions.* Amounts paid under a qualified plan distributed annuity contract are payments of the balance to the credit of the employee for purposes of section 402(c) and are eligible rollover distributions, if they otherwise qualify. Thus, for example, if the employee surrenders the contract for a single sum payment of its cash surrender value, the payment would be an eligible rollover distribution to the extent it is includible in gross income and not a required minimum distribution under section 401(a)(9). This rule applies even if the annuity contract is distributed in connection with a plan

termination. See § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–16 and § 31.3405(c)–1, Q&A–13 of this chapter concerning the direct rollover requirements and 20-percent withholding requirements, respectively, that apply to eligible rollover distributions from such an annuity contract.

Q–11: If an eligible rollover distribution is paid to an employee, and the employee contributes all or part of the eligible rollover distribution to an eligible retirement plan within 60 days, is the amount contributed not currently includible in gross income?

A–11: Yes, the amount contributed is not currently includible in gross income, provided that it is contributed to the eligible retirement plan no later than the 60th day following the day on which the employee received the distribution. If more than one distribution is received by an employee from a qualified plan during a taxable year, the 60-day rule applies separately to each distribution. Because the amount withheld as income tax under section 3405(c) is considered an amount distributed under section 402(c), an amount equal to all or any portion of the amount withheld can be contributed as a rollover to an eligible retirement plan within the 60-day period, in addition to the net amount of the eligible rollover distribution actually received by the employee. However, if all or any portion of an amount equal to the amount withheld is not contributed as a rollover, it is included in the employee's gross income to the extent required under section 402(a), and also may be subject to the 10-percent additional income tax under section 72(t).

Q–12: How does section 402(c) apply to a distributee who is not the employee?

A–12: (a) *Spousal distributee.* If any distribution attributable to an employee is paid to the employee's surviving spouse, section 402(c) applies to the distribution in the same manner as if the spouse were the employee. The same rule applies if any distribution attributable to an employee is paid in accordance with a qualified domestic relations order (as defined in section 414(p)) to the employee's spouse or former spouse who is an alternate payee. Therefore, a distribution to the surviving spouse of an employee (or to a spouse or former spouse who is an alternate payee under a qualified domestic relations order), including a distribution of ancillary death benefits attributable to the employee, is an eligible rollover distribution if it meets the requirements of section 402(c)(2) and (4) and Q&A–3 through Q&A–10 and Q&A–14 of this section. However, a qualified plan (as defined in Q&A–2 of this section) is not treated as an eligible retirement plan with respect to a surviving spouse. Only an individual retirement plan is treated as an eligible retirement plan with respect to an eligible rollover distribution to a surviving spouse.

(b) *Non-spousal distributee.* A distributee other than the employee or the employee's surviving spouse (or a spouse or former spouse who is an alternate payee under a qualified domestic relations order) is not permitted to roll over distributions from a qualified plan. Therefore, those distributions do not constitute eligible rollover distributions under section 402(c)(4) and are not subject to the 20-percent income tax withholding under section 3405(c).

Q–13: Must an employee's (or spousal distributee's) election to treat a contribution of an eligible rollover distribution to an individual retirement plan as a rollover contribution be irrevocable?

A–13: (a) *In general.* Yes. In order for a contribution of an eligible rollover distribution to an individual retirement plan to constitute a rollover and, thus, to qualify for current exclusion from gross income, a distributee must elect, at the time the contribution is made, to treat the contribution as a rollover contribution. An election is made by designating to the trustee, issuer, or custodian of the eligible retirement plan that the contribution is a rollover contribution. This election is irrevocable. Once any portion of an eligible rollover distribution has been contributed to an individual retirement plan and designated as a rollover distribution, taxation of the withdrawal of the contribution from the individual retirement plan is determined under section 408(d) rather than under section 402 or 403. Therefore, the eligible rollover distribution is not eligible for capital gains treatment, five-year

or ten-year averaging, or the exclusion from gross income for net unrealized appreciation on employer stock.

(b) Direct rollover. If an eligible rollover distribution is paid to an individual retirement plan in a direct rollover at the election of the distributee, the distributee is deemed to have irrevocably designated that the direct rollover is a rollover contribution.

Q–14: How is the $5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b) treated for purposes of determining the amount that is an eligible rollover distribution?

A–14: To the extent that a death benefit is a distribution from a qualified plan, the portion of the distribution that is excluded from gross income under section 101(b) is not an eligible rollover distribution. See §1.401(a)(31)-1, Q&A–17 for guidance concerning assumptions that a plan administrator may make with respect to whether and to what extent a distribution of a survivor benefit is excludible from gross income under section 101(b).

Q–15: May an employee (or spousal distributee) roll over more than the plan administrator determines to be an eligible rollover distribution using an assumption described in §1.401(a)(31)-1, Q&A–17?

A–15: Yes. The portion of any distribution that an employee (or spousal distributee) may roll over as an eligible rollover distribution under section 402(c) is determined based on the actual application of section 402 and other relevant provisions of the Internal Revenue Code. The actual application of these provisions may produce different results than any assumption described in §1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–17 that is used by the plan administrator. Thus, for example, even though the plan administrator calculates the portion of a distribution that is a required minimum distribution (and thus is not made eligible for direct rollover under section 401(a)(31)), by assuming that there is no designated beneficiary, the portion of the distribution that is actually a required minimum distribution and thus not an eligible rollover distribution is determined by taking into account the designated beneficiary, if any. If, by taking into account the designated beneficiary, a greater portion of the distribution is an eligible rollover distribution, the distributee may rollover the additional amount. Similarly, even though a plan administrator assumes that a distribution from a qualified plan is the only death benefit with respect to an employee that qualifies for the $5,000 death benefit exclusion under section 101(b), to the extent that the death benefit exclusion is allocated to a different death benefit, a greater portion of the distribution may actually be includible in gross income and, thus, be an eligible rollover distribution, and the surviving spouse may roll over the additional amount if it otherwise qualifies.

Q–16: Is a rollover from a qualified plan to an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity treated as a rollover contribution for purposes of the one-year look-back rollover limitation of section 408(d)(3)(B)?

A–16: No. A distribution from a qualified plan that is rolled over to an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity is not treated for purposes of section 408(d)(3)(B) as an amount received by an individual from an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity which is not includible in gross income because of the application of section 408(d)(3).

[T.D. 8619, 60 FR 49208, Sept. 22, 1995]

§1.402(d)–1 Effect of section 402(d).

(a) If the requirements of section 402(d) are met, a contribution made by an employer on behalf of an employee to a trust which is not exempt under section 501(a) shall not be included in the income of the employee in the year in which the contribution is made. Such contribution will be taxable to the employee, when received in later years, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1964, section 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to such contributions. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, such contributions, when received, may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). See paragraph (b)

of § 1.403(c)–1. The intent and purpose of section 402(d) is to give those employees, covered under certain non-exempt trusts to which such section applies, essentially the same tax treatment as those covered by trusts described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a), except that the capital gains treatment referred to in section 402(a)(2) does not apply.

(b) Every person claiming the benefit of section 402(d) must be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that all of the provisions of such section are met. The taxpayer must produce sufficient evidence to prove:

(1) That, before October 21, 1942, he was employed by the particular employer making the contribution in question and was at such time definitely covered by a written agreement, entered into before October 21, 1942, between himself and the employer, or between the employer and the trustee of a trust established by the employer before October 21, 1942, and that the contribution by the employer was made pursuant to such agreement. The fact that an employee may have been potentially covered is not sufficient. Evidence that the employment was entered into, or the agreement executed, ''as of'' a date before October 21, 1942, or that the agreement or trust instrument which did not theretofore meet the requirements of section 402(d) was modified or amended after October 20, 1942, so as to come within the provisions of such section, will not satisfy the requirements of section 402(d).

(2) That such contribution, pursuant to the terms of such agreement, was to be applied for the purchase of an annuity contract for the taxpayer. In the case of a contribution by the employer of an annuity contract purchased by such employer and transferred by him to the trustee of the trust, evidence should be presented to prove that such contract was purchased for the taxpayer by the employer pursuant to the terms of a written agreement between the employer and the employee or between the employer and the trustee, entered into before October 21, 1942.

(3) That under the written terms of the trust agreement the taxpayer is not entitled during his lifetime, except with the consent of the trustee, to any payments other than annuity payments under the annuity contract or contracts purchased by the trustee or by the employer and transferred to the trustee, and that the trustee may grant or withhold such consent free from control by the taxpayer, the employer, or any other person. However, such control will not be presumed from the fact that the trustee is himself an officer or employee of the employer. As used in section 402(d) the phrase ''if * * * under the terms of the trust agreement the employee is not entitled'' means that the trust instrument must make it impossible for the prohibited distribution to occur whether by operation or natural termination of the trust, whether by power of revocation or amendment, other than with the consent of the trustee, whether by the happening of a contingency, by collateral arrangement, or any other means. It is not essential that the employer relinquish all power to modify or terminate the trust but it must be impossible, except with the consent of the trustee, to be received by the taxpayer contracts purchased by the trustee, or by the employer and transferred to the trustee, to be received by the taxpayer directly or indirectly, other than as annuity payments.

(4) The nature and amount of such contribution and the extent to which income taxes have been paid thereon before January 1, 1949, and not credited or refunded.

(5) If it is claimed that section 402(d) applies to amounts contributed to a trust after June 1, 1949, the taxpayer must prove to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the trust did not, on June 1, 1949, qualify for exemption under section 165(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1939. Where an employer buys an annuity contract which is transferred to the trustee, the date of the purchase of the annuity contract and not the date of the transfer to the trustee is the controlling date in determining whether or not the contribution was made to the trust after June 1, 1949.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11679, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6885, 31 FR 7801, June 2, 1966]

§ 1.402(e)–1 Certain plan terminations.

Distributions made after December 31, 1953, and before January 1, 1955, as a result of the complete termination of an employees' trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt under section 501(a) shall be considered distributions on account of separation form service for purposes of section 402(a)(2) if the employer who established the trust is a corporation, and the termination of the plan is incident to the complete liquidation of the corporation before August 16, 1954, regardless of whether such liquidation is incident to a reorganization as defined in section 368.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11680, Nov. 26, 1960]

§ 1.402(f)–1 Required explanation of eligible rollover distributions; questions and answers.

The following questions and answers concern the written explanation requirement imposed by section 402(f) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 relating to distributions eligible for rollover treatment. Section 402(f) was amended by section 521(a) of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992, Public Law 102–318, 106 Stat. 290 (UCA). For additional UCA guidance under sections 401(a)(31), 402(c), 403(b)(8) and (10), and 3405(c), see §§ 1.401(a)(31)–1, 1.402(c)–2, 1.403(b)–2, and 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter, respectively.

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Q–1: What are the requirements for a written explanation under section 402(f)?

Q–2: When must the plan administrator provide the section 402(f) notice to a distributee?

Q–3: Must the plan administrator provide a separate section 402(f) notice for each distribution in a series of periodic payments that are eligible rollover distributions?

Q–4: May a plan administrator post the section 402(f) notice as a means of providing it to distributees?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q–1: What are the requirements for a written explanation under section 402(f)?

A–1: (a) *General rule.* Under section 402(f), as amended by UCA, the plan administrator of a qualified plan is required, within a reasonable period of time before making an eligible rollover distribution, to provide the distributee with the written explanation described in section 402(f) (section 402(f) notice). The section 402(f) notice must be designed to be easily understood and must explain the following: the rules under which the distributee may elect that the distribution be paid in the form of a direct rollover to an eligible retirement plan; the rules that require the withholding of tax on the distribution if it is not paid in a direct rollover; the rules under which the distributee may defer tax on the distribution if it is contributed in a rollover to an eligible retirement plan within 60 days of the distribution; and if applicable, certain special rules regarding the taxation of the distribution as described in section 402(d) (averaging with respect to lump sum distributions) and (e) (other rules including treatment of net unrealized appreciation). See § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–7 for additional information that must be provided if a plan provides a default procedure regarding the election of a direct rollover.

(b) *Model section 402(f) notice.* The plan administrator will be deemed to have complied with the requirements of paragraph (a) of this Q&A–1 relating to the contents of the section 402(f) notice if the plan administrator provides the applicable model section 402(f) notice published by the Internal Revenue Service for this purpose in a revenue ruling, notice, or other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

(c) *Delegation to Commissioner.* The Commissioner, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance, published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin, may modify, or provide any additional guidance with respect to, the notice requirement of this section. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

(d) *Effective date*—(1) *Statutory effective date.* Section 402(f) applies to eligible rollover distributions made after December 31, 1992.

(2) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to eligible rollover distributions made on or after October 19, 1995. For eligible rollover distributions

made on or after January 1, 1993 and before October 19, 1995, § 1.402(c)–2T, Q&A–11 through 15 (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1), apply. However, for any distribution made on or after January 1, 1993 but before October 19, 1995, a plan administrator or payor may satisfy the requirements of section 402(f) by substituting any or all provisions of this section for the corresponding provisions of § 1.402(c)–1T, Q&A–11 through 15, if any.

Q–2: When must the plan administrator provide the section 402(f) notice to a distributee?

A–2: The plan administrator must provide a distributee with the section 402(f) notice no less than 30 days and no more than 90 days before the date of distribution. However, if the distributee, after having received the section 402(f) notice, affirmatively elects a distribution, a plan will not fail to satisfy section 402(f) merely because the distribution is made less than 30 days after the section 402(f) notice was provided to the distributee, provided that the following requirement is met. The plan administrator must provide information to the distributee clearly indicating that (in accordance with the first sentence of this Q&A–2) the distributee has a right to consider the decision of whether or not to elect a direct rollover for at least 30 days after the notice is provided. The plan administrator may use any method to inform the distributee of the relevant time period, provided that the method is reasonably designed to attract the attention of the distributee. For example, this information could be provided either in the section 402(f) notice or stated in a separate document (e.g., attached to the election form) that is provided at the same time as the notice. For purposes of satisfying the requirement in the first sentence of this Q&A–2, the plan administrator may substitute the annuity starting date, within the meaning of § 1.401(a)–20, Q&A–10, for the date of distribution.

Q–3: Must the plan administrator provide a separate section 402(f) notice for each distribution in a series of periodic payments that are eligible rollover distributions?

A–3: No. In the case of a series of periodic payments that are eligible rollover distributions, the plan administrator is permitted to satisfy section 402(f) with respect to each payment in the series by providing the section 402(f) notice prior to the first payment in the series, in accordance with the rules in Q&A–1 and Q&A–2 of this section, and providing the notice at least once annually for as long as the payments continue. However, see § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–12 for additional guidance if the plan administrator intends to treat a distributee's election to make or not make a direct rollover with respect to one payment in a series of periodic payments as applicable to all subsequent payments in the series (absent a subsequent change of election).

Q–4: May a plan administrator post the section 402(f) notice as a means of providing it to distributees?

A–4: No. The posting of the section 402(f) notice will not be considered provision of the notice. The written notice must be provided individually to any distributee of an eligible rollover distribution within the time period described in Q&A–2 and Q&A–3 of this section.

[T.D. 8619, 60 FR 49213, Sept. 22, 1995]

§ 1.402(g)–0 Limitation on exclusion for elective deferrals, table of contents.

This section contains the captions that appear in § 1.402(g)–1.

§ 1.402(g)–1 Limitation on exclusion for elective deferrals.

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[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40545, Aug. 15, 1991]

§ 1.402(g)–1 Limitation on exclusion for elective deferrals.

(a) *In general.* The excess of an individual's elective deferrals for any taxable year over the applicable limit for the year may not be excluded from gross income under sections 402(a)(8), 402(h)(1)(B), 403(b), 408(k)(6), or 501(c)(18). Thus, an individual's elective deferrals in excess of the applicable limit for a taxable year (i.e., the individual's excess deferrals for the year) must be included in gross income for the year.

(b) *Elective deferrals.* An individual's elective deferrals for a taxable year are the sum of the following:

(1) Any elective contribution under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement (as defined in section 401(k)) to the extent not includible in the individual's gross income for the taxable year on account of section 402(a)(8) (before applying the limits of section 402(g) or this section).

(2) Any employer contribution to a simplified employee pension (as defined in section 408(k)) to the extent not includible in the individual's gross income for the taxable year on account of section 402(h)(1)(B) (before applying the limits of section 402(g) or this section).

(3) Any employer contribution to an annuity contract under section 403(b) under a salary reduction agreement (within the meaning of section 3121(a)(5)(D)) to the extent not includible in the individual's gross income for the taxable year on account of section 403(b) (before applying the limits of section 402(g) or this section).

(4) Any employee contribution designated as deductible under a trust described in section 501(c)(18) to the extent deductible from the individual's income for the taxable year on account of section 501(c)(18) (before appying the limits of section 402(g) or this section). For purposes of this section, the employee contribution is treated as though it were excluded from the individual's gross income.

(c) *Certain one-time irrevocable elections.* An employer contribution is not treated as an elective deferral under paragraph (b) of this section if the contribution is made pursuant to a one-time irrevocable election made by the employee:

(1) In the case of an annuity contract under section 403(b), at the time of initial eligibility to participate in the salary reduction agreement;

(2) In the case of a qualified cash or deferred arrangement, at a time when, under § 1.401(k)–1(a)(3)(iv), the election is not treated as a cash or deferred election;

(3) In the case of a trust described in section 501(c)(18), at the time of initial eligibility to have the employer contribute on the employee's behalf to the trust.

(d) *Applicable limit*—(1) *In general.* Except as adjusted under paragraphs (d)(2) and (d)(3) of this section, the applicable limit for an individual's taxable year beginning in the 1987 calendar year is $7,000. This amount is increased for the taxable year beginning in 1988 and subsequent calendar years in the same manner as the $90,000

amount is adjusted under section 415(d).

(2) *Special adjustment for elective deferrals with respect to a section 403(b) annuity contract.* The applicable limit for an individual who makes elective deferrals described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section for a taxable year is adjusted by increasing the applicable limit otherwise determined under paragraph (d)(1) of this section by the amount of the individual's elective deferrals described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section for the taxable year. This adjustment cannot cause the applicable limit for any taxable year to exceed $9,500.

(3) *Special adjustment for elective deferrals with respect to a section 403(b) annuity contract for certain long-term employees.* The applicable limit for an individual who is a qualified employee (as defined in section 402(g)(8)(C)) and has elective deferrals described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section for a taxable year is adjusted by increasing the applicable limit otherwise determined under paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) of this section in accordance with section 402(g)(8)(A).

(4) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph (d) are illustrated by the following example.

Example. Employer X maintains a cash or deferred arrangement under section 401(k), and offers its employees section 403(b) contracts to which elective deferrals may be made. For the 1987 taxable year, three of X's employees, A, B, and C, contribute $3,500, $1,000, and $8,500, respectively, as elective deferrals under the section 403(b) contract. The maximum amounts that A, B, and C may contribute to the cash or deferred arrangement are $6,000, $7,000, and $1,000, respectively. B may only contribute $7,000 under the cash or deferred arrangement because the special adjustment under paragraph (d)(2) of this section applies only to section 403(b) annuity contracts. B could, of course, contribute up to $2,500 under the section 403(b) contract (to the extent otherwise permitted), in addition to the $7,000 under the cash or deferred arrangement.

(e) *Treatment of excess deferrals*—(1) *Plan qualification*—(i) *Effect of excess deferrals.* For plan years beginning before January 1, 1988, a plan, annuity contract, simplified employee pension, or trust does not fail to meet the requirements of section 401(a), section 403(b), section 408(k), or section 501(c)(18), respectively, merely because excess deferrals are made with respect to the plan, contract, pension, or trust. For plan years beginning after December 3l, 1987, see section 401(a)(30) and § 1.401(a)–30 for the effect of excess deferrals on the qualification of a plan or trust under section 401(a). For purposes of determining whether a plan or trust complies in operation with section 401(a)(30), excess deferrals that are distributed under paragraph (e)(2) or (3) of this section are disregarded. Similar rules apply to annuity contracts under section 403(b), simplified employee pensions under section 408(k), and plans or trusts under section 501(c)(28).

(ii) *Treatment of excess deferrals as employer contributions.* For other purposes of the Code, including sections 401(a)(4), 401(k)(3), 404, 409, 411, 412, and 416, excess deferrals must be treated as employer contributions even if they are distributed in accordance with paragraph (e)(2) or (3) of this section. However, excess deferrals of a nonhighly compensated employee are not taken into account under section 401(k)(3) (the actual deferral percentage test) to the extent the excess deferrals are prohibited under section 401(a)(30). Excess deferrals are also treated as employer contributions for purposes of section 415 unless distributed under paragraph (e)(2) or (3) of this section.

(iii) *Definition of excess deferrals.* The term ''excess deferrals'' means the excess of an individual's elective deferrals for any taxable year, as defined in § 1.402(g)–1(b), over the applicable limit under section 402(g)(1) for the taxable year.

(2) *Correction of excess deferrals after the taxable year.* A plan may provide that if any amount is included in the gross income of an individual under paragraph (a) of this section for a taxable year:

(i) Not later than the first April 15 (or such earlier date specified in the plan) following the close of the individual's taxable year, the individual may notify each plan under which deferrals were made of the amount of the excess deferrals received by that plan. A plan may provide that an individual is

deemed to have notified the plan of excess deferrals to the extent the individual has excess deferrals for the taxable year calculated by taking into account only elective deferrals under the plan and other plans of the same employer. A plan may instead provide that the employer may notify the plan on behalf of the individual under these circumstances.

(ii) Not later than the first April 15 following the close of the taxable year, the plan may distribute to the individual the amount designated under paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section (and any income allocable to that amount).

(3) *Correction of excess deferrals during taxable year*—(i) A plan may provide that an individual who has excess deferrals for a taxable year may receive a corrective distribution of excess deferrals during the same year. This corrective distribution may be made only if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

(A) The individual designates the distribution as an excess deferral. A plan may provide that an individual is deemed to have designated the distribution to the extent the individual has excess deferrals for the taxable year calculated by taking into account only elective deferrals under the plan and other plans of the same employer. A plan may instead provide that the employer may make the designation on behalf of the individual under these circumstances.

(B) The correcting distribution is made after the date on which the plan received the excess deferral.

(C) The plan designates the distribution as a distribution of excess deferrals.

(ii) The provisions of this paragraph (e)(3) are illustrated by the following example:

Example. S is a 62 year old individual who participates in Employer Y's qualified cash or deferred arrangement. In January 1991, S withdraws $5,000 from Y's cash or deferred arrangement. From February through September, S defers $900 per month. On October 1, S leaves Employer Y and becomes employed by Employer Z (unrelated to Y). During the remainder of 1991, S defers $1,800 under Z's qualified cash or deferred arrangement. In January 1992, S realizes that S has deferred a total of $9,000 in 1991, and therefore has a $525 excess deferral ($9,000 minus $8,475, the applicable limit for 1991). An additional $525 must be distributed to S before April 15, 1992, to correct the excess deferral. The $5,000 withdrawal did not correct the excess deferral because it occurred before the excess deferral was made.

(4) *Plan provisions.* In order to distribute excess deferrals pursuant to paragraphs (e)(2) or (e)(3) of this section, a plan must contain language permitting distribution of excess deferrals. A plan may require the notification in paragraphs (e)(2) and (e)(3) of this section to be in writing and may require that the employee certify or otherwise establish that the designated amount is an excess deferral. A plan need not permit distribution of excess deferrals.

(5) *Income allocable to excess deferrals*—(i) *General rule.* The income allocable to excess deferrals is equal to the sum of the allocable gain or loss for the taxable year of the individual and, if the plan so provides, the allocable gain or loss for the period between the end of the taxable year and the date of distribution (the ''gap period'').

(ii) *Method of allocating income.* A plan may use any reasonable method for computing the income allocable to excess deferrals, provided that the method does not violate section 401(a)(4), is used consistently for all participants and for all corrective distributions under a plan for the plan year, and is used by the plan for allocating income to participants' accounts. See § 1.401(a)(4)–1(c)(8).

(iii) *Alternative method of allocating income.* A plan may allocate income to excess deferrals by multiplying the income for the taxable year (and the gap period, if the plan so provides) allocable to elective contributions by a fraction. The numerator of the fraction is the excess deferrals by the employee for the taxable year. The denominator of the fraction is equal to the sum of:

(A) The total account balance of the employee attributable to elective contributions as of the beginning of the taxable year, plus

(B) The employee's elective contributions for the taxable year (and the gap period, if the plan so provides).

(iv) *Safe harbor method of allocating gap period income.* Under the safe harbor method, income on excess deferrals for the gap period is equal to 10 percent

of the income allocable to excess deferrals for the taxable year (calculated under the method described in paragraph (e)(5)(iii) of this section), multiplied by the number of calendar months that have elapsed since the end of the taxable year. For purposes of calculating the number of calendar months that have elapsed under the safe harbor method, a corrective distribution that is made on or before the fifteenth day of the month is treated as made on the last day of the preceding month. A distribution made after the fifteenth day of the month is treated as made on the first day of the next month.

(6) *Coordination with distribution or recharacterization of excess contributions.* The amount of excess deferrals that may be distributed under this paragraph (e) with respect to an employee for a taxable year is reduced by any excess contributions previously distributed or recharacterized with respect to the employee for the plan year beginning with or within the taxable year. In the event of a reduction under this paragraph (e)(6), the amount of excess contributions includible in the gross income of the employee and reported by the employer as a distribution of excess contributions is reduced by the amount of the reduction under this paragraph (e)(6). See § 1.401(k)–1(f)(5)(i). In no case may an individual receive from a plan as a corrective distribution for a taxable year under paragraph (e)(2) or (e)(3) of this section an amount in excess of the individual's total elective deferrals under the plan for the taxable year.

(7) *No employee or spousal consent required.* A corrective distribution of excess deferrals (and income) may be made under the terms of the plan without regard to any notice or consent otherwise required under sections 411(a)(11) or 417.

(8) *Tax treatment*—(i) *Corrective distributions on or before April 15 after close of taxable year.* A corrective distribution of excess deferrals within the period described in paragraph (e)(2) or (e)(3) of this section is excludable from the employee's gross income. However, the income allocable to excess deferrals is includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year in which the allocable income is distributed. The corrective distribution of excess deferrals (and income) is not subject to the early distribution tax of section 72(t) and is not treated as a distribution for purposes of applying the excise tax under section 4980A.

(ii) *Special rule for 1987 and 1988 excess deferrals.* Income on excess deferrals for 1987 or 1988 that were timely distributed on or before April 17, 1989, may be reported by the recipient either in the year described in paragraph (e)(8)(i) of this section, or in the year in which the employee would have received the elective deferrals had the employee originally elected to receive the amounts in cash.

(iii) *Distributions of excess deferrals after correction period.* If excess deferrals (and income) for a taxable year are not distributed within the period described in paragraphs (e)(2) and (e)(3) of this section, they may only be distributed when permitted under section 401(k)(2)(B). These amounts are includible in gross income when distributed, and are treated for purposes of the distribution rules otherwise applicable to the plan as elective deferrals (and income) that were excludable from the individual's gross income under section 402(g). Thus, any amount includible in gross income for any taxable year under this section that is not distributed by April 15 of the following taxable year is not treated as an investment in the contract for purposes of section 72 and is includible in the employee's gross income when distributed from the plan. Excess deferrals that are distributed under this paragraph (e)(8)(iii) are treated as employer contributions for purposes of section 415 when they are contributed to the plan.

(9) *No reduction of required minimum distribution.* A distribution of excess deferrals (and income) under paragraphs (e)(2) and (e)(3) of this section is not treated as a distribution for purposes of determining whether the plan meets the minimum distribution requirements of section 401(a)(9).

(10) *Partial correction.* Any distribution under paragraphs (e)(2) or (e)(3) of this section of less than the entire amount of excess deferrals (and income) is treated as a pro rata distribution of excess deferrals and income.

(11) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples. Assume in *Examples 1* and *2* that there is no income or loss allocable to the elective deferrals.

Example 1. Employee A is a 60-year old highly compensated employee who participates in Employer M's cash or deferred arrangement. During the period of January through September of 1988, A contributed $7,000 to the arrangement in elective deferrals. During the same period A also contributed $813 in elective deferrals under a plan of an unrelated employer. In December of 1988, A made a withdrawal of $1,000 from Employer M's plan but did not designate this as a withdrawal of an excess deferral. In January of 1989, A notifies Employer M of an excess deferral, specifying a distribution of $500 for 1988. To correct the excess deferrals, A must receive this additional $500 even though A has already withdrawn $1,000 for 1988. A may exclude from income in 1988 only $7,313. However, if the $500 is distributed by April 25, 1989, the distribution is excludable from A's gross income in 1989. Even if A withdraws the $500, M must take into account the entire $7,000 in computing A's actual deferral percentage for 1988.

Example 2. (i) Corporation X maintains a cash or deferred arrangement. The plan year is the calendar year. For plan year 1989, all 10 of X's employees are eligible to participate in the plan. The employees' compensation, contributions, and actual deferral ratios are shown in the following table:

Employee	Compensation	Contribution	Actual deferral ratio (percent)
A	$140,000	$7,000	5.0
B	70,000	7,000	10.0
C	70,000	7,000	10.0
D	45,000	2,250	5.0
E	40,000	4,000	10.0
F	35,000	1,750	5.0
G	35,000	350	1.0
H	30,000	3,000	10.0
I	17,500	0	0
J	17,500	0	0.0

(ii) Employees A, B, and C are highly compensated employees within the meaning of section 414(q). Employees D, E, F, G, H, I, and J are nonhighly compensated employees. The actual deferral percentages for the highly compensated employees and nonhighly compensated employees are 8.33 percent and 4.43 percent, respectively. These percentages do not satisfy the requirements of section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii). The actual deferral percentage for the highly compensated employees may not exceed 6.43 percent.

(iii) The plan reduces the actual deferral ratios of B and C to 7.14 percent by distributing $2,002 ($7,000 − .0714×$70,000) to each in January 1990. Section 401(k)(3)(A)(ii) is therefore satisfied.

(iv) In February 1990, B notifies X that B made elective deferrals of $2,000 under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement maintained by an unrelated employer in 1989, and requests distribution of $2,000 from X's plan. However, since B has already received a distribution of $2,002 to meet the ADP test, no additional amounts are required or are permitted to be distributed as excess deferrals by this plan, and the prior distribution of excess contributions has corrected the excess deferrals. But X must report $2,000 as a distribution of an excess deferral and $2 as a distribution of an excess contribution.

Example 3. Employee T has excess deferrals of $1,000. The income attributable to excess deferrals is $100. T properly notifies the employer, and requests a distribution of the excess deferral (and income) on February 1. The plan distributes $1,000 to T by April 15. Because the plan did not distribute any additional amount as income, $909 is treated as a distribution of excess deferrals, and $91 is treated as a distribution of earnings. With respect to amounts remaining in the account, $91 is treated as an elective deferral and is not included in T's investment in the contract. Because it was not distributed by the required date, the $91 is includible in gross income upon distribution as well as in the year of deferral.

(f) *Community property laws.* This section is applied without regard to community property laws.

(g) *Effective date*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided, the provisions of this section are effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1986.

(2) *Deferrals under collective bargaining agreements.* In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, the provisions of this section do not apply to contributions made pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement for taxable years beginning before the earlier of January 1, 1989, or the date on which the agreement terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986). These contributions under a collective bargaining agreement are taken into account for purposes of applying this section to elective deferrals under plans not described in this paragraph (g)(2).

(3) *Transition rule.* For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1992, a plan or an individual may rely on a reasonable interpretation of the rules set forth in section 402(g), as in effect during those years.

(4) *Partnership cash or deferred arrangements.* For purposes of section 402(g), employer contributions for any plan year beginning after December 31, 1986, and before January 1, 1989, under an arrangement that directly or indirectly permits individual partners to vary the amount of contributions made on their behalf will be treated as elective contributions only if the arrangement was intended to satisfy and did satisfy the nondiscrimination test of section 401(k)(3) and § 1.401(k)–1(b) for the plan year.

[T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40546, Aug. 15, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66180, Dec. 23, 1994]

§ 1.403(a)–1 Taxability of beneficiary under a qualified annuity plan.

(a) An employee or retired or former employee for whom an annuity contract is purchased by his employer is not required to include in his gross income the amount paid for the contract at the time such amount is paid, whether or not his rights to the contract are forfeitable, if the annuity contract is purchased under a plan which meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2). For purposes of the preceding sentence, it is immaterial whether the employer deducts the amounts paid for the contract under such section 404(a)(2). See § 1.403(b)–1 for rules relating to annuity contracts which are not purchased under qualified plans but which are purchased by organizations described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt under section 501(a) or which are purchased for employees who perform services for certain public schools.

(b) The amounts received by or made available to any employee referred to in paragraph (a) of this section under such annuity contract shall be included in gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which received or made available, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities), except that certain total distributions described in section 403(a)(2) are taxable as long-term capital gains. For the treatment of such total distributions, see § 1.403(a)–2. However, for taxable years beginning before January 1, 1964, section 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to such amounts. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, such amounts may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging).

(c) If upon the death of an employee or of a retired employee, the widow or other beneficiary of such employee is paid, in accordance with the terms of the annuity contract relating to the deceased employee, an annuity or other death benefit, the extent to which the amounts received by or made available to the beneficiary must be included in the beneficiary's income under section 403(a) shall be determined in accordance with the rules presented in paragraph (a)(5) of § 1.402(a)–1.

(d) An individual contract issued after December 31, 1962, or a group contract, which provides incidental life insurance protection may be purchased under a qualified annuity plan. For the rules as to nontransferability of such contracts issued after December 31, 1962, see § 1.401–9. For the rules relating to the taxation of the cost of the life insurance protection and the proceeds thereunder, see § 1.72–16. Section 403(a) is not applicable to premiums paid after October 26, 1956, for individual contracts which were issued prior to January 1, 1963, and which provide life insurance protection.

(e) As to inclusion of full-time life insurance salesmen within the class of persons considered to be employees, see section 7701(a)(20).

(f) For purposes of this section and § 1.403(a)–2, the term ''employee'' includes a self-employed individual who is treated as an employee under section 401(c)(1) and paragraph (b) of § 1.401–10, and the term ''employer'' means the person treated as the employer of such individual under section 401(c)(4). For the rules relating to annuity plans covering self-employed individuals, see section 404(a)(2) and §§ 1.404(a)–8 and 1.401–10 through 1.401–13.

(g) For the treatment of amounts paid to provide medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in §1.401–14, see paragraph (h) of §1.72–15.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11680, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6676, 28 FR 10143, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5073, Apr. 14, 1964; T.D. 6783, 29 FR 18359, Dec. 24, 1964; T.D. 6885, 31 FR 7801, June 2, 1966]

§1.403(a)–2 Capital gains treatment for certain distributions.

(a) If the total amounts payable with respect to any employee for whom an annuity contract has been purchased by an employer under a plan which—

(1) Is a plan described in section 403(a)(1) and §1.403(a)–1, and

(2) Requires that refunds of contributions with respect to annuity contracts purchased under such plan be used to reduce subsequent premiums on the contracts under the plan,

are paid to, or includible in gross income of, the payee within one taxable year of the payee by reason of the employee's death or other separation from the service, or death after such separation from the service, such total payments, to the extent they exceed the net amount contributed by the employee, shall be considered a gain from the sale or exchange of a capital asset held for more than six months. The ''net amount contributed by the employee'' is the amount actually contributed by the employee plus any amounts considered to be contributed by the employee under the rules of sections 72(f), 101(b), and paragraph (d) of §1.403(a)–1, reduced by any amounts theretofore distributed to him which were excludable from his gross income as a return of employee contributions. For example, if under an annuity contract purchased under a plan described in this section, the total distributions payable to the employee's widow are paid to her in the year in which the employee dies, in the amount of $8,000, and if $5,000 thereof is excludable under section 101(b), and if the employee made contributions of $600 and had received no payments, the remaining amount of $2,400 will be considered a gain from the sale or exchange of a capital asset held for more than six months.

(b)(1) The term ''total amounts'' means the balance to the credit of an employee with respect to all annuities under the annuity plan which becomes payable to the payee by reason of the employee's death or other separation from the service, or by reason of his death after separation from the service. If an employee commences to receive annuity payments on retirement and then a lump sum payment is made to his widow upon his death, the capital gains treatment applies to the lump sum payment, but it does not apply to amounts received before the time the ''total amounts'' become payable. However, if the total amount to the credit of the employee at the time of his death or other separation from the service or death after separation from the service is paid or includible in the gross income of the payee within one taxable year of the payee, such amount is entitled to the capital gains treatment notwithstanding that in a later taxable year an additional amount is credited to the employee and paid to the payee.

(2) If more than one annuity contract is received under the plan, the capital gains treatment does not apply to any amount received on the surrender thereof unless all contracts under the plan with respect to a particular employee are surrendered either at the time of the employee's death or other separation from the service or death after separation from the service. Thus, if an employee receives two contracts on separation from the service and surrenders one of them in the year of separation and receives payments under the other until his death, the capital gains treatment is applicable to the balance paid to his beneficiary on his death if paid within one taxable year of the beneficiary. The amount received by the employee on surrender of the contract in the year of his separation from the service, however, would not receive capital gains treatment since the balance to the credit of the employee with respect to all amounts under the plan did not become payable at that time.

(3) If an employee retires and commences to receive an annuity but subsequently in some succeeding taxable

year, he is paid a lump sum in settlement of all future annuity payments, the capital gains treatment does not apply to such lump sum settlement paid during the lifetime of the employee since it is not a payment on account of separation from the service, or death after separation, but is on account of the settlement of future annuity payments.

(4) If the ''total amounts'' payable under all annuity contracts under the plan with respect to a particular employee are paid or includible in the gross income of several payees within one taxable year on account of the employee's death or other separation from the service or on account of his death after separation from the service, the capital gains treatment is applicable. Thus, if the balance to the credit of a deceased employee under all annuity contracts provided under an annuity plan becomes payable to two payees, the capital gains treatment is applicable provided the ''total amounts'' payable are received by or includible in the gross income of both payees within the same taxable year. However, if the ''total amounts'' payable are made available to each payee and one elects to receive his share in cash while the other makes a timely election under section 72(h) to receive his share as an annuity, the capital gains treatment does not apply to either payee.

(5) For purposes of determining whether the total amounts payable to an employee have been paid within one taxable year, the term ''total amounts'' includes amounts under a plan which are attributable to contributions on behalf of an individual while he was self-employed in the business with respect to which the plan was established. Thus, the ''total amounts'' payable are not paid within one taxable year if amounts remain payable which are so attributable.

(6) The term ''total amounts'' does not include any amount which has been placed in a separate account for the funding of benefits described in section 401(h). Thus, a distribution under a qualified annuity plan may constitute a distribution of the total amounts payable with respect to an employee even though amounts attributable to the funding of section 401(h) medical benefits as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14 are not so distributed.

(c) The provisions of this section are not applicable to any amounts paid to a payee to the extent such amounts are attributable to contributions made on behalf of an employee while he was a self-employed individual in the business with respect to which the plan was established. For the taxation of such amounts, see § 1.72–18. For the rules for determining the amount attributable to contributions on behalf of an employee while he was self-employed, see paragraphs (b)(4) and (c)(2) of such section.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11681, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6676, 28 FR 10143, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5073, Apr. 14, 1964]

§ 1.403(b)–1 Taxability of beneficiary under annuity purchased by a section 501(c)(3) organization or public school.

(a) *Amounts paid by employer during taxable years beginning before January 1, 1958*—(1) *In general.* If an amount is paid during a taxable year of an employee (or a retired or former employee) beginning before January 1, 1958, toward the purchase for such employee of an annuity contract and such purchase is not part of an annuity plan which meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2), then such amount is not required to be included in the gross income of such employee for such taxable year—

(i) If such amount is paid by an employer which, at the time of the payment, is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), and

(ii) If the purchase of the annuity contract is merely a supplement to the past or current compensation of such employee (within the meaning of subparagraph (2) of this paragraph).

For purposes of this paragraph, it is immaterial whether or not the employee's rights to the annuity contract are forfeitable.

(2) *Supplement to past or current compensation.* For purposes of this paragraph, whether the purchase of an annuity contract is merely a ''supplement to past or current compensation'' is to be determined by all the surrounding facts and circumstances. One

of the pertinent facts to be taken into consideration is the ratio of the consideration paid by the employer for an employee's contract to the amount of his past or current compensation. For example, if the annual premium paid for an employee's contract is $1,000 and his annual salary is $10,000, the ratio indicates that the premium paid for the contract is merely a supplement to the employee's current compensation. If, however, an employee receives no current compensation, or the annual premiums paid for his annuity contract approximate his annual salary, the amount paid for his contract will be considered to be current compensation and taxable to the employee in the year in which it is paid by the employer. Other pertinent considerations are whether the annuity contract is purchased as a result of an agreement for a reduction of the employee's annual salary, or whether it is purchased at his request in lieu of an increase in current compensation to which he otherwise might be entitled. In such cases, the amount paid for the contract shall also be considered to be current compensation.

(b) *Amounts paid by employer during taxable years beginning after December 31, 1957*—(1) *In general.* If amounts are contributed by an employer during a taxable year of an employee (or a retired or former employee) beginning after December 31, 1957, toward the purchase for such employee of an annuity contract and such purchase is not part of an annuity plan which meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2), then, to the extent such amounts do not exceed the exclusion allowance for such taxable year, they are not required to be included in the gross income of such employee for such taxable year, if at the time of the contribution—

(i) The employer is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), or

(ii) The employer is a State, a political subdivision of a State, or an agency or instrumentality of any one or more of the foregoing, and the employee is performing (or has performed) services for an educational institution (as defined in section 151(e)(4)), and

(iii) The employee's rights under the annuity contract are nonforfeitable except for failure to pay future premiums.

See paragraph (d) of this section for rules relating to the computation of an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year.

(2) *Forfeitable rights which change to nonforfeitable rights.* If an employee's rights under an annuity contract change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights, the amount which, under section 403(d), is includible in the gross income of such employee by reason of such change (computed without regard to subparagraph (1) of this paragraph) shall, for purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, be considered an amount contributed by the employer for such annuity contract as of the time the employee's rights under the contract change to nonforfeitable rights. Such amount will, therefore, be excludable from the employee's gross income for the taxable year in which the change occurs to the extent that it is so excludable under the rules contained in this section. In determining the extent to which such amount is excludable, this section shall be applied in the same manner as in the case of current employer contributions. Thus, no part of such amount is excludable if the employer is not an employer described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph at the time the employee's rights under the annuity contract change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights. In addition, such amount will be excludable only to the extent it does not exceed the employee's exclusion allowance for the taxable year in which the change occurs. Since such an amount is considered as an amount contributed by the employer at the time the change occurs, it is immaterial whether the employer was an employer described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph at the time the actual contributions were made.

(3) *Agreement to take a reduction in salary or to forego an increase in salary.* (i) There is no requirement that the purchase of an annuity contract for an employee must be merely a ''supplement to past or current compensation'' in order for the exclusion provided by this

paragraph to apply to employer contributions for such annuity contract. Thus, the exclusion provided by this paragraph is applicable to amounts contributed by an employer for an annuity contract as a result of an agreement with an employee to take a reduction in salary, or to forego an increase in salary, but only to the extent such amounts are earned by the employee after the agreement becomes effective. Such an agreement must be legally binding and irrevocable with respect to amounts earned while the agreement is in effect. Except as provided in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, the employee must not be permitted to make more than one agreement with the same employer during any taxable year of such employee beginning after December 31, 1963; the exclusion provided by this paragraph shall not apply to any amounts which are contributed under any further agreement made by such employee during the same taxable year beginning after such date. However, the employee may be permitted to terminate the entire agreement with respect to amounts not yet earned.

(ii) An individual who is employed by an organization described in section 415(c)(4) may make a salary reduction agreement for his taxable year beginning in 1976 or 1977 at any time before the end of the 1976 or 1977 taxable year, respectively, without the agreement's being considered a new agreement within the meaning of this subparagraph. The agreement for 1976 may be made on or before June 15, 1977, and the agreement for 1977 may be made on or before April 17, 1978. This special rule only applies if the individual makes a statement of intention in accordance with § 11.415(c)(4)–1(b) electing, or determines his income tax liability for the taxable year in a way which is consistent with, one of the alternative limitations under section 415(c)(4) for 1976 or 1977 (as the case may be). The salary reduction agreement for 1976 may be made effective with respect to any amount earned during the taxpayer's most recent one-year period of service (as defined in paragraph (f) of this section) ending not later than the end of the 1976 taxable year, notwithstanding subdivision (i) of this subparagraph. Similarly, the salary reduction agreement for 1977 may be made effective with respect to such period of service ending not later than the end of the 1977 taxable year. If the salary reduction agreement for 1976 is entered into at any time after December 31, 1976, or if the salary reduction agreement for 1977 is entered into at any time after December 31, 1977, an amended Form W–2 must be filed on behalf of the individual.

(iii) The rules of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. A is an employee of X Organization (an employer described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a)) for the entire calendar year 1964. A uses the calendar year as a taxable year. A's annual salary as of January 1, 1964, is $12,000. On February 1, 1964, A and his employer enter a binding and irrevocable agreement whereby A is to take a 10-percent reduction in salary (from $1,000 per month to $900 per month) and X Organization is to contribute $100 per month for an annuity contract described in section 403(b). The agreement also provides that A may terminate the entire agreement with respect to amounts not yet earned. Since the agreement to reduce A's salary and invest the amount of such reduction in an annuity contract was made after A earned his salary for January, A's current compensation for January is $1,000 even though the agreement may provide that X Organization shall contribute $100 with respect to January for the benefit of A for an annuity contract described in section 403(b). For February and subsequent months ending before July 1, 1964, X Organization contributes $100 per month for A's annuity. Thus, A's current compensation for each of these months is $900, and the $100 which is contributed during such months by X Organization for an annuity contract for A is an employer contribution to which the exclusion provided in this paragraph applies. On July 1, 1964, A becomes entitled to a salary increase of $200 per month and, pursuant to the agreement of February 1, 1964, X Organization contributes 10 percent of such increase or an additional $20 per month for a section 403(b) annuity. For July and subsequent months ending before October 1, 1964, X Organization contributes $120 per month for A's annuity. Thus, A's current compensation for each of these months is $1,080, and the $120 which is contributed during such months by X Organization for an annuity contract for A is an employer contribution to which the exclusion provided in this paragraph applies. On November 1, 1964, A terminates the entire agreement with respect to amounts not yet

earned. Since the termination occurred after A earned his salary for the month of October, the contribution for October is an employer contribution to which the exclusion provided in this paragraph applies. For the months November and December, A's full salary of $1,200 per month is includible in his gross income whether or not his employer makes contributions for a section 403(b) annuity.

(4) *Two or more annuity contracts.* If, during a taxable year of an employee, this paragraph applies to amounts contributed (including amounts which are considered to be contributed under subparagraph (2) of this paragraph) by his employer for two or more annuity contracts for such employee, such two or more annuity contracts shall, for such taxable year, be considered a single contract for purposes of applying the rules contained in this paragraph.

(5) *Employees performing services for public schools.* For purposes of this section, a person shall be considered an employee who performs services for an educational institution (as defined in section 151(e)(4)) if he is performing services as an employee directly or indirectly for such an institution. Thus, for example, the principal, clerical employees, custodial employees, and teachers at a public elementary school are employees performing services directly for such an educational institution. An employee who performs services involving the operation or direction of a State's, or political subdivision's, education program as carried on through educational institutions (as defined in section 151(e)(4)) is an employee performing services indirectly for such institutions. An employee participating in an ''in-home'' teaching program is included since such program is merely an extension of the activities carried on by such educational institutions. On the other hand, a person occupying an elective or appointive public office is not an employee performing services for an educational institution unless such office is one to which an individual is elected or appointed only if he has received training, or is experienced, in the field of education. The term ''public office'' includes any elective or appointive office of a State, a political subdivision of a State, or an agency or instrumentality of any one or more of the foregoing. Thus, for example, a regent or trustee of a State university or a member of a board of education is not an employee performing services for an educational institution. On the other hand, a commissioner or superintendent of education will generally be considered an employee performing services for an educational institution.

(c) *Taxation of amounts received under annuity contracts*—(1) *In general.* The amounts received by or made available to any employee under an annuity contract to which paragraph (a) or (b) of this section applies shall be included in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which received or made available, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1964, section 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to any amount received by or made available to any such employee under such an annuity contract. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, amounts received or made available to any such employee under such annuity contract may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging).

(2) *Taxation of beneficiaries.* If, upon the death of an employee or of a retired employee, the widow or other beneficiary of such employee is paid, in accordance with the terms of the annuity contract relating to the deceased employee, an annuity or other death benefit, the extent to which the amounts received by or made available to the beneficiary must be included in the beneficiary's income under subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall be determined in accordance with the rules presented in paragraph (a)(5) of § 1.402(a)–1.

(3) *Life insurance protection.* An individual contract issued after December 31, 1962, or a group contract, which provides incidental life insurance protection may be purchased as an annuity contract to which paragraph (a) or (b) of this section applies. For the rules as to nontransferability of such contracts issued after December 31, 1962, see § 1.401–9. For the rules relating to the

taxation of the cost of the life insurance protection and the proceeds thereunder, see § 1.72–16. Section 403(b) is not applicable to premiums paid after October 26, 1956, for individual contracts which were issued prior to January 1, 1963, and which provide life insurance protection.

(d) *Exclusion allowance*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of paragraph (b) of this section, an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year is an amount equal to the excess, if any, of—

(i) The amount determined by multiplying *(a)* 20 percent of such employee's includible compensation in respect of such taxable year, by *(b)* such employee's total number of years of service as of the close of such taxable year, over

(ii) The aggregate of (*a*) the amounts which have been contributed by the employer for annuity contracts for such employee and which were excludable from the gross income of the employee for any taxable year prior to the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined, and (*b*) the amounts of compensation excludable from the gross income of the employee under section 457(a) (relating to eligible State deferred compensation plans) for any prior taxable year that is taken into account as a year of service under paragraph (f) of this section.

Compensation deferred under an eligible State deferred compensation plan shall be taken into account as described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph even if the entity sponsoring the eligible plan is not the employer purchasing the annuity contract with respect to which the employee's exclusion allowance is to be determined. See paragraph (e) of this section for the definition of an employee's includible compensation in respect of a taxable year and paragraph (f) of this section for rules for computing an employee's total number of years of service for an employer.

(2) *More than one employer.* If, during a taxable year of an employee, amounts are contributed for annuity contracts for such employee by two or more employers described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section, a separate exclusion allowance shall be computed with respect to each employer. In such a case, therefore, there shall not be taken into account, in computing the exclusion allowance with respect to one employer, the ''includible compensation'' received by the employee from any other employer, the employee's years of service with any other employer, or amounts which have been contributed by any other employer for annuity contracts for such employee.

(3) *Amounts previously contributed by the employer which were excludable from the employee's gross income.* In computing, for purposes of subparagraph (1)(ii) of this paragraph, the aggregate of the amounts which have been contributed by an employer for annuity contracts for an employee and which were excludable from the gross income of the employee for any taxable year prior to the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined, there shall be included all contributions made by the employer for the benefit of the employee—

(i) Which, under section 402(a) or section 403(a), were excludable from the employee's gross income for any such prior taxable year by reason of being contributions to a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt from tax under section 501(a) or contributions toward the purchase of an annuity contract under a plan which meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2) (whether forfeitable or nonforfeitable); or

(ii) Which, under section 405(d), were excludable from the employee's gross income for any such prior taxable year by reason of being contributions toward the purchase of United States bonds under a plan which meets the requirements of section 405(a)(1); or

(iii) Which were excludable from the employee's gross income for any such prior taxable year by reason of being contributions described in paragraph (a) or (b) of this section; or

(iv) *(a)* Which were excludable from the employee's gross income for the taxable year when made solely by reason of the fact that the employee's rights to such contributions were forfeitable at the time they were made (and not for any of the reasons described in subdivisions (i), (ii), and (iii) of this subparagraph);

(b) With respect to which the employee's rights changed to nonforfeitable rights prior to the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined; and

(c) Which were not, under section 403(d) and without regard to paragraph (b) of this section, includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year in which his rights to such contributions changed from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights.

For purposes of subdivisions (i) and (iii) of this subparagraph, all references to provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and to provisions of the regulations under such Code shall also be considered references to the corresponding provisions of prior law and regulations. See subparagraph (4) of this paragraph for rules relating to the allocation of employer contributions to an employee where the actual contributions are not allocated among individual employees; or

(v) Which were contributions to a section 403(b) annuity contract for a prior taxable year and which exceeded the limitations of section 415(c)(1) applicable to the employee. See § 1.415–6(e)(1)(ii) for a more detailed discussion of this rule. See also § 1.415–9(c) for rules relating to the treatment of certain contributions to a section 403(b) annuity contract which are excess contributions because of the aggregation of the annuity contract with a qualified plan.

(4) *Determination of excludable amounts by allocation of contributions.* If, for any employee, the actual amounts of employer contributions to a defined benefit plan described in subparagraph (3) of this paragraph are not known, such amounts shall be determined under the formula described in this subparagraph or under any other method utilizing recognized actuarial principles which are consistent with the provisions of the plan under which such contributions are made and the method adopted by the employer for funding the benefits under the plan. If the formula described in this subparagraph is to be used, the contributions made by the employer for the benefit of the employee as of the end of any taxable year shall be deemed to be the product of the quantities described in subdivisions (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) of this subparagraph. Such quantities are—

(i) The projected annual amount of the employee's pension (as of the end of the taxable year) to be provided at normal retirement age from employer contributions, based upon the provisions of the plan in effect at such time and upon the assumption of the employee's continued employment with his present employer at his then current salary rate.

(ii) The value, from Table I below, at normal retirement age of an annuity of $1.00 per annum payable in equal monthly installments during the life of the employee, based upon the normal retirement age as defined in the plan.

(iii) The amount from Table II below (representing the level annual contribution which will accumulate to $1.00 at normal retirement age) for the sum of *(a)* the number of years remaining from the end of the taxable year to normal retirement age and *(b)* the lesser of the number of years of service credited through the end of the taxable year or the number of years that the plan has been in existence at such time.

(iv) The lesser of the number of years of service credited through the end of the taxable year or the number of years that the plan has been in existence at such time.

TABLE I—VALUE AT NORMAL RETIREMENT AGES OF ANNUITY OF $1.00 PER ANNUM PAYABLE IN EQUAL MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS DURING THE LIFE OF THE EMPLOYEE

[For taxable years beginning after July 1, 1986]

Ages	Values
40	11.49
41	11.40
42	11.31
43	11.22
44	11.12
45	11.01
46	10.91
47	10.79
48	10.68
49	10.56
50	10.43
51	10.30
52	10.18
53	10.04
54	9.89
55	9.75
56	9.60
57	9.44
58	9.28
59	9.13

TABLE I—VALUE AT NORMAL RETIREMENT AGES OF ANNUITY OF $1.00 PER ANNUM PAYABLE IN EQUAL MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS DURING THE LIFE OF THE EMPLOYEE—Continued

[For taxable years beginning after July 1, 1986]

Ages	Values
60	8.96
61	8.79
62	8.62
63	8.44
64	8.25
65	8.08
66	7.88
67	7.70
68	7.50
69	7.29
70	7.10
71	6.88
72	6.68
73	6.46
74	6.25
75	6.03
76	5.82
77	5.61
78	5.40
79	5.20
80	4.99

NOTE: If the normal form of retirement benefit under the plan is other than a straight life annuity, the value from Table I above should be divided by the figure set forth below opposite the normal form of retirement benefit provided by the plan:

Annuity for 5 years certain and life thereafter	0.97
Annuity for 10 years certain and life thereafter	0.90
Annuity for 15 years certain and life thereafter	0.80
Annuity for 20 years certain and life thereafter	0.70
Life annuity with installment refund	0.80
Life annuity with cash refund[1]	0.75

[1] The term ''cash refund'' refers to refund of accumulated employer contributions, and does not refer to refund of employee contributions only, often referred to as ''modified cash refund''.

TABLE II—LEVEL ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION WHICH WILL ACCUMULATE TO $1.00 AT END OF NUMBER OF YEARS

[For taxable years beginning after July 1, 1986]

Number of years	Amounts
1	$1.0000
2	.4808
3	.3080
4	.2219
5	.1705
6	.1363
7	.1121
8	.0940
9	.0801
10	.0690
11	.0601

TABLE II—LEVEL ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION WHICH WILL ACCUMULATE TO $1.00 AT END OF NUMBER OF YEARS—Continued

[For taxable years beginning after July 1, 1986]

Number of years	Amounts
12	.0527
13	.0465
14	.0413
15	.0368
16	.0330
17	.0296
18	.0267
19	.0241
20	.0219
21	.0198
22	.0180
23	.0164
24	.0150
25	.0137
26	.0125
27	.0114
28	.0105
29	.0096
30	.0088
31	.0081
32	.0075
33	.0069
34	.0063
35	.0058
36	.0053
37	.0049
38	.0045
39	.0042
40	.0039
41	.0036
42	.0033
43	.0030
44	0028
45	.0026
46	.0024
47	.0022
48	.0020
49	.0019
50	.0017

(5) *Election to have allowance determined under section 415 rules.* Under section 415(c)(4)(D), an employee may elect to have the provisions of section 415(c)(4)(C) (relating to special limitations for annuity contracts purchased by educational organizations, hospitals and home health service agencies) apply for a taxable year. If the employee so elects, his exclusion allowance is the maximum amount under section 415 that could be contributed by the employer for the benefit of the employee if the annuity contract for the benefit of the employee were treated as a defined contribution plan maintained by the employer. Thus, the exclusion allowance for the taxable year of an employee who makes the election

may not exceed the limitation on contributions and other additions (as described in § 1.415–6) applicable to the employee for that taxable year. See § 1.415–7 for provisions applicable in the event an employer maintains a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan for the same employee. See § 1.415–8 for provisions applicable in the event an employer maintains more than one defined contribution plan covering the same employee.

(e) *Includible compensation*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of computing, under paragraph (d) of this section, an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year, such employee's includible compensation in respect of such taxable year means the amount of compensation from the employer—

(i) Which was earned during the most recent period (ending not later than the close of the employee's taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined) that, under paragraph (f) of this section, may be counted as one-year of service,

(ii) Which is includible in the employee's gross income, and

(iii) In the case of an employee of an employer described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, which is attributable to services performed for an educational institution (as defined in section 151(e)(4)).

See subparagraph (2) of this paragraph for special rules for determining the amount of compensation which is includible in the employee's gross income.

(2) *Special rules for determining the amount of compensation includible in the employee's gross income.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the amount of compensation which is includible in the employee's gross income shall be computed without regard to the exclusions allowed by section 105(d) (relating to wage continuation plans) and section 911 (relating to earned income from sources without the United States). Therefore, although amounts received by the employee from the employer while he is absent from work on account of personal injuries or sickness may be excludable from his gross income under section 105(d), such amounts are, nevertheless, considered as includible in his gross income for purposes of computing his includible compensation. On the other hand, in computing the amount which is includible in the gross income of the employee for purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, there shall not be included any amount which is contributed by the employer for an annuity contract to which paragraph (b) of this section applies. Thus, although the amount of any employer contributions for an annuity contract to which paragraph (b) of this section applies is, to the extent it exceeds in any taxable year the employee's exclusion allowance for such year, includible in the employee's gross income for that year, such amount is not considered as includible in the employee's gross income for purposes of computing his includible compensation for that year.

(3) *Period during which compensation must be earned.* For purposes of computing an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year, there may not be taken into account, as includible compensation, any compensation which was earned by the employee during a taxable year ending after the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined. On the other hand, an employee's includible compensation may include all or part of his compensation earned during a taxable year prior to the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined. Such a situation can occur, for example, when an employer purchases an annuity contract for a retired employee, or when an employer purchases an annuity contract for a part-time employee whose most recent one-year period of service (within the meaning of paragraph (f) of this section) extends over more than one taxable year of such employee. For purposes of this subparagraph, it is immaterial when the compensation is actually received by the employee or for what taxable year it is includible in his gross income.

(4) *Status of employer.* In computing an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year, there is not taken into account, as includible compensation, any compensation which was earned during a period when the employer was not an employer described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section since

under paragraph (f)(2) of this section an employee is not considered to be in the service of the employer for any such period. On the other hand, it is immaterial whether the employer is an employer described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section at the time the compensation is actually received by the employee. Thus, if an employee receives compensation during his 1961 taxable year for services performed during his 1960 taxable year, such compensation can qualify as includible compensation if his employer was an employer described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section during 1960, even though such employer was not such an employer during 1961. See, also, paragraph (b) of this section which provides that the exclusion allowance is only applicable with respect to contributions which are made by an employer at a time when such employer is an employer described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section.

(f) *Years of service*—(1) *In general.* In computing an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year, it is necessary to determine such employee's number of years of service for the employer as of the close of such taxable year. For this purpose, the number of years of service of an employee for an employer shall be determined in accordance with the rules set forth in this paragraph. In addition, such rules are applicable in determining, for purposes of paragraph (e) of this section, an employee's most recent one-year period of service.

(2) *Exempt status requirement.* For purposes of determining an employee's number of years of service for an employer and his most recent one-year period of service for such employer, an employee shall not be considered to be employed by the employer, or to be in the service of the employer, during any period that the employer is not an employer described in paragraph (b)(1) (i) or (ii) of this section, or, in the case of an employee of an employer described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, during any period when the employee is not performing services for an educational institution (as defined in section 151(e)(4)). The rule in this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following example: A was employed on a full-time basis by the X scientific organization during the whole of 1959 and 1960 and during half of 1961. Both A and the X Organization use the calendar year as their taxable year. The X Organization was an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a) during the years 1959 and 1961, but not during the year 1960. For purposes of determining A's exclusion allowance for 1961, he is considered to have 1½ years of service (his service during 1959 and 1961) and his most recent one-year period of service ending not later than the close of 1961 consists of his service during 1961 (which is equal to ½ year of service) and his service during the last half of 1959 (which is equal to another ½ year of service).

(3) *Service included.* For purposes of computing an employee's exclusion allowance for a taxable year, there may be taken into account, in determining his number of years of service, all service performed by him as of the close of such taxable year. Therefore, whenever possible, service performed during each of the employee's taxable years should be considered separately in arriving at his total number of years of service. For example, if an employee who reports his income on a calendar year basis is employed on a full-time basis on July 1, 1959, and continues on a full-time basis through December 31, 1960, his number of years of service as of the close of his 1960 taxable year should, if possible, be computed as follows:

(a) Number of years of service performed during 1959 taxable year	½
(b) Number of years of service performed during 1960 taxable year	1
(c) Total number of years of service as of close of 1960 taxable year (*(a)+(b)*)	1½

However, in determining what constitutes a full year of service, the employer's annual work period, and not the employee's taxable year, is the standard of measurement. For example, in determining whether a professor is employed full time, the number of months in the school's academic year shall be the standard of measurement.

(4) *Full-time employee for full year.* (i) Each full year during which an individual was employed full time shall be

considered as one year of service. In determining whether an individual is employed full-time, the amount of work which he is required to perform shall be compared with the amount of work which is normally required of individuals holding the same position with the same employer and who generally derive the major portion of their personal service income from such position.

(ii)*(a)* In measuring the amount of work required of individuals holding a particular position, any method that reasonably and accurately reflects such amount may be used. For example, the number of hours of classroom instruction is only an indication of the amount of work required, but it may be used as a measure.

(b) In determining whether positions with the same employer are the same, all of the facts and circumstances concerning the positions shall be considered, including the work performed, the methods by which compensation is computed, and the descriptions (or titles) of the positions. For example, an assistant professor employed in the English department of a university will be considered a full-time employee if the amount of work that he is required to perform is the same as the amount of work normally required of assistant professors of English at that university who derive the main portion of their personal service income from such position.

(c) In case an individual's position is not the same as another with his employer, the rules of this paragraph shall be applied by considering the same position with similar employers or similar positions with the same employer.

(iii) A full year of service for a particular position means the usual annual work period of individuals employed full-time in that general type of employment at the place of employment. For example, if a doctor employed by a hospital works throughout the 12 months of a year except for a one-month vacation, such doctor will be considered as being employed for a full year, if the other doctors at that hospital work 11 months of the year with a one-month vacation. Similarly, if the usual annual work period at a university consists of the fall and spring semesters, an instructor at that university who teaches those semesters will be considered as working a full year.

(5) *Other employees.* (i) An individual shall be treated as having a fraction of a year of service for each year during which he was a full-time employee for part of the year or for each year during which he was a part-time employee for the entire year or for a part of the year.

(ii) In determining the fraction which represents the fractional year of service for an individual employed full time for part of a year, the numerator shall be the number of weeks (or months) during which the individual was a full-time employee in a position during that year, and the denominator shall be the number of weeks (or months) which is considered under subparagraph (4)(iii) of this paragraph as the usual annual work period for that position. For example, if an instructor is employed full time by a university for the 1959 spring semester (which lasts from February 1959 through May 1959), and the academic year of the university is 8 months long, beginning in October 1958, and ending in May 1959, then he is considered as having completed 4/8 of a year of service.

(iii) In determining the fraction which represents the fractional year of service of an individual who is employed part time for a full year, the numerator shall be the amount of work required to be performed by the individual, and the denominator shall be the amount of work normally required of individuals who hold the same position. The amount of work required to be performed by the individual and the amount of work normally required of individuals holding the same position shall be determined in accordance with the principles of subparagraph (4) of this paragraph. Thus, if a practicing physician teaches one course at a local medical school 3 hours per week for two semesters and other faculty members at that medical school teach 9 hours per week for two semesters, then the practicing physician is considered as having completed 3/9 of a year of service.

(iv) In determining the fraction representing the fractional year of service

of an individual who is employed part time for part of a year, it is necessary to compute the fractional year of service if the individual were a part-time employee for a full year, and the fractional year of service if the individual were a full-time employee for the part of a year. The two fractions shall be multiplied and the product is the fractional year of service of such individual who is employed part time for part of a year. For example, if an attorney who is a specialist in a subject teaches a course in that subject for 3 hours per week for one semester at a nearby law school, and the full-time instructors at that law school teach 12 hours per week for two semesters, then the fractional part of a year of service for such part-time instructor is computed as follows: The fractional year of service if the instructor were a part-time employee for a full year is 3/12 (number of hours employed divided by the usual number of hours of work required for that position); the fractional year of service if the instructor were a full-time employee for part of a year is ½ (period worked or one semester, divided by usual work period, or 2 semesters). These fractions are multiplied to obtain the fractional year of service: 3/12 times ½, or 3/24 (⅛).

(6) *Less than one year of service considered as one year.* If, at the close of a taxable year, an employee has, under the rules in this paragraph, a period of service of less than one year, such employee shall, nevertheless, be considered to have one year of service for purposes of computing his exclusion allowance for that taxable year. Such period of service of less than one year shall also be considered to be such employee's most recent one-year period of service for purposes of determining his includible compensation.

(7) *Most recent one-year period of service.* (i) In determining, for purposes of paragraph (e) of this section (relating to includible compensation), an employee's most recent one-year period of service, there is first taken into account all service performed by the employee during the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined. For this purpose, therefore, an employee's most recent one-year period of service may not be the same as his employer's most recent annual work period. The rule in this subdivision may be illustrated by the following example: A, a professor who reports his income on a calendar year basis, is employed by a university on a full-time basis during the university's 1959–1960 and 1960–1961 academic years (October through May). For purposes of computing A's exclusion allowance for his 1960 taxable year, his most recent one-year period of service consists of his service performed during January through May, 1960 (which is part of the 1959–1960 academic year) and his service performed during October through December 1960 (which is part of the 1960–1961 academic year).

(ii) In the case of a part-time employee or a full-time employee who is employed for only part of a year, it will be necessary to aggregate his most recent periods of service to determine his most recent one-year period of service. In such a case, there is first taken into account his service during the taxable year for which the exclusion allowance is being determined; then there is taken into account his service during his next preceding taxable year and so forth until his service equals, in the aggregate, one year of service. For example, if an employee, who reports his income on the calendar year basis, is employed on a full-time basis during the months July through December 1959 (½ year of service), July through December 1960 (½ year of service), and October through December 1961 (¼ year of service), his most recent one-year period of service for purposes of computing his exclusion allowance for 1961 consists of his service during 1961 (¼ year of service), his service during 1960 (½ year of service), and his service during the months October through December 1959 (¼ year of service).

(g) *Illustration of computation of exclusion allowance.* The exclusion provided under paragraph (b) of this section may be illustrated by the following example: A, a professor who reports his income on the calendar year basis, became a full-time employee of X University on October 1, 1958 (beginning of X University's 1958–1959 academic year) and continued as a full-time employee for the academic years 1958–1959, 1959–1960, and 1960–1961. X University was,

during all such academic years, an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a). X University's academic year runs for a period of 8 months: October through May. A received an annual salary, all of which was includible in his gross income, of $8,000 for the 1958–1959 academic year, $8,800 for the 1959–1960 academic year, and $9,600 for the 1960–1961 academic year. Starting in 1958, X University contributed amounts toward the purchase of annuity contracts for A and such purchase was not part of a qualified annuity plan. X University paid, as premiums for such contracts, $1,000 in 1958, $2,000 in 1959, $2,400 in 1960, and $1,400 in 1961. The amount of such premiums which is excludable from A's gross income for the year in which paid is computed as follows:

1958

(1) Amount contributed by employer for annuity contracts in 1958	$1,000.00
(2) Includible compensation for most recent one-year period of service (since A was employed for only ⅜ of a year at the close of 1958, this period is counted as most recent one-year period of service) ⅜ × $8,000	$3,000.00
(3) 20% × includible compensation	$600.00
(4) Number of years of service (although A was employed for less than a year, he is considered to have one-year of service)	1
(5) Item (4) × item (3)	$600.00
(6) Contributions excludable in prior taxable years of A	None
(7) Amount excludable from A's gross income for 1958 ((5)—(6))	$600.00
(8) Amount includible in A's gross income for 1958 ((1) – (7))	$400.00

1959

(9) Amount contributed by employer for annuity contracts in 1959	$2,000.00
(10) Includible compensation for most recent one-year period of service. (⅜ × $8,800+⅝×$8,000)	$8,800.00
(11) 20% × includible compensation	$1,660.00
(12) Number of years of service	1⅜
(13) Item (12) × item (11)	$2,282.50
(14) Contributions excludable in prior taxable years of A (item 7))	$600.00
(15) Amount excludable from A's gross income for 1959 ((13) – (14))	$1,682.50
(16) Amount includible in A's gross income for 1959 ((9) – (15))	$317.50

1960

(17) Amount contributed by employer for annuity contracts in 1960	$2,400.00
(18) Includible compensation for most recent one-year period of service (⅜×$9,600+⅝×$8,800)	$9,100.00
(19) 20% × includible compensation	$1,820.00
(20) Number of years of service	2⅜
(21) Item (20) × item (19)	$4,322.50
(22) Contributions excludable in prior taxable years ((7) + (15))	$2,282.50
(23) Amount excludable from A's gross income for 1960 ((21) – (22))	$2,040.00
(24) Amount includible in A's gross income for 1960 ((17) – (23))	$360.00

1961

(25) Amount contributed by employer for annuity contracts in 1961	$1,400.00
(26) Includible compensation for most recent one-year period of service (⅝ × $9,600+⅜×$9,600)	$9,600.00
(27) 20% × includible compensation	$1,920.00
(28) Number of years of service	3
(29) Item (28) × item (27)	$5,760.00
(30) Contributions excludable in prior taxable years ((7) + (15) + (23))	$4,322.50
(31) Amount excludable from A's gross income for 1961 (item (25) since it is less than (29) – (30))	$1,400.00
(32) Amount includable in A's gross income for 1961 ((25) – (31))	None

[T.D. 6783, 29 FR 18360, Dec. 24, 1964, as amended by T.D. 6885, 31 FR 7802, June 2, 1966; T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1696, Jan. 7, 1981; T.D. 7836, 47 FR 42337, Sept. 27, 1982; T.D. 8115, 51 FR 45736, Dec. 19, 1986]

§ 1.403(b)–2 Eligible rollover distributions; questions and answers.

The following questions and answers relate to eligible rollover distributions from annuities, custodial accounts, and retirement income accounts described in section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by sections 521 and 522 of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1992 (Public Law 102–318, 106 Stat. 290) (UCA). For additional UCA guidance under sections 401(a)(31), 402(c), 402(f), and 3405(c), see §§ 1.401(a)(31)–1, 1.402(c)–2, 1.402(f)–1, and § 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter, respectively.

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Q–1: What is the rule regarding distributions that may be rolled over to an eligible retirement plan from annuities, custodial accounts, and retirement income accounts described in section 403(b)?

Q–2: Is a section 403(b) annuity required to provide the direct rollover option described in section 401(a)(31) as a distribution option?

Q–3: Is the payor of a section 403(b) annuity required to provide a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution with an explanation of the direct rollover option?

Q–4: When do sections 403 (b)(8) and (b)(10), as amended by UCA, and this § 1.403(b)–2 apply to distributions from section 403(b) annuities?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q–1: What is the rule regarding distributions that may be rolled over to

an eligible retirement plan from annuities, custodial accounts, and retirement income accounts described in section 403(b)?

A–1: Under section 403(b)(8), as amended by UCA, any eligible rollover distribution from a section 403(b) annuity is permitted to be rolled over to an eligible retirement plan. For purposes of this section, a section 403(b) annuity includes an annuity contract, a custodial account, and a retirement income account described in section 403(b). For purposes of section 403(b)(8) and this section, an eligible retirement plan means another section 403(b) annuity or an individual retirement plan (as defined in § 1.402(c)(2), Q&A–2 but does not include a qualified plan (as defined in § 1.402(c)–2), Q&A–2. Except to the extent otherwise provided in this section, an eligible rollover distribution from a section 403(b) annuity is an eligible rollover distribution described in section 402(c) (2) and (4) and § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–3 through Q&A–10 and Q&A–14, except that the distribution is from section 403(b) annuity rather than a qualified plan. Thus, for example, to the extent that corrective distributions described in § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–4 are properly made from a section 403(b) annuity, such distributions are not eligible rollover distributions. Similarly, in the case of annuity distributions from an annuity contract described in section 403(b), the entire amount of any such annuity payment made on or after January 1 of the year in which an employee attains (or would have attained) age 70½ will be treated as an amount required under section 401(a)(9) and, thus, will not be an eligible rollover distribution. The rules with respect to rollovers in sections 402 (c)(1), (c)(3), and (c)(9) and § 1.402(c)–2, Q&A–11 through Q&A–13 and Q&A–15 also apply to eligible rollover distributions from section 403(b) annuities.

Q–2: Is a section 403(b) annuity required to provide the direct rollover option described in section 401(a)(31) as a distribution option?

A–2: (a) *General rule.* Yes. Pursuant to section 403(b)(10), section 403(b) does not apply to an annuity contract, custodial account, or retirement income account unless the annuity contract, custodial account, or retirement income account provides that if the distributee of any eligible rollover distribution elects to have the distribution paid directly to an eligible retirement plan (as defined in Q&A–1 of this section) and specifies the eligible retirement plan to which the distribution is to be paid, then the distribution will be paid to that eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover. For purposes of determining whether a section 403(b) annuity has satisfied this direct rollover requirement, the provisions of § 1.401(a)(31)–1 apply to the section 403(b) annuity as though it were a plan qualified under section 401(a) unless otherwise provided in this section. For example, as described in § 1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–14 a direct rollover from a section 403(b) annuity to another section 403(b) annuity is a distribution and a rollover and not a transfer of funds between section 403(b) annuities and, thus, is not subject to the applicable law governing transfers of funds between section 403(b) annuities. In applying the provisions of § 1.401(a)(31)–1, the payor of the eligible rollover distribution is treated as the plan administrator.

(b) *Mandatory withholding.* As in the case of an eligible rollover distribution from a qualified plan, if a distributee of an eligible rollover distribution from a section 403(b) annuity does not elect to have the eligible rollover distribution paid directly to an eligible retirement plan in a direct rollover, the eligible rollover distribution is subject to 20-percent income tax withholding imposed under section 3405(c). See § 31.3405(c)–1 of this chapter for provisions regarding the withholding requirements relating to eligible rollover distributions.

Q–3: Is the payor of a section 403(b) annuity required to provide the distributee of an eligible rollover distribution with an explanation of the direct rollover option?

A–3: Yes. In order to ensure that the distributee of an eligible rollover distribution from a section 403(b) annuity has a meaningful right to elect a direct rollover, the distributee must be informed of the option. Thus, within a reasonable time period before making an eligible rollover distribution, the payor must provide an explanation to the distributee of his or her right to

elect a direct rollover and the income tax withholding consequences of not electing a direct rollover. For purposes of satisfying the reasonable time period, the qualified plan timing rule provided in §1.402(f)–1, Q&A–2 does not apply to section 403(b) annuities. However, a payor of a section 403(b) annuity will be deemed to have provided the explanation within a reasonable time period if the payor complies with the time period in that rule.

Q–4: When do sections 403(b)(8) and (b)(10), as amended by UCA, and this §1.403(b)–2 apply to distributions from section 403(b) annuities?

A–4: (a) *General rule*—(1) *Statutory effective date.* Section 403(b)(8), as amended by UCA, and section 403(b)(10), as amended by UCA, apply to distributions made on or after January 1, 1993. In addition, the underlying section 403(b) annuity document must be amended at the time provided in, and the section 403(b) annuity must operate in accordance with the requirements of §1.401(a)(31)–1, Q&A–18. Section 522 of UCA provides a special effective date for governmental section 403(b) annuities. This special effective date is specified in §1.403(b)–2T (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1).

(2) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to distributions made on or after October 19, 1995. For distributions made on or after January 1, 1993 and before October 19, 1995, §1.403(b)–2T (as it appeared in the April 1, 1995 edition of 26 CFR part 1), applies. However, for distributions made on or after January 1, 1993 but before October 19, 1995, a section 403(b) annuity may satisfy section 403(b)(10) by substituting any or all provisions of this section for the corresponding provisions of §1.403(b)–2T, if any.

[T.D. 8619, 60 FR 49214, Sept. 22, 1995]

§1.403(c)–1 Taxability of beneficiary under a nonqualified annuity.

(a) *Taxability of vested interest in premiums.* If after August 1, 1969, an employer (whether or not exempt under section 501(a)) pays premiums for an annuity contract for the benefit of an employee, the amount of such premiums shall be included as compensation in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year during which such premiums are paid, but only to the extent that the employees's rights in such premiums are substantially vested (as defined in §1.83–3(b)) at the time such premiums are paid. The preceding sentence shall not apply to contracts referred to in the transitional rule of paragraph (d) (1), (ii), or (iii) of this section, or to premiums subject to §1.403(a)–1(a) or excludible under §1.403(b)–1(b). If any employer has purchased annuity contracts and transfered them to a trust (other than one described in section 401(a)) that is to provide annuity contracts or benefits for his employees, the amounts so paid shall be treated as contributions to a trust described in section 402(b). For the rules relating to the taxation of the cost of life insurance protection when rights in a life insurance contract are substantially nonvested, see §1.83–1(a)(2).

(b) *Taxability of employee when rights under annuity contract change from nonvested to vested*—(1) *In general.* If, during a taxable year of an employee ending after August 1, 1969, the rights of such employee under an annuity contract purchased for him by an employer (whether or not exempt under section 501(a) or 521(a)) become substantially vested, the value of the annuity contract on the date of such change shall be included in the employee's gross income for such year, to the extent provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. The preceding sentence shall not apply, however, to an annuiity contract purchased and held as part of a plan which met at the time of such purchase, and continues to meet, the requirements of section 404(a)(2) or an annuity contract referred to in paragraph (d) (ii) or (iii) of this section. For purposes of this section, the value of an annuity contract on the date the employee's rights become substantially vested means the cash surrender value of such contract on such date.

(2) *Extent to which value of annuity contract is includible in employee's gross income.* For purposes of paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the only amount includible in the gross income of the employee is that the portion of the value of the contract on the date of the

change that is attributable to premiums which were paid by the employer after August 1, 1969, and which were not excludible from the employer's gross income under § 1.403(b)–1(b). However, the includible portion does not include—

(i) The value attributable to a premium paid on the date of such change, and

(ii) The value attributable to premiums described in the transitional rule of paragraph (d)(1) (ii) or (iii) of this section.

See § 1.403(b)–1(b)(2) for the treatment of an amount otherwise includible in gross income under section 403(c) as an employer contribution for purposes of the exclusion under section 403(b).

(3) *Partial vesting.* If, during any taxable year of an employee, only part of his beneficial interest in an annuity contract becomes substantially vested, then only the corresponding part of the value of the annuity contract on the date of such change is includible in the employee's gross income for such taxable year. In such a case, it is first necessary to compute, under the rules in paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section but without regard to any exclusion allowable under § 1.403(b)–1(b), the amount which would be includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year if his entire beneficial interest in the annuity contract had changed to a substantially vested interest during such year. The amount that is includible under this (3) (without regard to the section 403(b) exclusion) is equal to the amount determined under the preceding sentence multiplied by the percent of the employee's beneficial interest which became substantially vested during the taxable year.

(c) *Amounts paid or made available under an annuity contract.* The amounts paid or made available to the employee under an annuity contract subject to this section shall be included in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which paid or made available, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). Such amounts may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). For rules relating to the treatment of employer contributions as part of the consideration paid by the employee, see section 72(f). See also section 101(b)(2)(D) for rules relating to the treatment of the limited exclusion provided thereunder as part of the consideration paid by the employee.

(d) *Taxability of beneficiary under a nonqualified annuity on or before August 1, 1969.* (1) Except as provided in section 402(d) (relating to taxable years beginning before Janaury 1, 1977), if an employer purchases an annuity contract and if the amounts paid for the contract.

(i) On or before August 1, 1969, or

(ii) After such date, if pursuant to a binding written contract (as defined in § 1.83–8(b)(2)) entered into before April 22, 1969, or

(iii) After August 1, 1969, pursuant to a written plan in which the employee participated on April 22, 1969 and under which the obligation of the employer is essentially the same as under a binding written contract, are not subject to paragraph (a) of § 1.403(a)–1 or paragraph (a) of § 1.403–1, the amount of such contribution shall, to the extent it is not excludible under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1, be included in the income of the employee for the taxable year during which such contribution is made if, at at the time the contribution is made, the employee's rights under the annuity contract are nonforfeitable, except for failure to pay future premiums. If the annuity contract was purchased by an employer which is not exempt from tax under section 501(a) or section 521(a), and if the employee's rights under the annuity contract in such a case were forfeitable at the time the employer's contribution was made for the annuity contract, even though they become nonforfeitable later the amount of such contribution is not required to be included in the income of the employee at the time his rights under the contract become nonforfeitable. On the other hand, if the annuity contract is purchased by an employer which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or section 521(a), all or part of the value of the contract may be includible in the employee's gross income at the time his rights

under the contract become nonforfeitable (see section 403(d) prior to the repeal thereof by the Tax Reform Act of 1969 and the regulations thereunder). As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee, see §1.402(b)–1(d)(2). The amounts received by or made available to the employee under the annuity contract shall be included in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which received or made available, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). For taxable years beginning before Janaury 1, 1964, sections 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to such amounts. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, such amounts may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). For rules relating to the treatment of employer contributions as part of the consideration paid by the employee, see section 72(f). See also section 101(b)(2)(D) for rules relating to the treatment of the limited exclusion provided thereunder as part of the consideration paid by the employee.

(2) If an employer has purchased annuity contracts and transferred them to a trust, or if an employer has made contributions to a trust for the purpose of providing annuity contracts for his employees as provided in section 402(d) (see paragraph (a) of §1.402(D)–1, the amount so paid or contributed is not required to be included in the income of the employee, but any amount received by or made available to the employee under the annuity contract shall be includible in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which received or made available, as provided in section 72 (relating to annuities). For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1964, section 72(e)(3) (relating to the treatment of certain lump sums), as in effect before such date, shall not apply to any amount received by or made available to the employee under the annuity contract. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1963, amounts received by or made available to the employee under the annuity contract may be taken into account in computations under sections 1301 through 1305 (relating to income averaging). In such case the amount paid or contributed by the employer shall not constitute consideration paid by the employee for such annuity contract in determining the amount of annuity payments required to be included in his gross income under section 72 unless the employee has paid income tax for any taxable year beginning before January 1, 1949, with respect to such payment or contribution by the employer for such year and such tax is not credited or refunded to the employee. In the event such tax has been paid and not creditid or refunded the amount paid or contributed by the employer for such year shall constitute consideration paid by the employee for the annuity contract in determining the amount of the annuity required to be included in the income of the employee under section 72.

(3) For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1958, the provisions contained in section 403(c) prior to the amendment made thereto by the Tax Reform Act of 1969 were included in section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Therefore, the regulations contained in this paragraph shall, for such taxable years, be considered as the regulations under section 403(b) as in effect for such taxable years. For the rules with respect to contributions paid after August 1, 1969, see paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section.

(Secs. 83 and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (83 Stat. 588; 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 83 and 7805))

[T.D. 7554, 43 FR 31924, July 24, 1978]

§1.403(d)–1 Taxability of employee when rights under contracts purchased by exempt organizations change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable.

(a) *In general.* The provisions of section 403(d), repealed by section 321(b) of the Tax Reform Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 571), applied for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1957, only with respect to amounts paid for an annuity contract—

(1) On or before August 1, 1969, or

(2) After such date, if pursuant to a binding written contract (as defined in §1.83–8(b)(2)) entered into before April 22, 1969, or

(3) After August 1, 1969, pursuant to a written plan in which the employee participated on April 22, 1969, and under which the obligation of the employer is essentially the same as under a binding written contract.

If, during a taxable year of an employee beginning after December 31, 1957, the rights of such employee under an annuity contract purchased for him by an employer which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or 521(a) change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights, then (except in the case of contracts to which § 1.403(c)—1(b) applies for taxable years ending after August 1, 1969) the value of such annuity contract on the date of such change shall be included in the employee's gross income for such taxable year, to the extent provided in paragraph (b) of this section. However, the preceding sentence does not apply to an annuity contract purchased and held as part of a plan that at the time of such purchase and at all times thereafter meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2). For purposes of this section, the value of an annuity contract on the date the employee's rights change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights means the cash surrender value of such contract on such date. As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee, see § 1.402(b)–1(d)(2). For the rules with respect to amounts paid after August 1, 1969, under an annuity contract purchased for an employee by an employer which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or 521(a), see generally section 403(c) and the regulations thereunder.

(b) *Extent to which value of annuity contract is includible in employee's gross income.* For purposes of paragraph (a) of this section, there shall be included in the gross income of an employee for his taxable year in which his rights under an annuity contract change from forfeitable to nonforfeitable rights only an amount equal to the portion of the value of such contract on the date of such change (1) that is attributable to contributions:

(i) Which were made by the employer while it was exempt from tax under section 501(a) or 521(a);

(ii) Which were made after December 31, 1957; and

(iii) Which were not, at the time they were made, excludable from the employee's gross income under paragraph (a) of § 1.403(b)–1;

and (2) that is not excludable from the employee's gross income under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1. Thus, although amounts are contributed by an employer after December 31, 1957, toward the purchase for an employee of an annuity contract and, at the time of the contribution, such employer is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), the value of such annuity contract attributable to such contributions would not be includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year in which his rights under the contract change to nonforfeitable rights if such amounts were contributed during a taxable year of the employee beginning before January 1, 1958, and were, therefore, excludable from the employee's gross income under paragraph (a) of § 1.403(b)–1. Similarly, the value of such an annuity contract is not includible in the gross income of the employee for the year in which the change occurs to the extent that it is excludable under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1. See paragraph (b)(2) of § 1.403(b)–1 which provides that the amount otherwise includible in gross income under section 403(d) is considered to be a contribution by the employer for purposes of the exclusion provided in paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1. In addition, the portion of the value of an annuity contract attributable to contributions made by the employer while it was not exempt from tax under either section 501(a) or 521(a) is not includible in the gross income of the employee at the time his rights under the contract change to nonforfeitable rights even though the employer is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or 521(a) at the time of such change. On the other hand, the value of the annuity contract purchased by an organization exempt from tax under section 501(a) or 521(a) may be includible in the gross income of an employee for the year during which his rights under the contract change to nonforfeitable rights even though such organization is not exempt on the date of such change.

(c) *Partial vesting*—(1) *General rule.* If, during any taxable year of an employee, only part of his beneficial interest in an annuity contract changes from a forfeitable to a nonforfeitable interest, then only the corresponding part of the value of the annuity contract on the date of such change is includible in the employee's gross income for such taxable year. In such a case, it is first necessary to compute, under the rules in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section but without regard to any exclusion allowable under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1, the amount which would be includible in the employee's gross income for the taxable year if his entire beneficial interest in the annuity contract had changed to a nonforfeitable interest during such year. The amount that is includible (without regard to any exclusion allowed by paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1) in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which the change occurs is an amount equal to the amount determined under the preceding sentence multiplied by the percent of the employee's beneficial interest which changed to a nonforfeitable interest during the taxable year. If at the time the employee's interest changes to a nonforfeitable interest, the employer is an organization described in section 501(a)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), then the amount that is includible in the employee's gross income under this subparagraph is considered as an employer contribution to which the exclusion provided in paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1 applies (see paragraph (b)(2) of § 1.403(b)–1).

(2) *Example.* The provisions in paragraph (c)(1) of this section may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. X organization purchased an annuity contract for A, one of its employees who reports his income on a calendar year basis. X contributed ⅓ of of amount necessary to purchase the contract before January 1, 1958, and the remaining ⅔ after December 31, 1957. At the time of the contributions, X was an organization exempt from tax under section 501(a) and A's rights under the contract were forfeitable. The annuity contract was not purchased as part of a qualified plan and A made no contributions toward the purchase of the contract. On December 31, 1965, 50 percent of A's interest in the contract changed from a forfeitable to a nonforfeitable interest, and on December 31, 1968, the remaining 50 percent of A's interest in the contract changed to a nonforfeitable interest. The cash surrender value of the contract was $9,900 on December 31, 1965, and $12,000 on December 31, 1968. The amount includible in A's gross income for 1965 and 1968 is computed as follows—

1965

(i) Amount which would have been includible if A's entire interest had changed to a nonforfeitable interest (cash surrender value of contract on December 31, 1965, attributable to contributions made after December 31, 1957), ⅔ × $9,900, $6,600.

(ii) Percent of A's interest that changed to a nonforfeitable interest on December 31, 1965, 50 percent.

(iii) Amount includible in A's gross income for 1965 ((ii) × (i)), $3,300.

1968

(iv) Amount which would have been includible if A's entire interest had changed to a nonforfeitable interest (cash surrender value of contract on December 31, 1968, attributable to contributions made after December 31, 1957), ⅔ $12,000, $8,000.

(v) Percent of A's interest that changed to a nonforfeitable interest on December 31, 1968, 50 percent.

(vi) Amount includible in A's gross income for 1968 ((v) × (iv)), $4,500.

If, on December 31, 1965, X is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), then only so much of the $3,300 as is not excludable under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1 is includible in A's gross income for 1965. Similarly, if, on December 31, 1968, X is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) and exempt from tax under section 501(a), then only so much of the $4,000 as is not excludable under paragraph (b) of § 1.403(b)–1 is includible in A's gross income for 1968.

(Secs. 83 and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (83 Stat. 588; 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 83 and 7805))

[T.D. 6783, 29 FR 18365, Dec. 24, 1964, as amended by T.D. 7554, 43 FR 31925, July 24, 1978]

§ 1.404(a)–1 Contributions of an employer to an employees' trust or annuity plan and compensation under a deferred payment plan; general rule.

(a)(1) Section 404(a) prescribes limitations upon deductions for amounts contributed by an employer under a pension, annuity, stock bonus, or profit-sharing plan, or under any plan of deferred compensation. It is immaterial

whether the plan covers present employees only, or present and former employees, or only former employees. Section 404(a) also governs the deductibility of unfunded pensions and death benefits paid directly to former employees or their beneficiaries (see § 1.404(a)–12). For taxable years beginning after 1962, certain self-employed individuals may be covered by pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plans. For the rules relating to the deduction of contributions on behalf of such individuals, see paragraph (a)(2) of § 1.404(a)–8 and § 1.404(e)–1.

(2) Section 404(a) does not apply to a plan which does not defer the receipt of compensation. Furthermore, section 404(a) does not apply to deductions for contributions under a plan which is solely a dismissal wage or unemployment benefit plan, or a sickness, accident, hospitalization, medical expense, recreation, welfare, or similar benefit plan, or a combination thereof. For example, if under a plan an employer contributes 5 percent of each employee's compensation per month to a fund out of which employees who are laid off will be paid benefits for temporary periods, but employees who are not laid off have no rights to the funds, such a plan is an unemployment benefit plan, and the deductibility of the contributions to it is determined under section 162. As to the deductibility of such contributions, see § 1.162–9.

(3) If, however, the contributions to a pension, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or other plan of deferred compensation can be used to provide any of the benefits referred to in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, then, except as provided in section 404(c), section 404(a) applies to the entire contribution to the plan. Thus, if in the example described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, the employer's contribution on behalf of each employee is set up as a separate account, and if any amount which remains in an employee's account at the time of retirement is paid to him at such time, the deductibility of the contributions to the plan is determined under section 404(a). For the regulations for determining whether the benefits referred to in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph can be included in a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan, see § 1.401–1(b).

(4) As to inclusion of full-time life insurance salesmen within the class of persons considered to be employees, see section 7701(a)(20).

(b) In order to be deductible under section 404(a), contributions must be expenses which would be deductible under section 162 (relating to trade or business expenses) or 212 (relating to expenses for production of income) if it were not for the provision in section 404(a) that they are deductible, if at all, only under section 404(a). Contributions may therefore be deducted under section 404(a) only to the extent that they are ordinary and necessary expenses during the taxable year in carrying on the trade or business or for the production of income and are compensation for personal services actually rendered. In no case is a deduction allowable under section 404(a) for the amount of any contribution for the benefit of an employee in excess of the amount which, together with other deductions allowed for compensation for such employee's services, constitutes a reasonable allowance for compensation for the services actually rendered. What constitutes a reasonable allowance depends upon the facts in the particular case. Among the elements to be considered in determining this are the personal services actually rendered in prior years as well as the current year and all compensation and contributions paid to or for such employee in prior years as well as in the current year. Thus, a contribution which is in the nature of additional compensation for services performed in prior years may be deductible, even if the total of such contributions and other compensation for the current year would be in excess of reasonable compensation for services performed in the current year, provided that such total plus all compensation and contributions paid to or for such employee in prior years represents a reasonable allowance for all services rendered by the employee by the end of the current year. A contribution under a plan which is primarily for the benefit of shareholders of the employer is not deductible. Such a contribution may constitute a dividend within the meaning of section 316.

See also §§1.162–6 and 1.162–8. In addition to the limitations referred to above, deductions under section 404(a) are also subject to further conditions and limitations particularly provided therein.

(c) Deductions under section 404(a) are generally allowable only for the year in which the contribution or compensation is paid, regardless of the fact that the taxpayer may make his returns on the accrual method of accounting. Exceptions are made in the case of overpayments as provided in paragraphs (1), (3), and (7) of section 404(a), and, as provided by section 404(a)(6), in the case of payments made by a taxpayer on the accrual method of accounting not later than the time prescribed by law for filing the return for the taxable year of accrual (including extensions thereof). This latter provision is intended to permit a taxpayer on the accrual method to deduct such accrued contribution or compensation in the year of accrual, provided payment is actually made not later than the time prescribed by law for filing the return for the taxable year of accrual (including extensions thereof), but this provision is not applicable unless, during the taxable year on account of which the contribution is made, the taxpayer incurs a liability to make the contribution, the amount of which is accruable under section 461 for such taxable year. See section 461 and the regulations thereunder. There is another exception in the case of certain taxpayers who are required to make additional contributions as a result of the Act of June 15, 1955 (Public Law 74, 84th Cong., 69 Stat. 134), and the regulations thereunder.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11682, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6676, 28 FR 10144, Sept. 17, 1963]

§1.404(a)–1T Questions and answers relating to deductibility of deferred compensation and deferred benefits for employees. (Temporary)

Q–1: How does the amendment of section 404(b) by the Tax Reform Act of 1984 affect the deduction of contributions or compensation under section 404(a)?

A–1: As amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, section 404(b) clarifies that section 404(a) shall govern the deduction of contributions paid and compensation paid or incurred by the employer under a plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation or providing for deferred benefits to employees, their spouses, or their dependents. See section 404(b) and §1.404(b)–1T. Section 404 (a) and (d) requires that such a contribution or compensation be paid or incurred for purposes of section 162 or 212 and satisfy the requirements for deductibility under either of those sections. However, notwithstanding the above, section 404 does not apply to contributions paid or accrued with respect to a ''welfare benefit fund'' (as defined in section 419(e)) after July 18, 1984, in taxable years of employers (and payors) ending after that date. Also, section 463 shall govern the deduction of vacation pay by a taxpayer that has elected the application of such section. For rules relating to the deduction of contributions paid or accured with respect to a welfare benefit fund, see section 419, §1.419–1T and §1.419A–2T. For rules relating to the deduction of vacation pay for which an election is made under section 463, see §301.9100–16T of this chapter and §1.463–1T.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4320, Feb. 4, 1986, as amended by T.D. 8435, 57 FR 43896, Sept. 23, 1992]

§1.404(a)–2 Information to be furnished by employer claiming deductions; taxable years ending before December 31, 1971.

(a) For the first taxable year for which a deduction from gross income is claimed under section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), or (7), the employer must file the following information (unless such information has been previously filed in accordance with the regulations under section 23(p) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1939) for each plan involved to establish that it meets the requirements of section 401(a) or 404(a)(2), and that deductions claimed do not exceed the amount allowable under paragraphs (1), (2), (3), and (7) of section 404(a), as the case may be:

(1) Verified copies of all the instruments constituting or evidencing the plan, including trust indentures, group annuity contracts, specimen copy of each type of individual contract, and

specimen copy of formal announcement and comprehensive detailed description to employees, with all amendments to any such instruments.

(2) A statement describing the plan which identifies it and which sets forth the name or names of the employers, the effective date of the plan and of any amendments thereto, the method of distribution or of disbursing benefits (whether by trustee, insurance company, or otherwise), the dates when the instruments or amendments were executed, the date of formal announcement and the dates when comprehensive detailed description of the plan and of each amendment thereto were made available to employees generally, the dates when the plan and when the trust or the contract evidencing the plan and of any amendments thereto were put into effect so that contributions thereunder were irrevocable and a summary of the provisions and rules relating to—

(i) Employee eligibility requirements for participation in the plan,

(ii) Employee contributions,

(iii) Employer contributions,

(iv) The basis or formula for determining the amount of each type of benefit and the requirements for obtaining such benefits and the vesting conditions,

(v) The medium of funding (e. g., self-insured, unit purchase group annuity contract, individual level annual premium retirement endowment insurance contracts, etc.) and, if not wholly insured, the medium of contributions and the kind of investments, and

(vi) The discontinuance or modification of the plan and distributions or benefit payments upon liquidation or termination.

(3) A tabulation in columnar form showing the information specified below with respect to each of the 25 highest paid employees covered by the plan in the taxable year, listed in order of their nondeferred compensation (where there are several plans of deferred compensation, the information for each of the plans may be shown on a single tabulation without repetition of the information common to the several plans):

(i) Name.

(ii) Whether an officer.

(iii) Percentage of each class of stock owned directly or indirectly by the employee or members of his family.

(iv) Whether the principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees.

(v) Year of birth.

(vi) Length of service for employer to the close of the year.

(vii) Total nondeferred compensation paid or accrued during the taxable year with a breakdown of such compensation into the following components:

(A) Basic compensation and overtime pay,

(B) Other direct payments, such as bonuses and commissions,

(C) Compensation paid other than in cash, such as goods, services, insurance not directly related to the benefits or provided from funds under the plan, etc.

(viii) Amount allocated during the year for the benefit of the employee or his beneficiary (including any insurance provided thereby or directly related thereto), less the employee's contributions during the year, under each other plan of deferred compensation.

(ix) Amount allocated during the year for the benefit of the employee or his beneficiary (including any insurance provided thereby or directly related thereto), less the employee's contributions during the year, under the plan. If a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan, also a breakdown of such amounts into the following components:

(A) Amounts originally allocated in the year, and

(B) Amounts reallocated in the year.

(x) Amounts of employee contributions during the year under the plan,

(xi) If a pension or annuity plan,

(A) The retirement age and date and the form of the retirement benefit,

(B) The annual rate or amount of the retirement benefit, and

(C) The aggregate of all of the employee's contributions under the plan,

all based, in the case of an employee who is not on retirement benefit under the plan, upon the assumption of his continued employment at his current rate of compensation until his normal retirement age (or the end of the current year if later) and retirement on

such date with the normal form of retirement benefit under the plan.

(4) The following totals:

(i) Total nondeferred compensation paid or accrued during the taxable year for all employees covered under the plan and also for all employees of the employer.

(ii) Total amount allocated during the year for the benefit of employees, former or retired employees, or their beneficiaries (including any insurance provided thereby or directly related thereto), less employee contributions during the year under the plan and, if a profit-sharing or stock bonus plan, also a breakdown of such total into the following components:

(A) Amount originally allocated in the year, and

(B) Amount reallocated in the year.

(5) A schedule showing the total number of employees as of the close of the year for each of the following groups, based on reasonable estimates:

(i) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan because of requirements as to employment classification, specifying the reasons applicable to the group (as, for example, temporary, seasonal, part time, hourly pay basis, etc.).

(ii) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan because of requirements as to length of service and not included in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph.

(iii) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan because of requirements as to minimum age and not included in subdivision (i) or (ii) of this subparagraph.

(iv) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan solely because of requirements as to minimum rate of compensation.

(v) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan other than those employees included in subdivision (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of this subparagraph, specifying the reason applicable to the group.

(vi) All employees ineligible for coverage under the plan for any reasons, which should be the sum of subdivisions (i) to (v), inclusive, of this subparagraph.

(vii) All employees eligible for coverage but not covered under the plan.

(viii) All employees covered under the plan.

(ix) All employees of the employer, which should be the sum of subdivisions (vi), (vii), and (viii) of this subparagraph.

If it is claimed that the requirements of section 401(a)(3)(A) are satisfied, also the data and computations necessary to show that such requirements are satisfied.

(6) In the case of a trust, a detailed balance sheet and a detailed statement of receipts and disbursements during the year; in the case of a nontrusteed annuity plan, a detailed statement of the names of the insurers, the contributions paid by the employer and by the employees, and a statement as to the amounts and kinds of premium refunds or similar credits made available and the disposition of such credits in the year.

(7) If a pension or annuity plan, a detailed description of all the methods, factors, and assumptions used in determining costs and in adjusting the costs for actual experience under the plan (including any loadings, contingency reserves, or special factors and the basis of any insured costs or liabilities involved therein) explaining their source and application in sufficient detail to permit ready analysis and verification thereof, and, in the case of a trust, a detailed description of the basis used in valuing the investments held.

(8) A statement of the applicable limitations under section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), or (7) and an explanation of the method of determining such limitations, a summary of the data, and a statement of computations necessary to determine the allowable deductions for the taxable year. Also, in the case of a pension or annuity plan, a summary of the costs or liabilities and adjustments for the year under the plan based on the application of the methods, factors, and assumptions used under the plan, in sufficient detail to permit ready verification of the reasonableness thereof.

(9) A statement of the contributions paid under the plan for the taxable year showing the date and amount of each payment. Also, a summary of the deductions claimed for the taxable year for the plan with a breakdown of

the deductions claimed into the following components:

(i) For contributions paid in the taxable year before giving effect to the provisions of paragraph (7) of section 404(a).

(ii) For contributions paid in prior taxable years beginning after December 31, 1941, in accordance with the carryover provisions of paragraphs (1) and (3) of section 404(a), before giving effect to the provisions of paragraph (7) thereof, and in accordance with the carryover provisions of section 404(d).

(iii) Any reductions or increases in the deductions in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (7) of section 404(a). However, if the information in this subdivision is filed prior to the filing of the information required by subparagraph (8) of this paragraph, then, in determining the limit of deduction under paragraph (7) of section 404(a), the applicable percentage of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the year may be used.

(b) For taxable years subsequent to the year for which all of the applicable information under paragraph (a) of this section (or corresponding provisions of prior regulations) has been filed, information is to be filed only to the following extent:

(1) If there is any change in the plan, instruments, methods, factors, or assumptions upon which the data and information specified in paragraph (a)(1), (2), or (7) of this section are based, a detailed statement explaining the change and its effect is to be filed only for the taxable year in which the change is put into effect. However, if there is no such change, unless otherwise requested by the district director, merely a statement that there is no such change is to be filed.

(2) The information specified in paragraph (a)(3) of this section which has been filed for a taxable year, unless otherwise requested by the district director and so long as the plan and the method and basis of allocations are not changed, is to be filed for subsequent years only to the extent of showing in the tabulation such information with respect to employees who, at any time in the taxable year, own, directly or indirectly, more than 5 percent of the voting stock, considering stock so owned by an individual's spouse or minor lineal descendant as owned by the individual for this purpose.

(3) The information specified in paragraph (a) (4), (5), (6), (8), and (9) of this section.

In the case of corporate employers, the information required to be submitted by this paragraph shall, except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner, be filed on Form 2950 for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1961. In the case of other employers, the information required to be submitted by this paragraph shall, except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner, be filed on Form 2950 for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1962.

(c) If a deduction is claimed under section 404(a)(5) for the taxable year, the taxpayer shall furnish such information as is necessary to show that the deduction is not allowable under the other paragraphs of section 404(a), that the amount paid is an ordinary and necessary expense or an expense for the production of income, and that the employees' rights to, or derived from, such employer's contribution or such compensation were nonforfeitable at the time the contribution or compensation was paid. In the case of corporate employers, the information required to be submitted by this paragraph shall, except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner, be filed on Form 2950 for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1961. In the case of other employers, the information required to be submitted by this paragraph shall, except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner, be filed on Form 2950 for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1962.

(d) For the purpose of the information required by this section, contributions paid in a taxable year shall include those deemed to be so paid in accordance with the provisions of section 404(a)(6) and shall exclude those deemed to be paid in the prior taxable year in accordance with such provisions. As used in this section, ''taxable year'' refers to the taxable year of the employer and, unless otherwise requested by the district director, a ''year'' which is not specified as a ''taxable year'' may be taken as the taxable year of the employer or as the plan,

trust, valuation, or group contract year with respect to which deductions are being claimed provided the same rule is followed consistently so that there is no gap or overlap in the information furnished for each item. In any case the date or period to which each item of information furnished relates should be clearly shown. All the information required by this section should be filed with the tax return for the taxable year in which the deduction is claimed, except that, unless sooner requested by the district director, such information, other than that specified in paragraph (a)(4)(i) and (9) of this section, may be filed within 12 months after the close of the taxable year provided there is filed with the tax return a statement that the information cannot reasonably be filed therewith, setting forth the reasons therefor.

(e) In any case all the information and data required by this section must be filed in the office of the district director in which the employer files his tax returns and must be filed independently of any information and data otherwise submitted in connection with a determination of the qualification of the trust or plan under section 401(a). The district director may, in addition, require any further information that he considers necessary to determine allowable deductions under section 404 or qualification under section 401. For taxable years ending on or before December 31, 1961, the district director may waive the filing of such information required by this section which he finds unnecessary in a particular case. For taxable years ending after December 31, 1961, the Commissioner may waive the filing of such information.

(f) Records substantiating all data and information required by this section to be filed must be kept at all times available for inspection by internal revenue officers at the main office or place of business of the employer.

(g) In the case of a plan which covers employees, some or all of whom are self-employed individuals and with respect to which a deduction is claimed under section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), or (7), paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, and the provision of paragraph (d) of this section relating to the time for filing the information required by this section, shall not apply, but in lieu of the information required to be submitted by paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, the employer shall, with the return for the taxable year in which the deduction is claimed, submit the information required by the form provided by the Internal Revenue Service for such purpose.

(h) When a custodial account forms a part of a plan for which a deduction is claimed under section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), or (7), the information which under this section is to be submitted with respect to a qualified trust must be submitted with respect to such custodial account. Thus, for purposes of this section—

(1) The term ''trust'' includes custodial account,

(2) The term ''trustee'' includes custodian, and

(3) The term ''trust indenture'' includes custodial agreement.

(i) Except as provided under §1.503(d)–1(a) and §601.201 of this chapter (Statement of Procedural Rules) in the case of a request for the determination of qualification of a trust under section 401 and exemption under section 501, paragraphs (a) through (h) of this section shall not apply for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1971. For information to be furnished for taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1971, see §1.404(a)–2A.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11683, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6599, 27 FR 4475, May 10, 1962; T.D. 6676, 28 FR 10144, Sept. 17, 1963; T.D. 7165, 37 FR 5025, Mar. 9, 1972; T.D. 7168, 37 FR 5491, Mar. 16, 1972]

§1.404(a)–2A Information to be furnished by employer; taxable years ending on or after December 31, 1971, and before December 31, 1975.

(a) *In general.* For any taxable year ending on or after December 31, 1971, any employer who maintains a pension, annuity, stock bonus, profit-sharing, or other funded plan of deferred compensation shall file the forms prescribed by this section. An employer (including a self-employed individual) maintaining such a plan shall furnish such information as is required by the forms and the instructions relating thereto. The forms shall be filed in the manner and at the time prescribed

under paragraph (c) of this section. See § 1.404(a)–2 with respect to information to be furnished for taxable years ending before December 31, 1971. For purposes of this section, in the case of a plan of several employers described in § 1.401–1(d), each employer shall be deemed to be maintaining a separate plan corresponding to the plan of which the trust is a part. For information required to be furnished with respect to a funded deferred compensation plan maintained by an employer who is exempt from tax under section 501(a), see § 1.6033–2(a)(2)(ii)(i).

(b) *Forms.* The forms prescribed by this section are:

(1) Form 4848, generally relating to information concerning the qualification of the plan, and deductions for contributions made on behalf of employees or self-employed individuals,

(2) Form 4849, generally relating to the financial position of the trust, fund, or custodial or fiduciary account which is a part of the plan, and

(3) For any taxable year ending on or after December 31, 1971, and before December 31, 1972, Forms 2950 and 2950SE, relating to the identification of plans to which an employer has made a contribution and information with respect to a deduction for a contribution made on behalf of a self-employed individual, respectively.

(c) *Filing requirements.* (1) Form 4848 shall be filed by the employer for each taxable year during which he maintains a pension, annuity, stock bonus, profit-sharing, or other funded plan of deferred compensation. Such form shall be filed on or before the 15th day of the 5th month following the close of the employer's taxable year. For rules relating to the extension of time for filing, see section 6081 and the regulations thereunder and the instructions for Form 4848.

(2) Form 4849 shall be filed by the employer as an attachment to Form 4848 for each taxable year during which he maintains a pension, annuity, stock bonus, profit-sharing, or other funded plan of deferred compensation unless the employer (i) has been notified in writing that Form 4849 will be filed by the fiduciary for such plan as an attachment to Form 990-P or (ii) is not required to file Form 4849 under the instructions relating thereto.

(3) For any taxable year ending on or after December 31, 1971, and before December 31, 1972, Form 2950 shall be filed with the employer's tax return for any such taxable year during which a pension, annuity, stock bonus, profit-sharing, or other funded plan of deferred compensation is maintained.

(4) For any taxable year ending on or after December 31, 1971, and before December 31, 1972, Form 2950SE shall be filed by each self-employed individual with his income tax return for any such taxable year in which he claims a deduction for contributions made on his behalf.

(d) *Additional information.* In addition to the information otherwise required to be furnished by this section, the district director may require any further information that he considers necessary to determine allowable deductions under section 404 or qualification under section 401.

(e) *Records.* Records substantiating all data and information required by this section to be filed must be kept at all times available for inspection by internal revenue officers at the main office or place of business of the employer.

[T.D. 7165, 37 FR 5025, Mar. 9, 1972, as amended by T.D. 7223, 37 FR 24748, Nov. 21, 1972; T.D. 7551, 43 FR 29292, July 7, 1978]

§ 1.404(a)–3 Contributions of an employer to or under an employees' pension trust or annuity plan that meets the requirements of section 401(a); application of section 404(a)(1).

(a) If contributions are paid by an employer to or under a pension trust or annuity plan for employees and the general conditions and limitations applicable to deductions for such contributions are satisfied (see § 1.404(a)–1), the contributions are deductible under section 404(a) (1) or (2) if the further conditions provided therein are also satisfied. As used in this section, a ''pension trust'' means a trust forming part of a pension plan and an ''annuity plan'' means a pension plan under which retirement benefits are provided under annuity or insurance contracts

without a trust. This section is also applicable to contributions to a foreign situs pension trust which could qualify for exemption under section 501(a) except that it is not created or organized and maintained in the United States. For the meaning of ''pension plan'' as used in this section, see paragraph (b)(1)(i) of § 1.401–1. Where disability pensions, insurance, or survivorship benefits incidental and directly related to the retirement benefits under a pension or annuity plan are provided for the employees or their beneficiaries by contributions under the plan, deductions on account of such incidental benefits are also covered under section 404(a) (1) or (2). See paragraph (b)(2) of § 1.72–16 as to taxability to employees of cost of incidental life insurance protection. Similarly, where medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14 are provided for retired employees, their spouses, or their dependents under the plan, deductions on account of such subordinate benefits are also covered under section 404(a) (1) or (2). In order to be deductible under section 404(a)(1), contributions to a pension trust must be paid in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a). Contributions paid in such a taxable year of the employer may be carried over and deducted in a succeeding taxable year of the employer in accordance with section 404(a)(1)(D), whether or not such succeeding taxable year ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a). See § 1.404(a)–7 for rules relating to the limitation on the amount deductible in such a succeeding taxable year of the employer. See § 1.404(a)–8 as to conditions for deductions under section 404(a)(2) in the case of an annuity plan. In either case, the deductions are also subject to further limitations provided in section 404(a)(1). The limitations provided in section 404(a)(1) are, with an exception provided for certain years under subparagraph (A) thereof (see § 1.404(a)–4), based on the actuarial costs of the plan.

(b) In determining costs for the purpose of limitations under section 404(a)(1), the effects of expected mortality and interest must be discounted and the effects of expected withdrawals, changes in compensation, retirements at various ages, and other pertinent factors may be discounted or otherwise reasonably recognized. A properly weighted retirement age based on adequate analyses of representative experience may be used as an assumed retirement age. Different basic assumptions or rates may be used for different classes of risks or different groups where justified by conditions or required by contract. In no event shall costs for the purpose of section 404(a)(1) exceed costs based on assumptions and methods which are reasonable in view of the provisions and coverage of the plan, the funding medium, reasonable expectations as to the effects of mortality and interest, reasonable and adequate regard for other factors such as withdrawal and deferred retirement (whether or not discounted) which can be expected to reduce costs materially, reasonable expenses of operation, and all other relevant conditions and circumstances. In any case, in determining the costs and limitations, an adjustment shall be made on account of any experience more favorable than that assumed in the basis of limitations for prior years. Unless such adjustments are consistently made every year by reducing the limitations otherwise determined by any decrease in liability or cost arising from experience in the next preceding taxable year which was more favorable than the assumptions on which the costs and limitations were based, the adjustment shall be made by some other method approved by the Commissioner.

(c) The amount of a contribution to a pension or annuity plan that is deductible under section 404(a) (1) or (2) depends upon the methods, factors, and assumptions which are used to compute the costs of the plan and the limitation of section 404(a)(1) which is applied. Since the amount that is deductible for one taxable year may affect the amount that is deductible for other taxable years, the methods, factors, and assumptions used in determining costs and the method of determining the limitation which have been used for determining the deduction for a taxable year for which the return has

been filed shall not be changed for such taxable year, except when the Commissioner determines that the methods, factors, assumptions, or limitations were not proper, or except when a change is necessitated by reason of the use of different methods, factors, assumptions, or limitations for another taxable year. However, different methods, factors, and assumptions, or a different method of determining the limitation, if they are proper, may be used in determining the deduction for a subsequent taxable year.

(d) Any expenses incurred by the employer in connection with the plan, such as trustee's and actuary's fees, which are not provided for by contributions under the plan are deductible by the employer under section 162 (relating to trade or business expenses), or 212 (relating to expenses for production of income) to the extent that they are ordinary and necessary.

(e) In case deductions are allowable under section 404(a)(3), as well as under section 404(a) (1) or (2), the limitations under section 404(a) (1) and (3) are determined and applied without giving effect to the provisions of section 404(a)(7) but the amounts allowable as deductions are subject to the further limitations provided in section 404(a)(7). See § 1.404(a)–13.

(f)(1) Amounts contributed by an employer under the plan for the funding of medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401–14 must satisfy the general requirements which are applicable to deductions allowable under section 404 and which are set forth in § 1.404(a)–1 including, for example, the requirements described in paragraph (b) of such section. Accordingly, such amounts must constitute an ordinary and necessary expense relating to either the trade or business or the production of income and must not, when added to all other compensation paid by the employer to the employee on whose behalf such a contribution is made, constitute more than reasonable compensation. However, in determining the amount which is deductible with respect to contributions to provide retirement benefits under the plan, amounts contributed for the funding of medical benefits described in section 401(h) shall not be taken into consideration.

(2) The amounts deductible with respect to employer contributions to fund medical benefits described in section 401(h) shall not exceed the total cost of providing such benefits. The total cost of providing such benefits shall be determined in accordance with any generally accepted actuarial method which is reasonable in view of the provisions and coverage of the plan, the funding medium, and other applicable considerations. The amount deductible for any taxable year with respect to such cost shall not exceed the greater of—

(i) An amount determined by distributing the remaining unfunded costs of past and current service credits as a level amount, or as a level percentage of compensation, over the remaining future service of each employee, or

(ii) 10 percent of the cost which would be required to completely fund or purchase such medical benefits.

In determining the amount deductible, an employer must apply either subdivision (i) of this subparagraph for all employees or subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph for all employees. If contributions paid by an employer in a taxable year to fund such medical benefits under a pension or annuity plan exceed the limitations of this subparagraph but otherwise satisfy the conditions for deduction under section 404, then the excess contributions are carried over and are deductible in succeeding taxable years of the employer which end with or within taxable years of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a) in order of time to the extent of the difference between the amount paid and deductible in each succeeding year and the limitation applicable to such year under this subparagraph. For purposes of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, if the remaining future service of an employee is one year or less, it shall be treated as one year.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11685, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6722, 29 FR 5073, Apr. 14, 1964; T.D. 7165, 37 FR 5025, Mar. 9, 1972]

§ 1.404(a)–4 Pension and annuity plans; limitations under section 404(a)(1)(A).

(a) Subject to the applicable general conditions and limitations (see § 1.404(a)–3), the initial limitation under section 404(a)(1)(A) is 5 percent of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the taxable year to all employees under the pension or annuity plan. This initial 5-percent limitation applies to the first taxable year for which a deduction is allowed for contributions to or under such a plan and also applies to any subsequent year (other than one described in paragraph (d) of this section) for which the 5-percent figure is not reduced as provided in this section. For years to which the initial 5-percent limitation applies, no adjustment on account of prior experience is required. If the contributions do not exceed the initial 5-percent limitation in the first taxable year to which this limitation applies, the taxpayer need not submit actuarial data for such year.

(b) For the first taxable year following the first year to which the initial 5-percent limitation applies, and for every fifth year thereafter, or more frequently where preferable to the taxpayer, the taxpayer shall submit with his return an actuarial certification of the amount reasonably necessary to provide the remaining unfunded cost of past and current service credits of all employees under the plan with a statement explaining all the methods, factors, and assumptions used in determining such amount. This amount may be determined as the sum of (1) the unfunded past service cost as of the beginning of the year, and (2) the normal cost for the year. Such costs shall be determined by methods, factors, and assumptions appropriate as a basis of limitations under section 404(a)(1)(C). Whenever requested by the district director, a similar certification and statement shall be submitted for the year or years specified in such request. The district director will make periodical examinations of such data at not less than 5-year intervals. Based upon such examinations the Commissioner will reduce the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(A) below the 5-percent limitation for the years with respect to which he finds that the 5-percent limitation exceeds the amount reasonably necessary to provide the remaining unfunded cost of past and current service credits of all employees under the plan. Where the limitation is so reduced, the reduced limitation shall apply until the Commissioner finds that a subsequent actuarial valuation shows a change to be necessary. Such subsequent valuation may be made by the taxpayer at any time and submitted to the district director with a request for a change in the limitation. See, however, paragraph (d) of this section with respect to taxable years to which the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(A) does not apply.

(c) For the purpose of limitations under section 404(a)(1)(A), ''compensation otherwise paid or accrued'' means all of the compensation paid or accrued except that for which a deduction is allowable under a plan that qualifies under section 401(a), including a plan that qualifies under section 404(a)(2). Where two or more pension or annuity plans cover the same employee, under section 404(a)(1)(A) the deductions with respect to each such plan are subject to the limitations applicable to the particular plan and the total deductions for all such plans are also subject to the limitations which would be applicable thereto if they constituted a single plan. Where, because of the particular provisions applicable to a large class of employees under a plan, the costs with respect to such employees are nominal in comparison with their compensation, after the first year to which the initial 5-percent limitation applies, deductions under section 404(a)(1)(A) are subject to limitations determined by considering the plan applicable to such class as if it were a separate plan. Deductions are allowable to the extent of the applicable limitations under section 404(a)(1)(A) even where these are greater than the applicable limitations under section 404(a)(1)(B) or section 404(a)(1)(C).

(d) The limitation under section 404(a)(1)(A) shall not be used for purposes of determining the amount deductible for a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the pension trust during which it is not exempt under section

501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it does not meet the requirements of section 404(a)(2), or which ends after the trust or plan has terminated. See § 1.404(a)–7 for rules relating to the limitation which is applicable for purposes of determining the amount deductible for such a taxable year of the employer.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11685, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6534, 26 FR 515, Jan. 20, 1961]

§ 1.404(a)–5 Pension and annuity plans; limitations under section 404(a)(1)(B).

(a) Subject to the applicable general conditions and limitations (see § 1.404(a)–3), under section 404(a)(1)(B), deductions may be allowed to the extent of limitations based on costs determined by distributing the remaining unfunded cost of the past and current service credits with respect to all employees covered under the trust or plan as a level amount or level percentage of compensation over the remaining service of each such employee except that, as to any three individuals with respect to whom more than 50 percent of such remaining unfunded cost attributable to such individuals shall be distributed evenly over a period of at least five taxable years. See, however, paragraph (e) of this section with respect to taxable years to which the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(B) does not apply.

(b) The statutory limitation for any taxable year under section 404(a)(1)(B) is any excess of the amount of the costs described in paragraph (a) of this section for the year over the amount allowable as a deduction under section 404(a)(1)(A).

(c) For this purpose, such excess, adjusted for prior experience, may be computed for each year as follows, all determinations being made as of the beginning of the year:

(1) Determine the value of all benefits expected to be paid, after the beginning of the year for all employees, any former employees, and any other beneficiaries, then covered under the plan.

(2) If employees contribute under the plan, determine the value of all contributions expected to be made after the beginning of the year by employees then covered under the plan.

(3) Determine the value of all funds of the plan as of the beginning of the year.

(4) Determine the amount remaining to be distributed as a level amount or as a level percentage of compensation over the remaining future service of each employee by subtracting from subparagraph (1) of this paragraph the sum of subparagraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph.

(5) Determine the value of all compensation expected to be paid after the beginning of the year to all employees then covered under the plan.

(6) Determine an accrual rate for each employee by dividing subparagraph (5) of this paragraph into subparagraph (4) of this paragraph.

(7) Compute the excess under section 404(a)(1)(B) for the year by multiplying the compensation paid to all employees covered under the plan during the year by any excess of subparagraph (6) of this paragraph over 5 percent. In general, where this method is used, the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(B) will be equal to the excess so computed without further adjustment on account of prior favorable experience, provided all the factors and assumptions used are reasonable in view of all applicable considerations (see § 1.404(a)–3) and provided subparagraph (5) of this paragraph is not less than five times the annual rate of compensation in effect at the beginning of the year.

(d) Instead of determining the excess deductible under section 404(a)(1)(B) by the method shown in paragraph (c), such excess may be based upon cost determined by some other method which is reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. Thus, such excess may be based on the amounts necessary with respect to each individual covered employee to provide the remaining unfunded cost of all his benefits under the plan distributed as a level amount over the period remaining until the normal commencement of his retirement benefits, in accordance with other generally accepted actuarial methods which are reasonable and appropriate in view of the provisions of the plan, the funding medium, and other applicable considerations.

(e) The limitation under section 404(a)(1)(B) shall not be used for purposes of determining the amount deductible for a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the pension trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it does not meet the requirements of section 404(a)(2), or which ends after the trust or plan has terminated. See §1.404(a)–7 for rules relating to the limitation which is applicable for purposes of determining the amount deductible for such a taxable year of the employer.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11686, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6534, 26 FR 515, Jan. 20, 1961]

§1.404(a)–6 Pension and annuity plans; limitations under section 404(a)(1)(C).

(a) *Application to a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the pension trust or annuity plan for which it is exempt under section 501(a) or meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2).* (1) The rules in this paragraph are applicable with respect to the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) for taxable years of the employer which end with or within a taxable year of the pension trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2). See paragraph (b) of this section for rules relating to the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) for other taxable years of the employer.

(2) Subject to the applicable general conditions and limitations (see §1.404(a)–3), in lieu of amounts deductible under the limitations of section 404(a)(1)(A) and section 404(a)(1)- (B), deductions may be allowed under section 404(a)(1)(C) to the extent of limitations based on normal and past service or supplementary costs of providing benefits under the plan. ''Normal cost'' for any year is the amount actuarially determined which would be required as a contribution by the employer in such year to maintain the plan if the plan had been in effect from the beginning of service of each then included employee and if such costs for prior years had been paid and all assumptions as to interest, mortality, time of payment, etc., had been fulfilled. Past service or supplementary cost at any time is the amount actuarially determined which would be required at such time to meet all the future benefits provided under the plan which would not be met by future normal costs and employee contributions with respect to the employees covered under the plan at such time.

(3) The limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) for any taxable year to which this paragraph applies is the sum of normal cost for the year plus an amount not in excess of one-tenth of the past service or supplementary cost as of the date the past service or supplementary credits are provided under the plan. For this purpose, the normal cost may be determined by any generally accepted actuarial method and may be expressed either as (i) the aggregate of level amounts with respect to each employee covered under the plan, (ii) a level percentage of payroll with respect to each employee covered under the plan, or (iii) the aggregate of the single premium or unit costs for the unit credits accruing during the year with respect to each employee covered under the plan, provided, in any case, that the method is reasonable in view of the provisions and coverage of the plan, the funding medium, and other applicable considerations. The limitation may include one-tenth of the past service or supplementary cost as of the date the provisions resulting in such cost were put into effect, but it is subject to adjustments for prior favorable experience. See §1.404(a)–3. In any case, past service or supplementary costs shall not be included in the limitation for any year in which the amount required to fund fully or to purchase such past service or supplementary credits has been deducted, since no deduction is allowable for any amount (other than the normal cost) which is paid in after such credits are fully funded or purchased.

(b) *Application to a taxable year of the employer which does not end with or within a taxable year of the pension trust or annuity plan for which it is exempt under section 501(a) or meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2).* (1) The rules in this paragraph are applicable with respect to the limitation under section

404(a)(1)(C) for taxable years of the employer which end with or within a taxable year of the pension trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it does not meet the requirements of section 404(a)(2), or which end after the trust or plan has terminated. Since contributions paid in such taxable years of the employer are not deductible under section 404(a) (1) or (2) (except as provided in section 404(a)(6)), the limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) for such taxable years relates only to the amount of any excess contributions that may be carried over to such taxable years under section 404(a)(1)(D).

(2) Subject to the applicable general conditions and limitations (see § 1.404(a)–3), deductions may be allowed under section 404(a)(1)(C) for taxable years of the employer to which this paragraph applies to the extent of limitations based on past service or supplementary costs of providing benefits under the plan. For definition of the ''past service or supplementary cost at any time'', see paragraph (a)(2) of this section.

(3) The limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) for any taxable year to which this paragraph applies is an amount not in excess of one-tenth of the past service or supplementary cost as of the date the past service or supplementary credits are provided under the plan. The limitation under section 404(a)(1)(C) is subject, however, to adjustments for prior favorable experience. In any case, no amounts are deductible under section 404(a)(1)(C) for any year to which this paragraph applies if the amount required to fund fully or to purchase the past service or supplementary credits has been deducted in prior taxable years of the employer.

[T.D. 6534, 26 FR 515, Jan. 20, 1961]

§ 1.404(a)–7 Pension and annuity plans; contributions in excess of limitations under section 404(a)(1); application of section 404(a)(1)(D).

When contributions paid by an employer in a taxable year to or under a pension or annuity plan exceed the limitations applicable under section 404(a)(1) but otherwise satisfy the conditions for deduction under section 404(a) (1) or (2), then in accordance with section 404(a)(1)(D), the excess contributions are carried over and are deductible in succeeding taxable years of the employer in order of time pursuant to the following rules:

(a) In the case of a succeeding taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the pension trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it meets the requirements of section 404(a)(2), such excess contributions are deductible to the extent of the difference between the amount paid and deductible in such succeeding taxable year and the limitation applicable to such year under section 404(a)(1) (A), (B), or (C).

(b) In the case of a succeeding taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the pension trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or, in the case of an annuity plan, during which it does not meet the requirements of section 404(a)(2), or which ends after the trust or plan has terminated, such excess contributions are deductible to the extent of the limitation applicable to such year under section 404(a)(1)(C) (see paragraph (b) of § 1.404(a)–6).

The provisions of section 404(a)(1)(D) are to be applied before giving effect to the provisions of section 404(a)(7) for any year. The carryover provisions of section 404(a)(1)(D), before effect has been given to section 404(a)(7), may be illustrated by the following example for a plan put into effect in a taxable year ending December 31, 1954:

Taxable Year Ending Dec. 31, 1954

Amount of contributions paid in year	$100,000
Limitation applicable to year	60,000
Amount deductible for year	60,000
Excess carried over to succeeding years	40,000

Taxable Year Ending Dec. 31, 1955

Amount of contributions paid in year	$25,000
Carried over from previous years	40,000
Total deductible subject to limitation	65,000
Limitation applicable to year	50,000
Amount deductible for year	50,000
Excess carried over to succeeding years	15,000

Taxable Year Ending Dec. 31, 1954	
Taxable Year Ending Dec. 31, 1956	
Amount of contributions paid in year	$10,000
Carried over from previous years	15,000
Total deductible subject to limitation	25,000
Limitation applicable to year	45,000
Amount deductible for year	25,000
Excess carried over to succeeding years	None

§1.404(a)–8 Contributions of an employer under an employees' annuity plan which meets the requirements of section 401(a); application of section 404(a)(2).

(a) If contributions are paid by an employer under an annuity plan for employees and the general conditions and limitations applicable to deductions for such contributions are satisfied (see §1.404(a)–1), the contributions are deductible under section 404(a)(2) if the further conditions provided therein are satisfied. For the meaning of ''annuity plan'' as used here, see §1.404(a)–3. In order that contributions by the employer may be deducted under section 404(a)(2), all of the following conditions must be satisfied:

(1) The contributions must be paid toward the purchase of retirement annuities (or for disability, severance, insurance, survivorship benefits incidental and directly related to such annuities, or medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of §1.404(h)–1) under an annuity plan for the exclusive benefit of the employer's employees or their beneficiaries.

(2) The contributions must be paid in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a year of the plan for which it meets the applicable requirements set forth in section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), and (19). In the case of a plan which covers a self-employed individual, the contributions must be paid in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a year of the plan for which it also meets the requrements of section 401(a), (9), (10), (17), and (18) and of section 401(d) (other than paragraph (1)). In the case of a plan which covers a shareholder-employee within the meaning of section 1379(d), the contributions must be paid in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a year of the plan for which it also meets the requirements of section 401(a) (17) and (18). See section 401(a) and the regulations thereunder for the requirements and the applicable effective dates of the respective paragraphs set forth in section 401(a). Any contributions of an employer which are paid in a taxable year of the employer ending with or within a year of the plan for which it meets the applicable requirements of section 401 may be carried over and deducted in a succeeding taxable year of the employer in accordance with section 404(a)(1)(D), whether or not such succeeding taxable year ends with or within a taxable year of the plan for which it meets the requirements set out in section 401 (a) and (d). See section 401(b) and the regulations thereunder for special rules allowing certain plan amendments to be given retroactive effect. See section 404(a)(6) for a special rule for determining the time when a contribution is deemed to have been made.

(3) There must be a definite written arrangement between the employer and the insurer that refunds of premiums, if any, shall be applied within the taxable year of the employer in which received or within the next succeeding taxable year toward the purchase of retirement annuities (or for disability, severance, insurance, survivorship benefits incidental and directly related to such annuities, or medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of §1.401(h)–1 under the plan. For the purpose of this condition, ''refunds of premiums'' means payments by the insurer on account of credits such as dividends, experience rating credits, or surrender or cancellation credits. The arrangement may be in the form of contract provisions or written directions of the employer or partly in one form and partly in another. This condition will be considered satisfied where—

(i) All credits are applied regularly, as they are determined, toward the premiums next due under the contracts before any further employer contributions are so applied, and

(ii) Under the arrangement,

(A) No refund of premiums may be made during continuance of the plan unless applied as aforesaid, and

(B) If refunds of premiums may be made after discontinuance or termination, whichever is applicable, of the plan on account of surrenders or cancellations before all retirement annuities provided under the plan with respect to service before its discontinuance or termination have been purchased, such refunds will be applied in the taxable year of the employer in which received, or in the next succeeding taxable year, to purchase retirement annuities for employees by a procedure which does not contravene the conditions of section 401(a)(4). If the plan also includes medical benefits described in section 401(h) as defined in paragraph (a) of § 1.401(h)–1, any refund of premiums attributable to such benefits must, in accordance with these rules, be applied toward the purchase of medical benefits described in section 401(h).

(4) Any amounts described in subparagraph (3) of this paragraph which are attributable to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual must be applied toward the purchase of retirement benefits. Amounts which are so applied are not contributions and thus are not taken into consideration in determining—

(i) The amount deductible with respect to contributions on his behalf, nor

(ii) In the case of an owner-employee, the maximum amount of contributions that may be made on his behalf.

(b) Where the above conditions are satisfied, the amounts deductible under section 404(a)(2) are governed by the limitations provided in section 404(a)(1). See §§ 1.404(a)–3 to 1.404(a)–7, inclusive.

(Sec. 411 Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42321, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.404(a)(8)–1T Deductions for plan contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals. (Temporary)

Q: How does the amendment to section 404(a)(8)(D), made by section 713(d)(6) of the Tax Reform Act of 1984 (TRA of 1984), affect section 404(a)(8)(C)?

A: In applying the rules of section 404(a)(8)(C), the Service will treat the amendment to section 404(a)(8)(D) as also having been made to section 404(a)(8)(C), pending enactment of technical corrections to TRA of 1984. The effect of treating the amendment as having also been made to section 404(a)(8)(C) is to increase the amount of contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual that will be treated as satisfying section 162 or 212. Generally, therefore, a contribution on behalf of a self-employed individual is treated as satisfying section 162 or 212 if it is not in excess of the individual's earned income for the year, determined without regard to the deduction allowed by section 404 for the self-employed individual's contribution.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4321, Feb. 4, 1986]

§ 1.404(a)–9 Contributions of an employer to an employees' profit-sharing or stock bonus trust that meets the requirements of section 401(a); application of section 404(a)(3)(A).

(a) If contributions are paid by an employer to a profit-sharing or stock bonus trust for employees and the general conditions and limitations applicable to deductions for such contributions are satisfied (see § 1.404(a)–1), the contributions are deductible under section 404(a)(3)(A) if the further conditions provided therein are also satisfied. In order to be deductible under the first, second, or third sentence of section 404(a)(3)(A), the contributions must be paid (or deemed to have been paid under section 404(a)(6)) in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a) and the trust must not be designed to provide retirement benefits for which the contributions can be determined actuarially. Excess contributions paid in such a taxable year of the employer may be carried over and deducted in a succeeding taxable year of the employer in accordance with the third sentence of section 404(a)(3)(A), whether or not such succeeding taxable year ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a). This section is also applicable to contributions to a foreign situs profit-sharing or stock bonus trust which could qualify for exemption under section 501(a) except

that it is not created or organized and maintained in the United States.

(b) The amount of deductions under section 404(a)(3)(A) for any taxable year is subject to limitations based on the compensation otherwise paid or accrued by the employer during such taxable year to employees who are beneficiaries under the plan. For purposes of computing this limitation, the following rules are applicable:

(1) In the case of a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a), the limitation shall be based on the compensation otherwise paid or accrued by the employer during such taxable year of the employer to the employees who, in such taxable year of the employer, are beneficiaries of the trust funds accumulated under the plan.

(2) In the case of a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or which ends after the trust has terminated, the limitation shall be based on the compensation otherwise paid or accrued by the employer during such taxable year of the employer to the employees who, at any time during the one-year period ending on the last day of the last calendar month during which the trust was exempt under section 501(a), were beneficiaries of the trust funds accumulated under the plan.

For purposes of this paragraph, ''compensation otherwise paid or accrued'' means all of the compensation paid or accrued except that for which a deduction is allowable under a plan that qualifies under section 401(a), including a plan that qualifies under section 404(a)(2). The limitations under section 404(a)(3)(A) apply to the total amount deductible for contributions to the trust regardless of the manner in which the funds of the trust are invested, applied, or distributed, and no other deduction is allowable on account of any benefits provided by contributions to the trust or by the funds thereof. Where contributions are paid to two or more profit-sharing or stock bonus trusts satisfying the conditions for deduction under section 404(a)(3)(A), such trusts are considered as a single trust in applying these limitations.

(c) The primary limitation on deductions for a taxable year is 15 percent of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued by the employer during such taxable year to the employees who are beneficiaries under the plan. See paragraph (b) of this section for rules for determining who are the beneficiaries under the plan.

(d) In order that the deductions may average 15 percent of compensation otherwise paid or accrued over a period of years, where contributions in some taxable year are less than the primary limitation but contributions in some succeeding taxable year exceed the primary limitation, deductions in each succeeding year are subject to a secondary limitation instead of to the primary limitation. The secondary limitation for any year is equal to the lesser of (1) twice the primary limitation for the year, or (2) any excess of (i) the aggregate of the primary limitations for the year and for all prior years over (ii) the aggregate of the deductions allowed or allowable under the limitations provided in section 404(a)(3)(A) for all prior years. Since contributions paid into a profit-sharing or stock bonus trust are deductible under section 404(a)(3)(A) only if they are paid (or deemed to have been paid under section 404(a)(6)) in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a), the secondary limitation described in this paragraph is not applicable with respect to determining amounts deductible for a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or which ends after the trust has terminated. See paragraph (e) of this section for rules relating to amounts which are deductible in such a taxable year.

(e) In any case when the contributions in a taxable year exceed the amount allowable as a deduction for the year under section 404(a)(3)(A), the excess is deductible in succeeding taxable years, in order of time, in accordance with the following limitations:

(1) If the succeeding taxable year ends with or within a taxable year of

the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a), such excess is deductible in any such succeeding taxable year in which the contributions are less than the primary limitation for that year; but the total deduction for such succeeding taxable year cannot exceed the lesser of (i) the primary limitation for such year, or (ii) the sum of the contributions in such year and the excess contributions not deducted under the limitations of section 404(a)(3)(A) for prior years.

(2) If the succeeding taxable year ends with or within a taxable year of the trust during which it is not exempt under section 501(a), or if such succeeding taxable year ends after the trust has terminated, the total deduction for such succeeding taxable year cannot exceed the lesser of (i) the primary limitation for such succeeding taxable year, or (ii) the excess contributions not deducted under the limitations of section 404(a)(3)(A) for prior years. In no case, however, are excess contributions deductible in a succeeding taxable year if such contributions were not paid (or deemed to have been paid under section 404(a)(6)) in a taxable year of the employer which ends with or within a taxable year of the trust for which it is exempt under section 501(a).

(f) In case deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2), as well as under section 404(a)(3)(A), the limitations under section 404(a) (1) and (3)(A) are determined and applied without giving effect to the provisions of section 404(a)(7), but the amounts allowable as deductions are subject to the further limitations provided in section 404(a)(7). See § 1.404(a)–13.

(g) The provisions of section 404(a)(3)(A) before giving effect to section 404(a)(7), may be illustrated as follows:

ILLUSTRATION OF PROVISIONS OF SECTION 404(a)(3)(A) FOR A PLAN PUT INTO EFFECT IN THE TAXABLE (CALENDAR) YEAR 1954, BEFORE GIVING EFFECT TO SECTION 404(a)(7) (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS AND ALL TAXABLE (CALENDAR) YEARS ARE YEARS WHICH END WITH OR WITHIN A TAXABLE YEAR OF THE TRUST FOR WHICH IT IS EXEMPT UNDER SECTION 501(a))

	Taxable (calendar) years						
	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960
1. Amount of contributions:							
(i) In taxable year	$65	$10	$15	$100	$70	$40	$30
(ii) Carried over from prior taxable years	0	8	0	0	4	5	3
2. Primary limitation applicable to year:							
15 percent of covered compensation in year[1]	57	54	51	48	45	42	39
3. Secondary limitation applicable to year:							
(i) Twice primary limitation	.....	.....	.....	96	90	84	.....
(ii) (a) Aggregate primary limitations (see item 2)	.....	.....	.....	210	255	297	.....
(b) Aggregate prior deductions (see item 4 (iii))	.....	.....	.....	90	186	255	
(c) Excess of (a) over (b)	.....	.....	.....	120	69	42	.....
(iii) Lesser of (i) or (ii)	.....	.....	.....	96	69	42	.....
4. Amount deductible for year on account of:							
(i) Contributions in year	57	10	15	96	69	40	30
(ii) Contributions carried over	0	8	0	0	0	2	3
(iii) Total	57	18	15	96	69	42	33
5. Excess contributions carried over to succeeding years.	8	0	0	4	5	3	0

[1] Compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the year to the employees who are beneficiaries of trust funds accumulated under the plan in the year.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11687, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6534, 26 FR 516, Jan. 20, 1961]

§1.404(a)–10 Profit-sharing plan of an affiliated group; application of section 404(a)(3)(B).

(a) Section 404(a)(3)(B) allows a corporation a deduction to the extent provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section for a contribution which it makes for another corporation to a profit-sharing plan or a stock bonus plan under which contributions are determined by reference to profits, provided the following tests are met:

(1) The corporation for which the contribution is made and the contributing corporation are members of an affiliated group of corporations as defined in section 1504, relating to the filing of consolidated returns, and both such corporations participate in the plan. However, it is immaterial whether all the members of such group participate in the plan.

(2) The corporation for which the contribution is made is required under the plan to make the contribution, but such corporation is prevented from making such contribution because it has neither current nor accumulated earnings or profits, or because its current and accumulated earnings or profits are insufficient to make the required contribution. To the extent that such a corporation has any current or accumulated earnings or profits, it is not considered to be prevented from making its required contribution to the plan.

(3) The contribution is made out of the current or accumulated earnings or profits of the contributing corporation.

(b) The amount that is deductible under section 404(a)(3)(B) is determined by applying the rules of section 404(a)(3)(A) and §1.404(a)–9 as if the contribution were made by the corporation for which it is made. For example, the primary limitation described in paragraph (e) of §1.404(a)–9 is determined by reference to the compensation otherwise paid or accrued to the employees of the corporation for which the contribution is made, and the secondary limitation described in paragraph (d) of §1.404(a)–9 and the contribution carryover described in paragraph (c) of §1.404(a)–9 are determined by reference to the prior contributions and deductions of such corporation. The contributing corporation may deduct the amount so determined subject to the limitations contained in paragraph (c) of this section. The contributing corporation shall not treat such amount as a contribution made by it in applying the rules of section 404(a)(3)(A) and §1.404(a)–9 either for the taxable year for which the contribution is made or for succeeding taxable years. The corporation for which the contribution is made shall treat the contribution as having been made by it in applying the rules of section 404(a)(3)(A) and §1.404(a)–9 for succeeding taxable years.

(c) The allowance of the deduction under section 404(a)(3)(B) does not depend upon whether the affiliated group does or does not file a consolidated return. If a consolidated return is filed, it is immaterial which of the participating corporations makes the contribution and takes the deduction or how the contribution or the deduction is allocated among them. However, if a consolidated return is not filed, the contribution which is deductible under section 404(a)(3)(B) by each contributing corporation shall be limited to that portion of its total current and accumulated earnings or profits (adjusted for its contribution deductible without regard to section 404(a)(3)(B)) which the prevented contribution bears to the total current and accumulated earnings or profits of all the participating members of the group having such earnings or profits (adjusted for all contributions deductible without regard to section 404(a)(3)(B)). For the purpose of this section, current earnings or profits shall be computed as of the close of the taxable year without diminution by reason of any dividends during the taxable year, and accumulated earnings or profits shall be computed as of the beginning of the taxable year.

(d) The application of section 404(a)(3)(B) may be illustrated by the following example in which the affiliated group does not file a consolidated return:

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
A	($10,000)	($140,000)	($150,000)	$200,000	⅕	$6,000	.....	.....	.....	.....

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
B	(5,000)	105,000	100,000	300,000	3/10	9,000	$9,000	$91,000	6/326× 91,000	$1,674.85
C	75,000	175,000	250,000	500,000	1/2	15,000	15,000	235,000	6/326× 235,000	4,325.15
Total	60,000	140,000	200,000	1,000,000		30,000	24,000	326,000		6,000.00

Column:
(1) Member.
(2) Earnings and profits of the taxable year.
(3) Accumulated earnings and profits at beginning of taxable year.
(4) Total current and accumulated earnings and profits (column 2 plus column 3).
(5) Compensation of participating employees.
(6) Contribution formula: 50 percent of consolidated earnings and profits, allocated among participating member in proportion of covered payroll of each to covered payroll of consolidated group.
(7) Individual contribution had it not been prevented.
(8) Individual contribution made by each employer for its own employees.
(9) Balance of accumulated earnings and profits (column 4 minus column 8).
(10) Proportion of make-up contribution.
(11) Make-up contribution.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11688, Nov. 26, 1960]

§ 1.404(a)–11 Trusts created or organized outside the United States; application of section 404(a)(4).

In order that a trust may constitute a qualified trust under section 401(a) and be exempt under section 501(a), it must be created or organized in the United States and maintained at all times as a domestic trust. See paragraph (a) of § 1.401–1. Paragraph (4) of section 404(a) provides, however, that an employer which is a resident, a corporation, or other entity of the United States, making contributions to a foreign stock bonus, pension, or profit-sharing trust, shall be allowed deductions for such contributions, under the applicable conditions and within the prescribed limits of section 404(a), if such foreign trust would qualify for exemption under section 501(a) except for the fact that it is a trust created, organized, or maintained outside the United States. Moreover, if a nonresident alien individual, foreign corporation, or other entity is engaged in trade or business within the United States and makes contributions to a foreign stock bonus, pension, or profit-sharing trust, which would qualify under section 401(a) and be exempt under section 501(a) except that it is created, organized, or maintained outside the United States, such contributions are deductible subject to the conditions and limitations of section 404(a) and to the extent allowed by section 873 or 882(c).

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11689, Nov. 26, 1960]

§ 1.404(a)–12 Contributions of an employer under a plan that does not meet the requirements of section 401(a); application of section 404(a)(5).

(a) *In general.* Section 404(a)(5) covers all cases for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (for contributions paid by an employer under a stock bonus, pension, profit sharing, or annuity plan or for any compensation paid on account of any employee under a plan deferring the receipt of such compensation) but not allowable under paragraph (1), (2), (3), (4), or (7) of such section. For the rules with respect to the taxability of an employee when rights under a nonexempt trust become substantially vested, see section 402(b) and the regulations thereunder.

(b) *Contributions made after August 1, 1969*—(1) *In general.* A deduction is allowable for a contribution paid after August 1, 1969, under section 404(a)(5) only in the taxable year of the employer in which or with which ends the taxable year of an employee in which an amount attributable to such contribution is includible in his gross income as compensation, and then only to the extent allowable under section 404(a). See § 1.404(a)-1. For example, if an employer A contributes $1,000 to the account of its employee E for its taxable (calendar) year 1977, but the amount in the account attributable to that contribution is not includible in E's gross income until his taxable (calendar) year 1980 (at which time the includible amount is $1,150), A's deduction for that contribution is $1,000 in

1980 (if allowable under section 404(a)). For purposes of this (1), a contribution is considered to be so includible where the employee or his beneficiary excludes it from his gross income under section 101(b) or subchapter N. To the extent that property of the employer is transferred in connection with such a contribution, such transfer will constitute a disposition of such property by the employer upon which gain or loss is recognized, except as provided in section 1032 and the regulations thereunder. The amount of gain or loss recognized from such disposition shall be the difference between the value of such property used to measure the deduction allowable under this section and the employer's adjusted basis in such property.

(2) *Special rule for unfunded pensions and certain death benefits.* If unfunded pensions are paid directly to former employees, such payments are includible in their gross income when paid, and accordingly, such amounts are deductible under section 404(a)(5) when paid. Similarly, if amounts are paid as a death benefit to the beneficiaries of an employee (for example, by continuing his salary for a reasonable period), and if such amounts meet the requirements of section 162 or 212, such amounts are deductible under section 404(a)(5) in any case when they are not includible under the other paragraphs of section 404(a).

(3) *Separate accounts for funded plans with more than one employee.* In the case of a funded plan under which more than one employee participates, no deduction is allowable under section 404(a)(5) for any contribution unless separate accounts are maintained for each employee. The requirement of separate accounts does not require that a separate trust be maintained for each employee. However, a separate account must be maintained for each employee to which employer contributions under the plan are allocated, along with any income earned thereon. In addition, such accounts must be sufficiently separate and independent to qualify as separate shares under section 663(c). Nothing shall preclude a trust which loses its exemption under section 501(a) from setting up such acounts and meeting the separate account requirement of section 404(a)(5) with respect to the taxable years in which such accounts are set up and maintained.

(c) *Contributions paid on or before August 1, 1969.* No deduction is allowable under section 404(a)(5) for any contribution paid on or before August 1, 1969, by an employer under a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, or annuity plan, or for any compensation paid on account of any employee under plan deferring the receipt of such compensation, except in the year when paid, and then only to the extent allowable under section 404(a). See § 1.404(a)–1. If payments are made under such a plan and the amounts are not deductible under the other paragraphs of section 404(a), they are deductible under section 404(a)(5) to the extent that the rights of individual employees to, or derived from, such employer's contribution or such compensation are nonforfeitable at the time the contribution or compensation is paid. If unfunded pensions are paid directly to former employees, their rights to such payments are nonforfeitable, and accordingly, such amounts are deductible under section 404(a)(5) when paid. Similarly, if amounts are paid as a death benefit to the beneficiaries of an employee (for example, by continuing his salary for a reasonable period), and if such amounts meet the requirements of section 162 or 212, such amounts are deductible under section 404(a)(5) in any case where they are not deductible under the other paragraphs of section 404(a). As to what constitutes nonforfeitable rights of an employee in other cases, see § 1.402(b)–1(d)(2). If an amount is accrued but not paid during the taxable year, no deduction is allowable for such amount for such year. If an amount is paid during the taxable year to a trust or under a plan and the employee's rights to such amount are forfeitable at the time the amount is paid, no deduction is allowable for such amount for any taxable year.

(Secs. 83 and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (83 Stat. 588; 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 83 and 7805))

[T.D. 7554, 43 FR 31926, July 24, 1978]

§ 1.404(a)–13 Contributions of an employer where deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2) and also under section 404(a)(3); application of section 404(a)(7).

(a) Where deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2) on account of contributions under a pension or annuity plan and deductions are also allowable under section 404(a)(3) for the same taxable year on account of contributions to a profit-sharing or stock bonus trust, the total deductions under these sections are subject to the provisions of section 404(a)(7) unless no employee who is a beneficiary under the trusts or plans for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2) is also a beneficiary under the trusts for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a)(3). The provisions of section 404(a)(7) apply only to deductions for overlapping trusts or plans, *i.e.*, for all trusts or plans for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3) except (1) any trust or plan for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2) and which does not cover any employee who is also covered under a trust for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (3), and (2) any trust for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a)(3) and which does not cover any employee who is also covered under a trust or plan for which deductions are allowable under section 404(a) (1) or (2). The limitations under section 404(a)(7) for any taxable year of the employer are based on the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the year by the employer to all employees who, in such year, are beneficiaries of the funds accumulated under one or more of the overlapping trusts or plans. For purposes of the preceding sentence, if the taxable year of the employer with respect to which the limitation is being computed ends with or within a taxable year of any of the overlapping trusts or plans during which any such trust is not exempt under section 501(a) or, in the case of a plan, during which it does not meet the requirements of section 404(a)(2), or if such taxable year of the employer ends after any such trust or plan has terminated, then, with respect to such trust or plan, those employees, and only those employees, who, at any time during the one-year period ending on the last day of the last calendar month during which the trust was exempt under section 501(a), or the plan met the requirements of section 404(a)(2), were beneficiaries of the funds accumulated under such trust or plan shall be considered the beneficiaries of such trust or plan in the taxable year of the employer with respect to which the limitation is being computed. For purposes of this paragraph, ''compensation otherwise paid or accrued'' means all of the compensation paid or accrued except that for which a deduction is allowable under a plan that qualifies under section 401(a), including a plan that qualifies under section 404(a)(2).

(b) Under section 404(a)(7), any excess of the total amount otherwise deductible for the taxable year under section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3) as contributions to overlapping trusts or plans over 25 percent of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the year to all the employees who are beneficiaries under such trusts or plans, is not deductible for such year but is deductible for succeeding taxable years, in order of time, so that the total deduction for contributions to such trusts or plans for a succeeding taxable year is equal to the lesser of—

(1) 30 percent of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the taxable year to all the employees who are beneficiaries under such trusts or plans in the year, or

(2) The sum of (i) the smaller of (*a*) 25 percent of the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the taxable year to all employees who are beneficiaries under such trusts or plans in the year, or (*b*) the total of the amounts otherwise deductible under section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3) for the year for such trusts or plans and (ii) any carryover to the year from prior years under section 404(a)(7), i.e., any excess otherwise deductible under section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3), but not deducted for a prior taxable year because of the limitations under section 404(a)(7).

(c) The limitations under section 404(a)(7) are determined and applied after all the limitations, deductions otherwise allowable, and carryovers under section 404(a) (1), (2), and (3) have

been determined and applied, and, in particular, after effect has been given to the carryover provision in section 404(a)(1)(D) and in the second and third sentences of section 404(a)(3)(A). Where the limitations under section 404(a)(7) reduce the total amount deductible, the excess deductible in succeeding years is treated as a carryover which is distinct from, and additional to, any excess contributions carried over and deductible in succeeding years under the provisions in section 404(a)(1)(D) or in the third sentence of section 404(a)(3)(A). The application of the provisions of section 404(a)(7) and the treatment of carryovers for a case where the taxable years are calendar years and the overlapping trusts or plans consist of a pension trust and a profit-sharing trust put into effect in 1954 and covering the same employees may be illustrated as follows:

ILLUSTRATION OF APPLICATION OF PROVISIONS OF SECTION 404(a)(7) AND OF TREATMENT OF CARRYOVERS FOR OVERLAPPING PENSION AND PROFIT-SHARING TRUSTS PUT INTO EFFECT IN 1954 AND COVERING THE SAME EMPLOYEES (ALL FIGURES REPRESENT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS AND ALL TAXABLE (CALENDAR) YEARS OF THE EMPLOYER ARE YEARS WHICH END WITH OR WITHIN A TAXABLE YEAR OF THE TRUST FOR WHICH IT IS EXEMPT UNDER SECTION 501(a))

	Taxable calendar years			
	1954	1955	1956	1957
BEFORE GIVING EFFECT TO SECTION 404(a)(7)				
Pension trust contributions and limitations, deductions, and carryovers under section 404(a)(1):				
1. Contributions paid in year	$215	$85	$140	$60
2. Contributions carried over from prior years	0	5	0	20
3. Total deductible for year subject to limitation	215	90	140	80
4. Limitation applicable to year	210	175	120	85
5. Amount deductible for year	210	90	120	80
6. Contributions carried over to succeeding years	5	0	20	0
Profit-sharing trust contributions and limitations, deductions, and carryovers under section 404(a)(3):				
7. Contributions paid in year	200	125	105	65
8. Contributions carried over from prior years	0	35	10	0
9. Total deductible for year subject to limitation	200	160	115	65
10. Limitation applicable to year	165	150	135	[1] 110
11. Amount deductible for year	165	150	115	65
12. Contributions carried over to succeeding years	35	10	0	0
APPLICATION OF SECTION 404(a)(7)				
Totals for pension and profit-sharing trust:				
13. Amount deductible for year under section 404(a)(7):				
(1) 30 percent of compensation covered in year [2]	([3])	300	270	180
(2) (i) (a) 25 percent of compensation covered in year [2]	275	250	225	150
(b) Total amount otherwise deductible for year: item 5 plus item 11	375	240	235	145
(c) Smaller of (a) or (b)	275	240	225	145
(ii) Carryover from prior years under section 404(a)(7)	0	100	40	10
(iii) Sum of (i)(c) and (ii)	275	340	265	155
(3) Amount deductible: Lesser of (1) or (2)(iii)	275	300	265	155
14. Carryover to succeeding years under section 404(a)(7): item 13(2)(ii) plus item 3(2)(i)(b) minus item 13(3)	100	40	10	0

[1] Includes carryover of 20 from 1956.
[2] Compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the year to the employees who are beneficiaries under the trusts in the year.
[3] 30 percent limitation not applicable to first year of plan.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11689, Nov. 26, 1960, as amended by T.D. 6534, 26 FR 517, Jan. 20, 1961]

§ 1.404(a)–14 Special rules in connection with the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

(a) *Purpose of this section.* This section provides rules for determining the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 for defined benefit plans.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section—

(1) *Section 404(a).* The term ''old section 404(a)'' means section 404(a) as in effect on September 1, 1974. Any reference to section 404 without the designation ''old'' is a reference to section 404 as amended by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

(2) *Ten-year amortization base.* The term ''10-year amortization base'' means either the past service and other supplementary pension and annuity credits described in section 404(a)(1)(A)(iii) or any base established in accordance with paragraph (g) of this section. A plan may have several 10-year amortization bases to reflect different plan amendments, changes in actuarial assumptions, changes in funding method, and experience gains and losses of previous years.

(3) *Limit adjustment.* The term ''limit adjustment'' with respect to any 10-year amortization base is the lesser of—

(i) The level annual amount necessary to amortize the base over 10 years using the valuation rate, or

(ii) The unamortized balance of the base,

in each case using absolute values (solely for the purpose of determining which is the lesser). To compute the level amortization amount, the base may be divided by the present value of an annuity of one dollar, obtained from standard annuity tables on the basis of a given interest rate (the valuation rate) and a known period (the amortization period).

(4) *Absolute value.* The term ''absolute value'' for any number is the value of that number, treating negative numbers as if they were positive numbers. For example, the absolute value of 5 is 5 and the absolute value of minus 3 is 3. On the other hand, the true value of minus 3 is minus 3. This term is relevant to the computation of the limit adjustment described in paragraph (b)(3) and the remaining amortization period of combined bases described in paragraph (i)(3) of this section.

(5) *Valuation rate.* The term ''valuation rate'' means the assumed interest rate used to value plan liabilities.

(c) *Use of plan in determining deductible limit for employer's taxable year.* Although the deductible limit applies for an employer's taxable year, the deductible limit is determined on the basis of a plan year. If the employer's taxable year coincides with the plan year, the deductible limit for the taxable year is the deductible limit for the plan year that coincides with that year. If the employer's taxable year does not coincide with the plan year, the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A) (i), (ii), or (iii) for a given taxable year of the employer is one of the following alternatives:

(1) The deductible limit determined for the plan year commencing within the taxable year.

(2) The deductible limit determined for the plan year ending within the taxable year, or

(3) A weighted average of alternatives (1) and (2). Such an average may be based, for example, upon the number of months of each plan year falling within the taxable year.

The employer must use the same alternative for each taxable year unless consent to change is obtained from the Commissioner under section 446 (e).

(d) *Computation of deductible limit for a plan year*—(1) *General rules.* The computation of the deductible limit for a plan year is based on the funding methods, actuarial assumptions, and benefit structure used for purposes of section 412, determined without regard to section 412(g) (relating to the alternative minimum funding standard), for the plan year. The method of valuing assets for purposes of section 404 must be the same method of valuing assets used for purposes of section 412.

(2) *Special adjustments of computations under section 412.* To apply the rules of this section (*i.e.*, rules regarding the computation of normal cost with aggregate type funding methods, unfunded liabilities, and the full funding limitation described in paragraph (k) of the section, where applicable) with

respect to a given plan year in computing deductible limits under section 404 (a)(1)(A), the following adjustments must be made:

(i) There must be excluded from the total assets of the plan the amount of any plan contribution for a plan year for which the plan was qualified under section 401(a), 403(a) or 405(a) that has not been previously deducted, even though that amount may have been credited to the funding standard account under section 412(b)(3). In the case of a plan using a spread gain funding method which maintains an unfunded liability (*e.g.*, the frozen initial liability method, but not the aggregate method), the amount described in the preceding sentence must be included in the unfunded liability of the plan.

(ii) There must be included in the total assets of the plan for a plan year the amount of any plan contribution that has been deducted with respect to a prior plan year, even though that amount is considered under section 412 to be contributed in a plan year subsequent to that prior plan year. In the case of a plan using a spread gain funding method which does not maintain an unfunded liability, the amount described in the preceding sentence must be excluded from the unfunded liability of the plan.

The special adjustments described in paragraph (d)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section apply on a year-by-year basis for purposes of section 404(a)(1)(A) only. Thus, the adjustments have no effect on the computation of the minimum funding requirement under section 412.

(e) *Special computation rules under section 404(a)(1)(A)(i)*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of determining the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A)(i), the deductible limit with respect to a plan year is the sum of—

(i) The amount required to satisfy the minimum funding standard of section 412(a) (determined without regard to section 412(g)) for the plan year and

(ii) An amount equal to the includible employer contributions. The term ''includible employer contributions'' means employer contributions which were required by section 412 for the plan year immediately preceding such plan year, and which were not deductible under section 404(a) for the prior taxable year of the employer solely because they were not contributed during the prior taxable year (determine with regard to section 404(a)(6)).

(2) *Rule for an employer using alternative minimum funding standard account and computing its deduction under section 404(a)(1)(A)(i).* This paragraph (e)(2) applies if the minimum funding requirements for the plan are determined under the alternative minimum funding standard described in section 412(g) for both the current plan year and the immediately preceding plan year. In that case, the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A)(i) (regarding the minimum funding requirement of section 412) for the current year is the sum of the amount determined under the rules of paragraph (e)(1) of this section.

(i) Plus the charge under section 412(b)(2)(D), and

(ii) Less the credit under section 412(b)(3)(D),

that would be required if in the current plan year the use of the alternative method were discontinued.

(f) *Special computation rules under section* 404(a)(1)(A) (ii) and (iii)—(1) *In general.* Subject to the full funding limitation described in paragraph (k) of this section, the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (iii) is the normal cost of the plan (determined in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section).

(2) *Adjustments in calculating limit under section 404 (a)(1)(A)(iii).* In calculating the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A)(iii), the normal cost of the plan is—

(i) Decreased by the limit adjustments to any unamortized bases required by paragraph (g) of this section, for example, bases that are due to a net experience gain, a change in actuarial assumptions, a change in funding method, or a plan provision or amendment which decreases the accrued liability of the plan, and

(ii) Increased by the limit adjustments of any unamortized 10-year amortization bases required by paragraph (g) or (j) of this section, for example, bases that are due to a net experience loss, a change in actuarial assumptions, a change in funding method, or a

plan provision or amendment which increases the accrued liability.

(3) *Timing for computations and interest adjustments under section 404(a)(1)(A) (ii) and (iii).* Regardless of the actual time when contributions are made to a plan, in computing the deductible limit under section 404(a)(1)(A) (ii) and (iii) the normal cost and limit adjustments shall be computed as of the date when contributions are assumed to be made (''the computation date'') and adjusted for interest at the valuation rate from the computation date to the earlier of—

(i) The last day of the plan year used to compute the deductible limit for the taxable year, or

(ii) The last day of that taxable year. For additional provisions relating to the timing of computations and interest adjustments, see paragraph (h)(6) of this section (relating to the timing of computations and interest adjustments in the maintenance of 10-year amortization bases). For taxable years beginning before April 22, 1981, computations under the preceding sentence may, as an alternative, be based on prior published positions of the Internal Revenue Service under section 404(a).

(4) *Special limit under section 404(a)(1)(A)(ii).* If the deduction for the plan year is determined solely on the basis of section 404(a)(1)(A)(ii) (that is, without regard to clauses (i) or (iii)), the special limitation contained in section 404(a)(1)(A)(ii), regarding the unfunded cost with respect to any three individuals, applies, notwithstanding the rules contained in paragraphs (d)(2) and (f)(1) of this section.

(g) *Establishment of a 10-year amortization base*—(1) *Experience gains and losses.* In the case of a plan valued by the use of a funding method which is an immediate gain type of funding method (and therefore separately amortizes rather than includes experience gains and losses as a part of the normal cost of the plan), a 10-year amortization base must be established in any plan year equal to the net experience gain or loss required under section 412 to be determined with respect to that plan year. The base is to be maintained in accordance with paragraph (h) of this section. Such a base must not be established if the deductible limit is determined by use of a funding method which is a spread gain type of funding method (under which experience gains and losses are spread over future periods as a part of the plan's normal cost). Examples of the immediate gain type of funding method are the unit credit method, entry age normal cost method, and the individual level premium cost method. Examples of the spread gain type of funding method are the aggregate cost method, frozen initial liability cost method, and the attained age normal cost method.

(2) *Change in actuarial assumptions.* (i) If the creation of an amortization base is required under the rules of section 412(b) (2)(B)(v) or (3)(B)(iii) (as applied to the funding method used by the plan), a 10-year amortization base must be established at the time of a change in actuarial assumptions used to value plan liabilities. The amount of the base is the difference between the accrued liability calculated on the basis of the new assumptions and the accrued liability calculated on the basis of the old assumptions. Both computations of accrued liability are made as of the date of the change in assumptions.

(ii) A plan using a funding method of the spread gain type does not directly determine an accrued liability. If a plan using such a method is required under section 412(b) (2)(B)(v) or (3)(B)(iii) to create an amortization base, it must establish a base as described in paragraph (g)(2)(i) of this section for a change in actuarial assumptions by determining an accrued liability on the basis of another funding method (of the immediate gain type) that does determine an accrued liability. (The aggregate method is an example of a funding method that is not required under section 412(b) (2)(B)(v) or (3)(B)(iii) to create an amortization base.) The funding method chosen to determine the accrued liability of the plan in these cases must be the same method used to establish all other 10-year amortization bases maintained by the plan, if any. These bases must be maintained in accordance with paragraph (h) of this section.

(3) *Past service or supplemental credits.* A 10-year base must be established when a plan is established or amended, if the creation of an amortizable base

is required under the rules of section 412(b)(2)(B) (ii) or (iii), or (b)(3)(B)(i) (as applied to the funding method used by the plan). The amount of the base is the accrued liability arising from, or the decrease in accrued liability resulting from, the establishment or amendment of the plan. The base must be maintained in accordance with paragraph (h) of this section.

(4) *Change in funding method.* If a change in funding method results in an increase or decrease in an unfunded liability required to be amortized under section 412, a 10-year base must be established equal to the increase or decrease in unfunded liability resulting from the change in funding method. The base must be maintained in accordance with paragraph (h) of this section.

(h) *Maintenance of 10-year amortization base*—(1) *In general.* Each time a 10-year amortization base is established, whether by a change in funding method, by plan amendment, by change in actuarial assumptions, or by experience gains and losses, the base must, except as provided in paragraph (i) of this section, be separately maintained in order to determine when the unamortized amount of the base is zero. The sum of the unamortized balances of all of the 10-year bases must equal the plan's unfunded liability with the adjustments described in paragraph (d) of this section, if applicable. When the unamortized amount of a base is zero, the deductible limit is no longer adjusted to reflect the amortization of the base.

(2) *First year's base.* See either paragraph (g) or paragraph (i) of this section for rules applicable with respect to the first year of a base.

(3) *Succeeding year's base.* For any plan year after the first year of a base, the unamortized amount of the base is equal to—

(i) The unamortized amount of the base as of the valuation date in the prior plan year, plus

(ii) Interest at the valuation rate from the valuation date in the prior plan year to the valuation date in the current plan year on the amount described in subdivision (i), minus

(iii) The contribution described in paragraph (h)(4) of this section with respect to the base for the prior plan year.

The valuation date is the date as of which plan liabilities are valued under section 412(c)(9). If such a valuation is performed less often than annually for purposes of section 412, bases must be adjusted for purposes of section 404 each year as of the date on which a section 412 valuation would be performed were it required on an annual basis. See paragraph (b)(3) of this section for the definition of valuation rate.

(4) *Contribution allocation with respect to each base.* A portion of the total contribution for the prior plan year is allocated to each base. Generally, this portion equals the product of—

(i) The total contribution described in paragraph (h)(6) of this section with respect to all bases, and

(ii) The ratio of the amount described in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section with respect to the base to the sum (using true rather than absolute values) of such amounts with respect to all remaining bases.

However, if the result of this computation with respect to a particular base exceeds the amount necessary to amortize such base fully, the smaller amount shall be deemed the contribution made with respect to such base. The unallocated excess with respect to a now fully amortized base shall be allocated among the other bases as indicated above.

(5) *Other allocation methods.* The Commissioner may authorize the use of methods other than the method described in paragraph (h)(4) of this section for allocating contributions to bases.

(6) *Total contribution for all bases.* The contribution with respect to all bases for the prior plan year (see paragraph (h)(3)(iii) of this section) is the difference between—

(i) The sum of (A) the total deduction (including a carryover deduction) for the prior year, (B) interest on the actual contributions for the prior year (whether or not deductible) at the valuation rate for the period between the dates as of which the contributions are credited under section 412 and the valuation date in the current plan year,

and (C) interest on the carryover described in section 404(a)(1)(D) that is available at the beginning of the prior taxable year at the valuation rate for the period between the current and prior valuation dates, and

(ii) The normal cost for the prior plan year and interest on it at the valuation rate from the date as of which the normal cost is calculated to the current valuation date.

(7) *Effect of failure to contribute normal cost plus interest on unamortized amounts.* The failure to make a contribution at least equal to the sum of the normal cost plus interest on the unamortized amounts has the following effects under the preceding rules of this section—

(i) It does not create a new base.

(ii) It results in an increase in the unamortized amount of each base and consequently extends the time before the base is fully amortized.

(iii) The limit adjustment for any base is not increased (in absolute terms) even if the unamortized amount computed under paragraph (h) of this section exceeds the initial 10-year amortization base. Thus, if the total unamortized amount of the plan's bases at the beginning of the plan year is $100,000 (which is also the unfunded liability of the plan), and a required $50,000 normal cost contribution is not made for the plan year, the following effects occur. The total unamortized balance of the plan's bases increases by the $50,000 normal cost for the year (adjusted for interest), plus interest on the $100,000 balance of the bases; and, because of that increase, it will take a longer period to amortize the remaining balance of the bases. (The annual amortization amount does not change.)

(8) *Required adjustment to a 10-year base limit adjustment if valuation rate changed.* If there is a change in the valuation rate, the limit adjustment for all unamortized 10-year amortization bases must be changed, in addition to establishing a new base as provided in paragraph (g)(2) of this section. The new limit adjustment for any base is the level amount necessary to amortize the unamortized amount of the base over the remaining amortization period using the new valuation rate. The remaining amortization period of the base is the number of years at the end of which the unamortized amount of the base would be zero if the contribution made with respect to that base equaled the limit adjustment each year. This calculation of the remaining period is made on the basis of the valuation rate used before the change. Both the remaining amortization period and the revised limit adjustment may be determined through the use of standard annuity tables. The remaining period may be computed in terms of fractional years, or it may be rounded off to a full year. The unamortized amount of the base as of the valuation date and the remaining amortization period of that base shall not be changed by any change in the valuation rate.

(i) *Combining bases*—(1) *General method.* For purposes of section 404 only, and not for purposes of section 412, different 10-year amortization bases may be combined into a single 10-year amortization base if such single base satisfies all of the requirements of paragraph (i) (2), (3), and (4) of this section at the time of the combining of the different bases.

(2) *Unamortized amount.* The unamortized amount of the single base equals the sum, as of the date the combination is made, of the unamortized amount of the bases being combined (treating negative bases as having negative unamortized amounts).

(3) *Remaining amortization period.* The remaining amortization period of the single base is equal to (i) the sum of the separate products of (A) the unamortized amount of each of these bases (using absolute values) and (B) its remaining amortization period, divided by (ii) the sum of the unamortized amounts of each of the bases (using absolute values). For purposes of this paragraph (i)(3), the remaining amortization period of each base being combined is that number of years at the end of which the unamortized amount of the base would be zero if the contribution made with respect to that base equaled the limit adjustment of that base in each year. This number may be determined through the use of standard annuity tables. The remaining amortization period described in this paragraph may be computed in terms of fractional years,

or it may be rounded off to a whole year.

(4) *Limit adjustment.* The limit adjustment for the single base is the level amount necessary to amortize the unamortized amount of the combined base over the remaining amortization period described in paragraph (i)(3) of this section, using the valuation rate. This amount may be determined through the use of standard annuity tables.

(5) *Fresh start alternative.* In lieu of combining different 10-year amortization bases, a plan may replace all existing bases with one new 10-year amortization base equal to the unfunded liability of the plan as of the time the new base is being established. This unfunded liability must be determined in accordance with the general rules of paragraphs (d) and (f) of this section. The unamortized amount of the base and the limit adjustment for the base will be determined as though the base were newly established.

(j) *Initial 10-year amortization base for existing plan*—(1) *In general.* In the case of a plan in existence before the effective date of section 404(a), the 10-year amortization base on the effective date of section 404(a) is the sum of all 10 percent bases existing immediately before section 404(a) became effective for the plan, determined under the rules of old section 404(a).

(2) *Limit adjustment.* The limit adjustment for the initial base is the lesser of the unamortized amount of such base or the sum of the amounts determined under paragraph (b)(3) of this section using the original balances of the remaining bases (under old section 404(a) rules) as the amount to be amortized.

(3) *Unamortized amount.* The employer may choose either to establish a single initial base reflecting both all prior 10-percent bases and the experience gain or loss for the immediately preceding actuarial period, or to establish a separate base for the prior 10-percent bases and another for the experience gain or loss for the immediately preceding period. If the initial 10-year amortization base reflects the net experience gain or loss from the immediately preceding actuarial period, the unamortized amount of the initial base shall equal the total unfunded liability on the effective date of section 404(a) determined in accordance with the general rules of paragraphs (d) and (f) of this section. If, however, a separate base will be used to reflect that gain or loss, the unamortized amount of the initial base shall equal such unfunded liability on the effective date of section 404(a), reduced by the net experience loss or increased by the net experience gain for the immediately preceding actuarial period. In this case, a separate 10-year amortization base must be established on the effective date equal to the net experience gain or loss. Thus, if the effective date unfunded liability is $100,000 and an experience loss of $15,000 is recognized on that date, and if the loss is to be treated as a separate base, the unamortized balances of the two bases would be $85,000 and $15,000. If the unfunded liability were the same $100,000, but a gain of $15,000 instead of a loss were recognized on that date, the unamortized balances of the two bases would be $115,000 and a credit base of $15,000. In both cases, if only one 10-year base is to be established on the effective date, its unamortized balance would be $100,000 (the unfunded liability of the plan). See paragraphs (d) and (f) for rules for determining the unfunded liability of the plan.

(k) *Effect of full funding limit on 10-year-amortization bases.* The amount deductible under section 404(a)(1)(A) (i), (ii), or (iii) for a plan year may not exceed the full funding limitation for that year. See section 412 and paragraphs (d), (e), and (f) of this section for rules to be used in the computation of the full funding limitation. If the total deductible contribution (including carryover) for a plan year equals or exceeds the full funding limitation for the year, all 10-year amortization bases maintained by the plan will be considered fully amortized, and the deductible limit for subsequent plan years will not be adjusted to reflect the amortization of these bases.

(l) *Transitional rules*—(1) *Plan years beginning before April 22, 1981.* In determining the deductible limit for plan years beginning before April 22, 1981, a contribution will be deductible under section 404(a)(1)(A) if the computation of the deductible limit is based on an interpretation of section 404(a)(1)(A)

that is reasonable when considered with prior published positions of the Internal Revenue Service. A computation of the deductible limit may satisfy the preceding sentence even if it does not satisfy the rules contained in paragraphs (c) through (i) of this section.

(2) *Transitional approaches.* The deductible limit determined for the first plan year with respect to which a plan applies the rules contained in paragraphs (c) through (i) of this section must be computed using one of the following approaches—

(i) The plan (whether or not in existence before the effective date of section 404(a)) may apply the rules of paragraph (j) for establishing the initial base for an existing plan, treating 10-year bases (if any) as 10 percent bases in adding bases.

(ii) The plan may apply the fresh start alternative for combining bases under paragraph (i)(5).

(iii) The plan may retroactively establish 10-year amortization bases for years with respect to which section 404(a)(1)(A) and the rules of this section would have applied but for the transition rule contained in paragraph (l)(1) of this section. Contributions actually deducted are used in retroactively establishing and maintaining these bases under paragraph (h). However, a deduction already taken shall not be recomputed because of the retroactive establishment of a base.

(m) *Effective date of section 404(a).* In the case of a plan which was in existence on January 1, 1974, section 404(a) generally applies for contributions on account of taxable years of an employer ending with or within plan years beginning after December 31, 1974. In the case of a plan not in existence on January 1, 1974, section 404(a) generally applies for contributions on account of taxable years of an employer ending with or within plan years beginning after September 4, 1974. See § 1.410(a)–2(c) for rules concerning the time of plan existence. See also § 1.410(a)–2(d), which provides that a plan in existence on January 1, 1974, may elect to have certain provisions, including the amendments to section 404(a) contained in section 1013 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, apply to a plan year beginning after September 2, 1974, and before the otherwise applicable effective date contained in that section.

[T.D. 7760, 46 FR 6914, Jan. 22, 1981; 46 FR 15685, Mar. 9, 1981]

§ 1.404(b)–1 Method of contribution, etc., having the effect of a plan; effect of section 404(b).

Section 404(a) is not confined to formal stock bonus, pension, profit- sharing, and annuity plans, or deferred compensation plans, but it includes any method of contributions or compensation having the effect of a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, or annuity plan, or similar plan deferring the receipt of compensation. Thus, where a corporation pays pensions to a retired employee or employees or to their beneficiaries in such amounts as may be determined from time to time by the board of directors or responsible officers of the company, or where a corporation is under an obligation, whether funded or unfunded, to pay a pension or other deferred compensation to an employee or his beneficiaries, there is a method having the effect of a plan deferring the receipt of compensation for which deductions are governed by section 404(a). If an employer on the accrual basis defers paying any compensation to an employee until a later year or years under an arrangement having the effect of a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, or annuity plan, or similar plan deferring the receipt of compensation, he shall not be allowed a deduction until the year in which the compensation is paid. This provision is not intended to cover the case where an employer on the accrual basis defers payment of compensation after the year of accrual merely because of inability to pay such compensation in the year of accrual, as, for example, where the funds of the company are not sufficient to enable payment of the compensation without jeopardizing the solvency of the company, or where the liability accrues in the earlier year, but the amount payable cannot be exactly determined until the later year.

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11690, Nov. 26, 1960]

§1.404(b)–1T Method or arrangement of contributions, etc., deferring the receipt of compensation or providing for deferred benefits. (Temporary)

Q–1: As amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, what does section 404(b) of the Internal Revenue Code provide?

A–1: As amended, section 404(b) clarifies that any plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation or providing for deferred benefits (other than compensation) is to be treated as a plan deferring the receipt of compensation for purposes of section 404 (a) and (d). Accordingly, section 404 (a) and (d) (in the case of employees and nonemployees; respectively) shall govern the deduction of contributions paid or compensation paid or incurred with respect to such a plan, or method or arrangement. Section 404 (a) and (d) requires that such a contribution or compensation be paid or incurred for purposes of section 162 or 212 and satisfy the requirements for deductibility under either of those sections. Thus, for example, under section 404 (a)(5) and (b), if otherwise deductible under section 162 or 212, a contribution paid or incurred with respect to a nonqualified plan, or method or arragement, providing for deferred benefits is deductible in the taxable year of the employer in which or with which ends the taxable year of the employee in which the amount attributable to the contribution is includible in the gross income of the employee (without regard to any applicable exclusion under Chapter 1, Subtitle A, of the Internal Revenue Code). Section 404 (a) and (d) applies to all compensation and benefit plans, or methods or arrangements, however denominated, which defer the receipt of any amount of compensation or benefit, including fees or other payments. Thus, a limited partnership (using the accrual method of accounting) may not accrue deductions for a fee owed to an unrelated person (using the cash method of accounting) who performs services for the partnership until the partnership taxable year in which or with which ends the taxable year of the service provider in which the fee is included in income. However, notwithstanding the above, section 404 does not apply to contributions paid or accrued with respect to a ''welfare benefit fund'' (as defined in section 419(e)) after July 18, 1984, in taxable years of employers (and payors) ending after that date. Also, section 463 shall govern the deduction of vacation pay by a taxpayer that has elected the application of such section. For rules relating to the deduction of contributions paid or accrued with respect to a welfare benefit fund, see section 419, §1.419–1T and §1.419A–2T. For rules relating to the deduction of vacation pay for which an election is made under section 463, see §301.9100–16T of this chapter and §1.463–1T.

Q–2: When does a plan, or method or arrangement, defer the receipt of compensation or benefits for purposes of section 404 (a), (b), and (d)?

A–2: (a) For purposes of section 404 (a), (b), and (d), a plan, or method or arrangement, defers the receipt of compensation or benefits to the extent it is one under which an employee receives compensation or benefits more than a brief period of time after the end of the employer's taxable year in which the services creating the right to such compensation or benefits are performed. The determination of whether a plan, or method or arrangement, defers the receipts of compensation or benefits is made separately with respect to each employee and each amount of compensation or benefit. Compensation or benefits received by an employee's spouse or dependent or any other person, but taxable to the employee, are treated as received by the employee for purposes of section 404. An employee is determined to receive compensation or benefits within or beyond a brief period of time after the end of the employer's taxable year under the rules provided in this Q&A. For the treatment of expenses with respect to transactions between related taxpayers, see section 267.

(b)(1) A plan, or method or arrangement, shall be presumed to be one deferring the receipt of compensation for more than a brief period of time after the end of an employer's taxable year to the extent that compensation is received after the 15th day of the 3rd calendar month after the end of the employer's taxable year in which the related services are rendered (''the 2½

month period''). Thus, for example, salary under an employment contract or a bonus under a year-end bonus declaration is presumed to be paid under a plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation, to the extent that the salary or bonus is received beyond the applicable 2½ month period. Further, salary or a year-end bonus received beyond the applicable 2½ month period by one employee shall be presumed to constitute payment under a plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation for such employee even though salary or bonus payments to all other employees are not similarly treated because they are received within the 2½ month period. Benefits are ''deferred benefits'' if, assuming the benefits were cash compensation, such benefits would be considered deferred compensation. Thus, a plan, or method or arrangement, shall be presumed to be one providing for deferred benefits to the extent benefits for services are received by an employee after the 2½ month period following the end of the employer's taxable year in which the related services are rendered.

(2) The taxpayer may rebut the presumption established under the previous subparagraph with respect to an amount of compensation or benefits only by setting forth facts and circumstances the preponderance of which demonstrates that it was impracticable, either administratively or economically, to avoid the deferral of the receipt by an employee of the amount of compensation or benefits beyond the applicable 2½ month period and that, as of the end of the employer's taxable year such impracticability was unforeseeable. For example, the presumption may be rebutted with respect to an amount of compensation to the extent that receipt of such amount is deferred beyond the applicable 2½ month period (i) either because the funds of the employer were not sufficient to make the payment within the 2½ month period without jeopardizing the solvency of the employer or because it was not reasonably possible to determine within the 2½ month period whether payment of such amount was to be made, and (ii) the circumstance causing the deferral described in (i) was unforeseeable as of the close of the employer's taxable year. Thus, the presumption with respect to the receipt of an amount of compensation or benefit is not rebutted to the extent it was foreseeable, as of the end of the employer's taxable year, that the amount would be received after the applicable 2½ month period. For example, if, as of the end of the employer's taxable year, it is foreseeable that calculation of a year-end bonus to be paid to an employee under a given formula will not be completed and thus the bonus will not be received (and is in fact not received) by the end of the applicable 2½ month period, the presumption that the bonus is deferred compensation is not rebutted.

(c) A plan, or method or arrangement, shall not be considered as deferring the receipt of compensation or benefits for more than a brief period of time after the end of the employer's taxable year to the extent that compensation or benefits are received by the employee on or before the end of the applicable 2½ month period. Thus, for example, salary under an employment contract or a bonus under a year-end bonus declaration is not considered paid under a plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation to the extent that such salary or bonus is received by the employee on or before the end of the applicable 2½ month period.

(d) Solely for purposes of applying the rules of paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Q&A, in the case of an employer's taxable year ending on or after July 18, 1984, and on or before March 21, 1986, compensation or benefits that relate to services rendered in such taxable year shall be deemed to have been received within the applicable 2½ month period if such receipt actually occurs after such 2½ month period but on or before March 21, 1986.

Q–3: When does section 404(b), as amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, become effective?

A–3: With the exceptions discussed below, section 404(b), as amended, and the rules under Q&A–2 are effective with respect to amounts paid or incurred after July 18, 1984, in taxable years of employers (and payors) ending after that date. In the case of an extended vacation pay plan maintained

pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement (a) between employee representatives and one or more employers, and (b) in effect on June 22, 1984, section 404(b) is not effective before the date on which such collective bargaining agreement terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof agreed to after June 22, 1984). For purposes of the preceding sentence, any plan amendment made pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement relating to the plan which amends the plan solely to conform to any requirement added under section 512 of the Tax Reform Act of 1984 shall not be treated as a termination of such collective bargaining agreement. For purposes of this section, an ''extended vacation pay plan'' is one under which covered employees gradually over a specified period of years earn the right to additional vacation benefits, no part of which, under the terms of the plan, can be taken until the end of the specified period.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4321, Feb. 4, 1986; 51 FR 7262, Mar. 3, 1986; 51 FR 11303, Apr. 2, 1986, as amended by T.D. 8435, 57 FR 43896, Sept. 23, 1992]

§ 1.404(c)–1 Certain negotiated plans; effect of section 404(c).

(a) Section 404(a) does not apply to deductions for contributions paid by an employer under a negotiated plan which meets the following conditions:

(1) The contributions under the plan are held in trust for the purpose of paying, either from principal or income or both, for the benefit of employees and their families, at least medical or hospital care, and pensions on retirement or death of employees; and

(2) Such plan was established before January 1, 1954, as a result of an agreement between employee representatives and the Government of the United States during a period of Government operation, under seizure powers, of a major part of the productive facilities of the industry in which such employer is engaged.

If these conditions are met, such contributions shall be deductible under section 162, to the extent that they constitute ordinary and necessary business expenses.

(b) The term ''as a result of an agreement'' is intended primarily to cover a trust established under the terms of an agreement referred to in paragraph (a)(2) of this section. It will also include a trust established under a plan of an employer, or group of employers, who are in competition with the employers whose facilities were seized by reason of producing the same commodity, and who would therefore be expected to establish such a trust as a reasonable measure to maintain a sound position in the labor market producing the commodity. Thus, for example, if a trust was established under such an agreement in the bituminous coal industry, a similar trust established about the same time in the anthracite coal industry would be covered by this provision.

(c) If any such trust becomes qualified for exemption under section 501(a), the deductibility of contributions by an employer to such trust on or after the date of such qualification would no longer be governed by section 404(c), even though the trust may later lose its exemption under section 501(a).

[T.D. 6500, 25 FR 11690, Nov. 26, 1960]

§ 1.404(d)–1T Questions and answers relating to deductibility of deferred compensation and deferred benefits for independent contractors. (Temporary)

Q–1: How does the amendment of section 404(b) by the Tax Reform Act of 1984 affect the deduction of contributions or compensation under section 404(d)?

A–1: As amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, section 404(b) clarifies that section 404(d) shall govern the deduction of contributions paid and compensation paid or incurred by a payor under a plan, or method or arrangement, deferring the receipt of compensation or providing for deferred benefits for service providers with respect to which there is no employer-employee relationship. In such a case, section 404 (a) and (b) and the regulations thereunder apply as if the person providing the services were the employee and the person to whom the services are provided were the employer. Section 404(a) requires that such a contribution or compensation be paid or

incurred for purposes of section 162 or 212 and satisfy the requirements for deductibility under either of those sections. However, notwithstanding the above, section 404 does not apply to contributions paid or accrued with respect to a ''welfare benefit fund'' (as defined in section 419(e)) after June 18, 1984, in taxable years of employers (and payors) ending after that date. Also, section 463 shall govern the deduction of vacation pay by a taxpayer that has elected under such section. For rules relating to the deduction of contributions paid or accrued with respect to a welfare benefit fund, see section 419, § 1.419–1T and § 1.419A–2T. For rules relating to the deduction of vacation pay for which an election is made under section 463, see § 301.9100–16T of this chapter and § 1.463–1T.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4322, Feb. 4, 1986, as amended by T.D. 8435, 57 FR 43896, Sept. 23, 1992]

§ 1.404(e)–1 Contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual to or under a pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan meeting the requirements of section 401; application of section 404(a) (8), (9), and (10) and section 404 (e) and (f).

(a) *In general.* (1) The Self-Employed Individuals Tax Retirement Act of 1962 (76 Stat. 809) permits certain self-employed individuals to be treated as employees for purposes of pension, annuity, and profit-sharing plans included in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of section 404(a). Therefore, for taxable years of an employer beginning after December 31, 1962, employer contributions to qualified plans on behalf of self-employed individuals are deductible under section 404 subject to the limitations of paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(2) In the case of contributions to qualified plans on behalf of self-employed individuals, the amount deductible differs from the amount allowed as a deduction. In general, the amount deductible is 10 percent of the earned income derived by the self-employed individual from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, or $2,500, whichever is the lesser. This is the amount referred to in section 401 when reference is made to the amounts which may be deducted under section 404 or the amount of contributions deductible under section 404. Thus, this is the amount taken into consideration in determining whether contributions under the plan are discriminatory. The amount allowed as a deduction with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual is one-half of the amount deductible. The amount allowed as a deduction is relevant only for purposes of determining the amount an employer may deduct from gross income.

(b) *Determination of the amount deductible.* (1) If a plan covers employees, some of whom are self-employed individuals, the determination of the amount deductible is made on the basis of independent consideration of the common-law employees and of the self-employed individuals. See subparagraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph. For purposes of determining the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual, such contributions shall be considered to satisfy the conditions of section 162 (relating to trade or business expenses) or 212 (relating to expenses for the production of income), but only to the extent that such contributions do not exceed the earned income of such individual derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. However, the portion of such contribution, if any, attributable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance protection shall be considered payment of a personal expense which does not satisfy the requirements of section 162 or 212. See paragraph (f) of this section. For the additional rules applicable where contributions are made by more than one employer on behalf of a self-employed individual, see paragraph (d) of this section.

(2) If contributions are made to a plan included in section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3) on behalf of employees, some of whom are self-employed individuals, the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of the common-law employees covered under the plan shall be determined as if such employees were the only employees for whom contributions and benefits are provided under the plan. Accordingly, for purposes of such determination, the percentage of compensation limitations of

section 404(a) (1), (3), and (7) are applicable only with respect to the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the taxable year by the employer to the common-law employees. Similarly, the costs referred to in section 404(a)(1) (B) and (C) shall be the costs of funding the benefits of the common-law employees. Also, the provisions of section 404(a)(1)(D), (3), and (7), relating to certain carryover deductions, shall be applicable only to amounts contributed, or to the amounts deductible, on behalf of such employees.

(3) If contributions are made to a plan included in section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3) on behalf of individuals some or all of whom are self-employed individuals, the amount deductible in any taxable year with respect to contributions on behalf of such individuals shall be determined as follows:

(i) The provisions of section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), and (7) shall be applied as if such individuals were the only participants for whom contributions and benefits are provided under the plan. Thus, the costs referred to in such provisions shall be the costs of funding the benefits of the self-employed individuals. If such costs are less than an amount equal to the amount determined under subdivision (iii) of this subparagraph, the maximum amount deductible with respect to such individuals shall be the costs of their benefits.

(ii) The provisions of section 404(a)(1)(D), the second and third sentences of section 404(a)(3)(A), and the second sentence of section 404(a)(7), relating to certain carryover deductions, are not applicable to contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals. Contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals are deductible, if at all, only in the taxable year in which the contribution is paid or deemed paid under section 404(a)(6).

(iii) The amount deductible for the taxable year of the employer with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual shall not exceed the lesser of $2,500 or 10 percent of the earned income derived by such individual for such taxable year from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established.

(iv) If a self-employed individual receives in any taxable year earned income with respect to which deductions are allowable to two or more employers, the aggregate amounts deductible shall not exceed the lesser of $2,500 or 10 percent of such earned income. See paragraph (d) of this section.

(c) *Special limitation on the amount allowed as a deduction for self-employed individuals.* The amount allowed as a deduction under section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), and (7) in any taxable year with respect to contributions made on behalf of a self-employed individual shall be an amount equal to one-half of the amount deductible with respect to such contributions under paragraph (b)(3) of this section. However, for purposes of section 401, the amount which may be deducted, or the amount deductible, under section 404 with respect to contributions made on behalf of self-employed individuals shall be determined without regard to the special limitation of this paragraph.

(d) *Rules applicable where contributions are made by more than one employer on behalf of a self-employed individual.* (1) Under paragraph (b)(3)(iv) of this section, if a self-employed individual receives in any taxable year earned income with respect to which deductions are allowable to two or more employers, the aggregate amounts deductible shall not exceed the lesser of $2,500 or 10 percent of such earned income. This limitation does not apply to contributions made under a plan on behalf of an employee who is not self-employed in the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established, even though such employee may be covered as a self-employed individual under a plan or plans established by other trades or businesses.

(2) In any case in which the application of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph reduces the amount otherwise deductible, the amount deductible by each employer shall be that amount which bears the same ratio to the aggregate amount deductible with respect to all trades or businesses (as determined in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph) as the earned income derived from that employer bears to the aggregate of the earned income derived from all of the trades or businesses

with respect to which plans are established. The amount allowed as a deduction to each employer is one-half of the amount determined (in accordance with the preceding sentence) to be deductible by such employer.

(e) *Partner's distributive share of contributions and deductions.* For purposes of sections 702(a)(8) and 704, a partner's distributive share of contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals under a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan is the contribution made on his behalf, and his distributive share of deductions allowed the partnership under section 404 for contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals is that portion of the deduction which is attributable to contributions made on his behalf under the plan. The contribution on behalf of a partner and the deduction with respect thereto must be accounted for separately by such partner, for his taxable year with or within which the partnership's taxable year ends, as an item described in section 702(a)(8).

(f) *Contributions allocable to insurance protection.* For purposes of determining the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual, amounts allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance protection shall not be taken into account. Such amounts are neither deductible nor considered as contributions for purposes of determining the maximum amount of contributions that may be made on behalf of an owner-employee. The amount of a contribution allocable to insurance shall be an amount equal to a reasonable net premium cost, as determined by the Commissioner, for such amount of insurance for the appropriate period. See paragraph (b)(5) of § 1.72–16.

(g) *Rules applicable to loans.* For purposes of section 404, any amount paid, directly or indirectly, by an owner-employee in repayment of any loan which under section 72(m)(4)(B) was treated as an amount received from a qualified trust or plan shall be treated as a contribution to such trust or under such plan on behalf of such owner-employee.

(h) *Definitions.* For purposes of section 404 and the regulations thereunder—

(1) The term ''employee'' includes an employee as defined in section 401(c)(1) and paragraph (b) of § 1.401–10, and the term ''employer'' means the person treated as the employer of such individual under section 401(c)(4);

(2) The term ''owner-employee'' means an owner-employee as defined in section 401(c)(3) and paragraph (d) of § 1.401–10;

(3) The term ''earned income'' means earned income as defined in section 401(c)(2) and paragraph (c) of § 1.401–10; and

(4) The term ''compensation'' when used with respect to an individual who is an employee described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall be considered to be a reference to the earned income of such individual derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established.

(i) *Years to which this section applies.* This section applies to taxable years of employers beginning before January 1, 1974. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 1973, see § 1.404(e)–1A.

[T.D. 6673, 28 FR 10145, Sept. 17, 1963; as amended by T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47056, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.404(e)–1A Contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual to or under a qualified pension, annuity, or profit-sharing plan.

(a) *In general.* This section provides rules relating to employer contributions to qualified plans on behalf of self-employed individuals described in subsections (a) (8) and (9), (e), and (f) of section 404. Unless otherwise specifically provided, this section applies to taxable years of an employer beginning after December 31, 1973. See section 1.404(e)–1 for rules relating to plans for self-employed individuals for taxable years beginning before January 1, 1974. Paragraph (b) of this section provides general rules of deductibility, paragraph (c) provides rules relating to defined contribution plans, paragraph (d) provides rules relating to defined benefit plans, paragraph (e) provides rules relating to combinations of plans, paragraph (f) provides rules for partnerships, paragraph (g) provides rules for insurance, paragraph (h) provides

rules for loans, and paragraph (i) provides definitions.

(b) *Determination of the amount deductible.* (1) If a defined contribution plan covers employees, some of whom are self-employed individuals, the determination of the amount deductible is made on the basis of independent consideration of the common-law employees and of the self-employed individuals. See subparagraphs (2) and (3) of this paragraph. For purposes of determining the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual, such contributions shall be considered to satisfy the conditions of section 162 (relating to trade or business expenses) or 212 (relating to expenses for the production of income), but only to the extent that such contributions do not exceed the earned income of such individual derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. However, the portion of such contribution, if any, attributable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance protection shall be considered payment of a personal expense which does not satisfy the requirements of section 162 or 212. See paragraph (g) of this section.

(2)(i) If contributions are made on behalf of employees, some of whom are self-employed individuals, to a defined contribution plan described in section 414(i) and included in section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3), the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of the common-law employees covered under the plan shall be determined as if such employees were the only employees for whom contributions and benefits are provided under the plan. Accordingly, for purposes of such determination, the percentage of compensation limitations of section 404(a) (3) and (7) are applicable only with respect to the compensation otherwise paid or accrued during the taxable year by the employer with respect to the common-law employees. Similarly, the costs referred to in section 404(a)(1) (A) and (B) shall be the costs of funding the benefits of the common-law employees. Also, the provisions of section 404(a)(1)(D), (3), and (7), relating to certain carryover deductions, shall be applicable only to amounts contributed or to the amounts deductible on behalf of such employees.

(ii) The amount deductible, by reason of contributions on behalf of employees to a defined benefit plan, shall be determined without regard to the self-employed or common law status of each employee.

(3)(i) If contributions are made on behalf of individuals, some or all of whom are self-employed individuals, to a defined contribution plan described in section 414(i) and included in section 404(a) (1), (2), or (3), the amount deductible in any taxable year with respect to contributions on behalf of such individuals shall be determined as follows:

(A) The provisions of section 404(a) (1), (2), (3), and (7) shall be applied as if such individuals were the only participants for whom contributions and benefits are provided under the plan. Thus, the costs referred to in such provisions shall be the costs of funding the benefits of the self-employed individuals. If such costs are less than an amount equal to the amount determined under paragraph (c) of this section, the maximum amount deductible with respect to such individuals shall be the cost of their benefits.

(B) The provisions of section 404(a) (1), (D), the third sentence of section 404(a) (3), (A), and the second sentence of section 404(a)(7), relating to certain carryover deductions are applicable to contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals made in taxable years of an employer beginning after December 31, 1975.

(C) For any employer taxable year in applying the 15 percent limit on deductible contributions set forth section in 404(a)(3) and the 25 percent limit in section 404(a)(7) for any taxable year of the employer, the amount deductible under section 404(e)(4) and paragraph (c)(4) of this section (relating to the minimum deduction of $750 or 100 percent of earned income) shall be substituted for such limits with respect to the self-employed individuals on whose behalf contributions are deductible under section 404(e)(4) for the taxable year of the employer. In addition, although the limitations of section 415 are applicable to the plan for plan years beginning after December 31,

1975, the defined contribution compensation limitation described in section 415(c)(1)(B) shall not be less than the amount deductible under section 404(e)(4) and paragraph (c)(4) of this section with respect to any self-employed individual for the taxable year of the employer wnding with or within the limitation year. The special rule in the second sentence of paragraph (3)(A) of section 404(a) is not applicable in determining the amounts deductible on behalf of self-employed individuals.

(ii) The limitations of this subparagraph are not applicable to a defined benefit plan for self-employed individuals.

(c) *Defined contribution plans.* (1) Under section 404(e)(1) in the case of a defined contribution plan, as defined in section 414(i), the amount deductible for the taxable year of the employer with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual shall not exceed the lesser of $7,500 or 15 percent of the earned income derived by such individual for such taxable year from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established.

(2) Under section 404(e)(2)(A) if a self-employed individual receives in any taxable year earned income with respect to which deductions are allowable to two or more employers under two or more defined contribution plans the aggregate amounts deductible shall not exceed the lesser of $7,500 or 15 percent of such earned income. This limitation does not apply to contributions made under a plan on behalf of an employee who is not self-employed in the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established.

(3) Under section 404(e)(2)(B) in any case in which the applicable limitation of subparagraph (2) of this paragraph reduces the amount otherwise deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of any employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), the amount deductible by each employer for such employee shall be that amount which bears the same ratio to the aggregate amount deductible for such employee with respect to all trades or businesses (as determined in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph) as his earned income derived from the employer bears to the aggregate of his earned income derived from all of the trades or businesses with respect to which plans are established.

Under section 404(e)(4), notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraphs (1) and (2) of this paragraph, the limitations on the amount deductible for the taxable year of the employer with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual shall not be less than the lesser of $750 or 100 percent of the earned income derived by such individual for such taxable year from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established. If such individual receives in any taxable year earned income with respect to which deductions are allowable to two or more employers, 100 percent of such earned income shall be taken into account for purposes of the limitations determined under this subparagraph. This subparagraph does not apply to any taxable year beginning after December 31, 1975, to any employee whose adjusted gross income for that taxable year is greater than $15,000. In applying the preceding sentence, the adjusted gross income of an employee for a taxable year is determined separately for each individual, without regard to any community property laws, and without regard to the deduction allowable under section 404(a).

(d) *Defined benefit plans.* In the case of a defined benefit plan, as defined in section 401(j), the special limitations provided by section 404(e) and paragraph (c) of this section do not apply. See section 401(j) for requirements applicable to defined benefit plans.

(e) *Combination of plans.* For special rules applied if a self-employed individual in any taxable year is a paraticipant in both a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan, see section 401(j) and the regulations thereunder.

(f) *Partner's distributive share of contributions and deductions.* (1) For purposes of sections 702(a)(8) and 704 in the case of a defined contribution plan, a partner's distributive share of contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals under such a plan is the contribution made on his behalf, and his distributive share of deductions allowed the partnership under section 404 for contributions on behalf of a self-

employed individual is that portion of the deduction which is attributable to contributions made on his behalf under the plan. The contribution on behalf of a partner and the deduction with respect thereto must be accounted for separately by such partner, for his taxable year with or within which the partnership's taxable year ends, as an item described in section 702(a)(8).

(2) In the case of a defined benefit plan, a partner's distributive share of contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals and his distributive share of deductions allowed the partnership under section 404 for such contributions is determined in the same manner as his distributive share of partnership taxable income. See section 704, relating to the determination of the distributive share and the regulations thereunder.

(g) *Contributions allocable to insurance protection.* Under Section 404(e)(3), for purposes of determining the amount deductible with respect to contributions on behalf of a self-employed individual, amounts allocable to the purchase of life, accident, health, or other insurance protection shall not be taken into account. Such amounts are neither deductible nor considered as contributions for purposes of determining the maximum amount of contributions that may be made on behalf of an owner-employee. The amount of a contribution allocable to insurance shall be an amount equal to a reasonable net premium cost, as determined by the Commissioner, for such amount of insurance for the appropriate period. See paragraph (b)(5) of § 1.72–16.

(h) *Rules applicable to loans.* Under section 404(f), for purposes of section 404, any amount paid, directly or indirectly, by an owner-employee in repayment of any loan which under section 72(m)(4)(B) was treated as an amount recieved from a qualified trust or plan shall be treated as a contribution to such trust or under such plan on behalf of such owner-employee.

(i) *Definitions.* Under section 404(a)(8), for purposes of section 404 and the regulations thereunder—

(1) The term ''employee'' includes an employee as defined in section 401(c)(1) and the term ''employer'' means the person treated as the employer of such individual under section 401(c)(4);

(2) The term ''owner-employee'' means an owner-employee as defined in section 401(c)(3);

(3) The term ''earned income'' means earned income as defined in section 401(c)(2); and

(4) The term ''compensation'' when used with respect to an individual who is an employee described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall be considered to be a reference to the earned income of such individual derived from the trade or business with respect to which the plan is established.

[T.D. 7636, 44 FR 47056, Aug. 10, 1979]

§ 1.404(g)–1 Deduction of employer liability payments.

(a) *General rule.* Employer liability payments shall be treated as contributions to a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, or annuity plan to which section 404 applies. Such payments that satisfy the limitations of this section shall be deductible under section 404 when paid without regard to any other limitations in section 404.

(b) *Employer liability payments.* For purposes of this section, employer liability payments mean:

(1) Any payment to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) for termination or withdrawal liability imposed under section 4062 (without regard to section 4062(b)(2)), 4063, or 4064 of the Employee Retirement Insurance Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). Any bond or escrow payment furnished under section 4063 of ERISA shall not be considered as a payment of liability until applied against the liability of the employer.

(2) Any payment to a non-multiemployer plan pursuant to a commitment to the PBGC made in accordance with PBGC Determination of Plan Sufficiency and Termination of Sufficient Plans. See PBGC regulations, 29 CFR 2617.13(b) for rules concerning these commitments. Such payments shall not exceed an amount necessary to provide for, and used to fund, the benefits guaranteed under section 4022 of ERISA.

(3) Any payment to a multiemployer plan for withdrawal liability imposed

under part 1 of subtitle E of title IV of ERISA. Any bond or escrow payment furnished under such part shall not be considered as a payment of liability until applied against the liability of the employer.

(c) *Limitations, etc.*—(1) *Permissible expenses.* A payment shall be deductible under section 404(g) and this section only if the payment satisfies the conditions of section 162 or section 212. Payments made by an entity which is liable for such payments because it is a member of a commonly controlled group of corporations, or trades or businesses, within the meaning of section 414 (b) or (c), shall not fail to satisfy such conditions merely because the entity did not directly employ participants in the plan with respect to which the liability payments were made.

(2) *Qualified plan.* A payment shall be deductible under section 404(g) and this section only if the payment is made in a taxable year of the employer ending within or with a taxable year of the trust for which the trust is exempt under section 501(a). For purposes of this paragraph, the payment timing rules of section 404(a)(6) shall apply.

(3) *Full funding limitation.* (i) If the employer liability payment is to a plan, the total amount deductible for such payment and for other plan contributions may not exceed an amount equal to the full funding limitation as defined in section 412(c)(7) for the taxable year with respect to which the contributions are deemed made under section 404.

(ii) If the total contributions to the plan for the taxable year including the employer liability payment exceed the amount equal to this full funding limitation, the employer liability payment shall be deductible first.

(iii) Any amount paid in a taxable year in excess of the amount deductible in such year under the full funding limitation shall be treated as a liability payment and be deductible in the succeeding taxable years in order of time to the extent of the difference between the employer liability payments made in each succeeding year and the maximum amount deductible for such year under the full funding limitation.

(4) *Maximum deduction allowable under section 404.* The amount deductible under section 404 is limited to the higher of the maximum amount deductible by the employer under section 404(a) or the amount otherwise deductible under section 404(g). If the contributions are to a plan to which more than one employer contributes, this limit shall apply to each employer separately rather than all employers in the aggregate. Thus, each employer may deduct the greater of its allocable share of the deduction determined under sections 404(a) and 413(b)(7) or 413(c)(6) or its allocable share of the amount deductible under section 404(g). However, pursuant to the rule in subdivision (ii) of subparagraph (3), in determining each employer's allocable share under section 404(a), the total amount deductible under section 404(a) by all employers shall not exceed the difference between the full funding limitation and the total amount deductible by all employers under section 404(g).

(5) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. In the 1983 taxable year, Employer *A* makes a withdrawal liability payment of $700,000 to multiemployer Plan *X* to which Employer *A* and Employer *B* are required to contribute. Employer *A*'s allocable share of the deduction allowable under sections 404(a) and 413(b)(7) in the 1983 taxable year is $600,000. Employer *B*'s allocable share of the deduction allowable under section 404(a) and 413(b)(7) in the 1983 taxable year is $400,000.

The full funding limitation for the 1983 taxable year is $1,000,000. Based on paragraph (c)(4) of this section, Employer *A* may deduct $700,000, the amount of the withdrawal liability payment. However, the deduction of Employer *B* is limited to $300,000, the difference between the full funding limitation and the amount deductible under section 404(g).

(d) *Effective date etc.*—(1) *General rule.* This section is effective for employer payments made after September 25, 1980.

(2) *Transitional rule.* For employer payments made before September 26, 1980, for purposes of section 404, any amount paid by an employer under section 4062, 4063, or 4064 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 shall be treated as a contribution to which section 404 applies by such

employer to or under a stock bonus, pension, profit-sharing, or annuity plan.

[T.D. 8085, 51 FR 16297, May 2, 1986]

§ 1.404(k)–1T Questions and answers relating to the deductibility of certain dividend distributions. (Temporary)

Q–1: What does section 404(k) provide?

A–1: Section 404(k) allows a corporation a deduction for dividends actually paid in accordance with section 404(k)(2) with respect to stock of such corporation held by an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)) maintained by the corporation (or by any other corporation that is a member of a ''controlled group of corporations'' within the meaning of section 409(l)(4) that includes the corporation), but only if such dividends may be immediately distributed under the terms of the plan and all of the applicable qualification and distribution rules. The deduction is allowed under section 404(k) for the taxable year of the corporation during which the dividends are received by the participants.

Q–2: Is the deductibility of dividends paid to plan participants under section 404(k) affected by a plan provision which permits participants to elect to receive or not receive payment of dividends?

A–2: No. Dividends actually paid in cash to plan participants in accordance with section 404(k) are deductible under section 404(k) despite such an election provision.

Q–3: Are dividends paid in cash directly to plan participants by the corporation and dividends paid to the plan and then distributed in cash to plan participants under section 404(k) treated as distributions under the plan holding stock to which the dividends relate for purposes of sections 72, 401 and 402?

A–3: Generally, yes. However, a deductible dividend under section 404(k) is treated for purposes of section 72 as paid under a contract separate from any other contract that is part of the plan. Thus, a deductible dividend is treated as a plan distribution and as paid under a separate contract providing only for payment of deductible dividends. Therefore, a deductible dividend under section 404(k) is a taxable plan distribution even though an employee has unrecovered employee contributions or basis in the plan.

[T.D. 8073, 51 FR 4322, Feb. 4, 1986]

§ 1.405–1 Qualified bond purchase plans.

(a) *Introduction.* Section 405 relates to the requirements for qualification of, and the tax treatment of funds contributed to, retirement plans of an employer for the benefit of his employees which are funded through the purchase of United States retirement plan bonds. Such bonds may be purchased under a qualified bond purchase plan described in section 405(a) and paragraph (b) of this section. The qualified bond purchase plan is an alternative method of providing some of the deferred compensation benefits provided by plans described in section 401. In addition, retirement bonds may be purchased under a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan described in section 401. A qualified bond purchase plan or a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan under which retirement bonds are purchased may cover only common-law employees, self-employed individuals, or both. A qualified bond purchase plan may be established after December 31, 1962, and retirement bonds may be purchased by a qualified pension or profit-sharing plan after December 31, 1962. For the terms and conditions of the retirement bonds, see section 405(b) and Treasury Department Circular, Public Debt Series—No. 1–63.

(b) *Qualified bond purchase plans.* (1) A qualified bond purchase plan is a definite written program and arrangement which is communicated to the employees and established and maintained by an employer solely to purchase for and distribute to his employees or their beneficiaries retirement bonds. These bonds must be purchased in the name of the employee on whose behalf the contributions are made. The plan must be a permanent plan which meets the requirements of section 401(a) (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (16), and (19), and, if applicable, the requirements of section 401(a) (9) and (10) and of section 401(d) (other than paragraphs (1), (5)(B), (8), (16), and (19)). The rules set forth in the regulations relating to

those provisions shall be applicable to qualified bond purchase plans.

(2) A qualified bond purchase plan must provide that an employee's right to the proceeds of a bond purchased in his name are nonforfeitable and will in no event inure to the benefit of the employer or be reallocated in any manner.

(c) *Benefits under a qualified bond purchase plan.* (1) Except as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, a qualified bond purchase plan must conform to the definition of a pension plan in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of § 1.401–1, or the definition of a profit-sharing plan in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of § 1.401–1. For example, if the qualified bond purchase plan is a profit-sharing plan, the plan must include the definite allocation formula described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of § 1.401–1. In addition, if such a profit-sharing plan covers any owner-employee, the plan must also include the definite contribution formula described in section 401(d)(2)(B).

(2)(i) Under a qualified bond purchase plan, the bonds may be distributed to the employees at any time, and the plan need not prohibit the distribution or redemption of the bonds until the retirement of the employee. Accordingly, even though a qualified bond purchase plan is designed as a pension plan, it need not provide systematically for the payment of definitely determinable benefits. However, provisions for distribution must apply in a nondiscriminatory manner.

(ii) A qualified bond purchase plan which is designed as a pension plan may not contain a formula for contributions or benefits which might require the reallocation of amounts to an employee's credit or which might provide for the reversion of any amounts to the employer.

(d) *Contributions under a qualified bond purchase plan.* (1) The retirement bonds will be issued in the denominations of $50, $100, $500, and $1,000. Therefore, the contribution otherwise called for under the plan may not coincide with an amount that can be invested in retirement bonds. Accordingly, the plan must provide that the contributions on behalf of an individual employee for any year shall be rounded to the nearest multiple of $50.

(2) Since the employee's rights to any bonds purchased for him under a qualified bond purchase plan must be nonforfeitable, a qualified bond purchase plan must, in order to conform to the requirements of section 401(a)(4) with respect to the early termination of the plan, restrict the contributions on behalf of any employee to the amount which could be allocated to him under paragraph (c) of § 1.401–4.

(e) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section and §§ 1.405–2 and 1.405–3—

(1) The term ''employee'' includes an employee as defined in section 401(c)(1) and paragraph (b) of § 1.401–10, and the term ''employer'' means the person treated as the employer of such individual under section 401(c)(4);

(2) The term ''owner-employee'' means an owner-employee as defined in section 401(c)(3) and paragraph (d) of § 1.401–10;

(3) The term ''earned income'' means earned income as defined in section 401(c)(2) and paragraph (c) of § 1.401–10; and

(4) The term ''retirement bond'' means a United States Retirement Plan Bond, as described in section 405(b) and Treasury Department Circular, Public Debt Series—No. 1–63.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10131, Sept. 17, 1963, as amended by T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1697, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.405–2 Deduction of contributions to qualified bond purchase plans.

(a) *In general.* An employer shall be allowed a deduction for contributions paid to or under a qualified bond purchase plan in the same manner and to the same extent as if such contributions were made to a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a). A deduction will be allowed only for the taxable year in which the contributions are paid, or treated as paid, except as provided by section 404(a) (1), (3), and (7). For purposes of the deduction, a contribution is paid at the time the application for the bond is made and the full purchase price paid.

(b) *Rules for applying section 404.* If a qualified bond purchase plan is designed as a pension plan as defined in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of § 1.401–1, the limitations of section 404 applicable to qualified pension trusts shall apply.

See §§ 1.404(a)–3 through 1.404(a)–7. Similarly, if a qualified bond purchase plan is designed as a profit-sharing plan as defined in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of § 1.401–1, the limitations of section 404 applicable to qualified profit-sharing trusts shall apply. See §§ 1.404(a)–9 and 1.404(a)–10. In addition, if a qualified bond purchase plan designed as a pension plan covers some or all of the employees who are covered by a qualified profit-sharing plan established and maintained by the same employer, or if a qualified bond purchase plan which is designed as a profit-sharing plan covers some or all the employees who are also covered by a qualified pension or annuity plan established and maintained by the same employer, section 404(a)(7) is applicable. See § 1.404(a)–(13). Furthermore, if a qualified bond purchase plan covers employees some or all of whom are employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), the provisions of section 404(a) (8), (9), and (10) and 404(e) shall also apply.

(c) *Accrual method taxpayers.* In the case of a taxpayer using the accrual method of accounting, a contribution to a qualified bond purchase plan will be deemed paid on the last day of the year of accrual if—

(1) During the taxable year of accrual the taxpayer incurs a liability to make the contribution, the amount of which is accruable under section 461 for such taxable year, and

(2) Payment is in fact made no later than the time prescribed by the law for filing the return for the taxable year of accrual (including extensions thereof).

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10131, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.405–3 Taxation of retirement bonds.

(a) *In general.* (1) As in the case of employer contributions under a qualified pension, annuity, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan, employer contributions on behalf of his common-law employees under a qualified bond purchase plan are not includible in the gross income of the employees when made, and employer contributions on behalf of self-employed individuals are deductible as provided in section 405(c) and § 1.405–2. Further, an employee or his beneficiary does not realize gross income upon the receipt of a retirement bond pursuant to a qualified bond purchase plan or from a trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a). Upon redemption of such a bond, ordinary income will be realized to the extent the proceeds thereof exceed the basis (determined in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section) of the bond. The proceeds of a retirement bond are not entitled to the special tax treatment of section 72(n) and § 1.72–18.

(2) In the event a retirement bond is surrendered for partial redemption and reissuance of the remainder, the person surrendering the bond shall be taxable on the proceeds received to the extent such proceeds exceed the basis in the portion redeemed. In such case, the basis shall be determined (in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section) as if the portion redeemed and the portion reissued had been issued as separate bonds.

(3) In the event a retirement bond is redeemed after the death of the registered owner, the amount taxable (as determined in accordance with subparagraph (1) of this paragraph) is income in respect of a decedent under section 691.

(4) The provisions of section 402(a)(2) are not applicable to a retirement bond. In general, section 402(a)(2) provides for capital gains treatment of certain distributions from a qualified trust which constitute the total distributions payable with respect to any employee. The proceeds of a retirement bond received upon redemption will not be entitled to such capital gain treatment even though the bond is received as a part of, or as the whole of, such a total distribution. Nor will such a bond be taken into consideration in determining whether the distribution represents the total amount payable by the trust with respect to an employee. Thus, a distribution by a qualified trust may constitute a total distribution payable with respect to an employee for purposes of section 402(a)(2) even though the trust retains retirement bonds registered in the name of such employee.

(b) *Basis.* (1) This paragraph is applicable in determining the basis of any retirement bond distributed pursuant to a qualified bond purchase plan or distributed by a trust qualifying under

section 401. In the case of such a bond purchased for an individual at the time he is a common-law employee, the basis is that portion of the purchase price attributable to employee contributions. In the case of such a bond purchased for an individual at the time he is a self-employed individual, the basis shall be determined under subparagraph (3) of this paragraph.

(2) At the time a retirement bond is purchased, there shall be indicated on the application for the retirement bond whether the individual for whom the retirement bond is purchased is a common-law employee or a self-employed individual, and in the case of common-law employees the amount of the purchase price, if any, attributable to the employee's contribution. The answers to these questions will appear on the retirement bond, and when the retirement bond is purchased for a common-law employee, the basis for the retirement bond is presumed to be the amount of the purchase price which the retirement bond indicates was contributed by the employee.

(3)(i) Except as provided in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, for purposes of determining the basis of retirement bonds purchased for an individual while he was a self-employed individual, all such bonds redeemed during a taxable year shall be considered in the aggregate as a single retirement bond. The basis of such retirement bonds shall be the difference between the aggregate of their face amounts and the lesser of:

(A)1 One-half the aggregate of their face amounts, or

(B) The aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction at the end of the taxable year (as determined in subparagraph (4) of this paragraph).

(ii) The basis of a retirement bond purchased for a self-employed individual which is redeemed after his death is the amount determined by multiplying the face amount of such retirement bond by a fraction—

(A) The numerator of which is the aggregate of the face amounts of all the bonds registered in the individual's name at his death which were purchased while he was a self-employed individual reduced by the aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction at his death (as determined in subparagraph (4) of this paragraph), and

(B) The denominator of which is the aggregate of the face amounts of all such bonds.

(4)(i) In the case of retirement bonds purchased under a qualified bond purchase plan, the aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction at the end of any taxable year shall be an amount equal to the total of the amounts allowable for such taxable year, and the amounts allowed in all prior taxable years, as a deduction under section 405(c) for contributions used to purchase retirement bonds for the registered owner while he was a self-employed individual, reduced by an amount equal to the portion of the face amounts of such retirement bonds redeemed in prior taxable years which were included in the registered owner's gross income.

(ii) In the case of retirement bonds purchased by a trust described in section 401(a) and exempt under section 501(a), there shall be allocated to the retirement bond the deduction under section 404 attributable to the contributions used to purchase the retirement bond. The amount so allocated shall be treated in the same manner as the deduction allowed under section 405(c) for purposes of computing the unused amounts allowed as a deduction under subdivision (i) of this subparagraph. Further, the amount so allocated shall not be included in the investment in the contract for purposes of section 72 in determining the portion of the other assets distributed by the trust included in gross income.

(5) The application of the rule of subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). B, a self-employed individual, adopts a qualified bond purchase plan in 1963. During 1963 the plan purchased $2,000 worth of retirement bonds in his name. As a result of overestimating his income for 1963, only $400 was allowed B as a deduction pursuant to section 405(c). In 1964, prior to B's retirement in June of that year, the plan purchased a $500 retirement bond in B's name for which a deduction was allowable pursuant to section 405(c) in the amount of $250. B redeemed a retirement bond with a face

amount of $500 in September of 1964 and another with a face amount of $500 in October of 1964. Of the proceeds received in 1964 from the redemption of the bonds, $1,000 plus interest, B shall exclude from his gross income $500 (face amount of the retirement bonds, $1,000, less $500, one-half of the face amount, the latter being less than the aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction, $250 allowable for the taxable year in which the bonds were redeemed plus $400, the unused amounts allowed in prior taxable years, or $650). The aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction shall be reduced by the amount so excluded ($650−$500=$150). During the following year, B redeems another retirement bond with a face amount of $500. Of the proceeds received from the redemption of such retirement bond, $500 plus interest, B shall exclude from his gross income $350 (face amount of the retirement bonds, $500, less $150, the aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction, the latter being less than one-half of the face amount of the bond, $250). The aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction is reduced to zero ($150−$150=0). Upon redemption of the remaining retirement bonds registered in B's name, B shall exclude from his gross income with respect to such proceeds an amount equal to the face amounts of the bonds redeemed.

Example (2). C, a self-employed individual, participated in a qualified bond purchase plan during the years 1963 through 1966. The plan purchased in his name retirement bonds in the aggregate of $10,000. C deducted $4,000 from his gross income for the four years ($1,000 for each year) with respect to the purchase of such retirement bonds. C retired in December of 1966 and during the following year redeemed one retirement bond with a face amount of $1,000. C excluded from his gross income $500 of the proceeds of the bond. C died without redeeming any of the remaining retirement bonds registered in his name. The basis of each remaining retirement bond shall be determined by multiplying the face amount of each retirement bond by $5,500÷$9,000. The numerator is the aggregate of the face amounts registered in C's name (as a self-employed individual) at his death, $9,000, reduced by the aggregate of the unused amounts allowed as a deduction at his death, $3,500 (amounts allowed as a deduction under section 405(c), $4,000, reduced by the portion of the face amount of the retirement bond redeemed by C which was included in C's gross income, $500), or $5,500. The denominator is the face amount of the retirement bonds registered in his name as a self-employed individual at his death, $9,000.

[T.D. 6675, 28 FR 10131, Sept. 17, 1963]

§ 1.406–1 Treatment of certain employees of foreign subsidiaries as employees of the domestic corporation.

(a) *Scope*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of applying the rules in part 1 of subchapter D of chapter 1 of subtitle A of the Code and the regulations thereunder with respect to a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan described in section 401(a), an annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a bond purchase plan described in section 405(a), of a domestic corporation, an individual who is a citizen of the United States and who is an employee of a foreign subsidiary (as defined in section 3121(1)(8) and the regulations thereunder) of such domestic corporation shall be treated as an employee of such domestic corporation if the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are satisfied.

(2) *Cross-references.* For rules relating to nondiscrimination requirements and the determination of compensation, see paragraph (c) of this section. For rules under which termination of the status of an individual as an employe of the domestic corporation in certain instances will not be considered as separation from service for certain purposes, see paragraph (d) of this section. For rules regarding deductibility of contribution, see paragraph (e) of this section. For rules regarding treatment of such individual as an employee of the domestic corporation under related provisions, see paragraph (f) of this section.

(b) *Application of this section*—(1) *Requirements.* This section shall apply and the employee of the foreign subsidiary shall be treated as an employee of domestic corporation for the purposes set forth in paragraph (a)(1) of this section only if each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(i) The domestic corporation must have entered into an agreement under section 3121(l) to provide social security coverage which applies to the foreign subsidiary of which such individual is an employee and which has not been terminated under section 3121(l)(3) or (4).

(ii) The plan, referred to in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, must expressly provide for contributions or benefits

for individuals who are citizens of the United States and who are employees of one or more of its foreign subsidiaries to which an agreement entered into by such domestic corporation under section 3121(l) applies. The plan must apply to all of the foreign subsidiaries to which such agreement applies.

(iii) Contributions under a funded plan of deferred compensation (whether or not a plan described in section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a)) must not be provided by any other person with respect to the remuneration paid to such individual by the foreign subsidiary.

(2) *Supplementary rules.* Subparagraph (l)(ii) of this paragraph does not modify the requirements for qualification of a plan described in section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) and the regulations thereunder. It is not necessary that the plan provide benefits or contributions for all United States citizens who are employees of such foreign subsidiaries. If the plan is amended to cover individuals who are employees by reason of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the plan will not qualify unless it meets the coverage requirements of section 410(b)(1) (section 401(a)(3), as in effect on September 1, 1974, for plan years to which section 410 does not apply; see § 1.410(a)–2 for the effective dates of section 401) and the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4). In addition, the administrative rules contained in § 1.401(a)–3(e) (relating to the determination of the contributions or benefits provided by the employer under the Social Security Act) will also apply for purposes of determining whether the plan meets the requirements of section 401. For purposes of subparagraph (1)(iii) of this paragraph, contributions will not be considered as provided under a funded plan merely because the foreign subsidiary is required under the laws of the foreign jurisdiction to pay social insurance taxes or to make similar payments with respect to the wages paid to the employee.

(c) *Special rules*—(1) *Nondiscrimination requirements.* For purposes of applying sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b)(1)(B) (section 401(a)(3)(B), as in effect on September 1, 1974, for plan years to which section 410 does not apply) and the regulations thereunder (relating to nondiscrimination concerning benefits and contributions and coverage of employees) with respect to an employee of the foreign subsidiary who is treated as an employee of the domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) If the employee is an officer, shareholder, or (with respect to plan years to which section 410 does not apply) person whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees of the foreign subsidiary of the domestic corporation, he shall be treated as having such capacity with respect to the domestic corporation; and

(ii) The determination as to whether the employee is a highly compensated employee shall be made by comparing his total compensation (determined under subparagraph (2) of this paragraph) with the compensation of all the employees of the domestic corporation (including individuals treated as employees of the domestic corporation pursuant to section 406 and this section).

(2) *Determination of compensation.* For purposes of applying section 401(a)(5) and the regulations thereunder, relating to classifications that will not be considered discriminatory, with respect to an employee of the foreign subsidiary who is treated as an employee of the domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) The total compensation of the employee shall be the remuneration of the employee from the foreign subsidiary (including any allowances that are paid to the employee because of his employment in a foreign country) which would constitute his total compensation if his services had been performed for the domestic corporation;

(ii) The basic or regular rate of compensation of the employee shall be determined for the employee in the same manner as it is determined under section 401 for other employees of the domestic corporation; and

(iii) The amount paid by the domestic corporation which is equivalent to the tax imposed with respect to the employee by section 3101 (relating to the tax on employees under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act) shall be

treated as having been paid by the employee and shall be included in his compensation.

(d) *Termination of status as deemed employee not to be treated as separation from service for purposes of capital gain provisions and limitation of tax.* For purposes of applying the rules, relating to the treatment of certain distributions which are made after an employee's separation from service, set forth in section 72(n) as in effect on September 1, 1974 (with respect to taxable years ending after December 31, 1969, and to which section 402(e) does not apply), and in sections 402(a)(2) and (e) and 403(a)(2) with respect to distributions or payments made after December 31, 1973, and in taxable years beginning after December 31, 1973) with respect to an employee of a foreign subsidiary who is treated as an employee of a domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the employee shall not be considered as separated from the service of the domestic corporation solely by reason of the occurrence of any one or more of the following events:

(1) The termination, under the provisions of section 3121(l), of the agreement entered into by the domestic corporation under that section which covers the employment of the employee;

(2) The employee's becoming an employee of another foreign subsidiary of the domestic corporation with respect to which such agreement does not apply,

(3) The employee's ceasing to be an employee of the foreign subsidiary by reason of which employment he was treated as an employee of such domestic corporation, if he becomes an employee of another corporation controlled by such domestic corporation; or

(4) The termination of the provision of the plan described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, for coverage of United States citizens who are employees of foreign subsidiaries covered by an agreement under section 3121(l).

For purposes of subparagraph (3) of this paragraph, a corporation is considered to be controlled by a domestic corporation if such domestic corporation owns directly or indirectly more than 50 percent of the voting stock of the corporation.

(e) *Deductibility of contributions*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying sections 404 and 405(c) with respect to the deduction for contributions made to or under a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan described in section 401(a), an annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a bond purchase plan described in section 405(a), by a domestic corporation, or by another corporation which is entitled to deduct its contributions under section 404(a)(3)(B), on behalf of an employee of a foreign subsidiary treated as an employee of the domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) Except as provided in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, no deduction shall be allowed to such domestic corporation or to any other corporation which would otherwise be entitled to deduct its contributions on behalf of such employee under one of such sections;

(ii) There shall be allowed as a deduction from the gross income of the foreign subsidiary which is effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business within the United States (within the meaning of section 882 and the regulations thereunder) an amount which is allocable and apportionable to such gross income under the rules of § 1.861–8 and which in no event may exceed the amount which (but for subdivision (i) of this subparagraph) would be deductible under section 404 or section 405(c) by the domestic corporation if the individual were an employee of the domestic corporation and if his compensation were paid by the domestic corporation; and

(iii) Any reference to compensation shall be considered to be a reference to the total compensation of such individual (determined by applying paragraph (c)(2) of this section).

(2) *Year of deduction.* Any amount deductible by the foreign subsidiary under section 406(d) and this paragraph shall be deductible for its taxable year with or within which ends the taxable year of the domestic corporation for which the contribution was made.

(3) *Special rules.* Whether contributions to a plan on behalf of an employee of the foreign subsidiary who is

treated as an employee of the domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, or whether forfeitures with regard to such employee, will require an inclusion in the income of the domestic corporation or an adjustment in the basis of its stock in the foreign subsidiary, shall be determined in accordance with the rules of general application of subtitle A of chapter 1 of the Code (relating to income taxes). For example, an unreimbursed contribution by the domestic corporation to a plan which meets the requirements of section 401(a) will be treated, to the extent each employee's rights to the contribution are nonforfeitable, as a contribution of capital to the foreign subsidiary to the extent that such contributions are made on behalf of the employees of such subsidiary.

(f) *Treatment as an employee of the domestic corporation under related provisions.* An individual who is treated as an employee of a domestic corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall also be treated as an employee of such domestic corporation, with respect to the plan having the provision described in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, for purposes of applying section 72(d) (relating to employees' annuities), section 72(f) (relating to special rules for computing employees' contributions), section 101(b) (relating to employees' death benefits), section 2039 (relating to annuities), and section 2517 (relating to certain annuities under qualified plans) and the regulations thereunder.

(g) *Nonexempt trust.* If the plan of the domestic corporation is a qualified plan described under section 401(a), the fact that a trust which forms a part of such plan is not exempt from tax under section 501(a) shall not affect the treatment of an employee of a foreign subsidiary as an employee of a domestic corporation under section 406(a) and paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(Sec. 411 Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42321, Aug. 23, 1978]

§ 1.407–1 Treatment of certain employees of domestic subsidiaries engaged in business outside the United States as employees of the domestic parent corporation.

(a) *Scope*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of applying the rules in part 1 of subchapter D of chapter 1 of subtitle A of the Code and the regulations thereunder with respect to a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan described in section 401(a), an annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a bond purchase plan described in section 405(a), of a domestic parent corporation (as defined in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section), an individual who is a citizen of the United States and who is an employee of a domestic subsidiary (as defined in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section) of such domestic parent corporation shall be treated as an employee of such domestic parent corporation if the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are satisfied.

(2) *Cross-references.* For rules relating to nondiscrimination requirements and the determination of compensation, see paragraph (c) of this section. For rules under which termination of the status of an individual as an employee of the domestic parent corporation in certain instances will not be considered as separation from service for certain purposes, see paragraph (d) of this section. For rules regarding deductibility of contributions, see paragraph (e) of this section. For rules regarding treatment of such individual as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under related provisions, see paragraph (f) of this section.

(b) *Application of this section*—(1) *Requirements.* This section shall apply and the employee of the domestic subsidiary shall be treated as an employee of the domestic parent corporation for the purposes set forth in paragraph (a)(1) of this section only if each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(i) The plan, referred to in paragraph (a)(1) of this section, must expressly provide for contributions of benefits for individuals who are citizens of the United States and who are employees

of one or more of the domestic subsidiaries of the domestic parent corporation. The plan must apply to every domestic subsidiary.

(ii) Contributions under a funded plan of deferred compensation (whether or not a plan described in section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a)) must not be provided by any other person with respect to the remuneration paid to such individual by the domestic subsidiary.

(2) *Supplementary rules.* Subparagraph (1)(i) of this paragraph does not modify the requirements for qualification of a plan described in section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) and the regulations thereunder. It is not necessary that the plan provide benefits or contributions for all United States citizens who are employees of such domestic subsidiaries. It the plan is amended to cover individuals who are employees by reason of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the plan will not qualify unless it meets the coverage requirements of section 410(b)(1) (section 401(a)(3), as in effect on September 1, 1974, for plan years to which section 410 does not apply; see § 1.410 (a)-2 for the effective dates of section 401) and the nondiscrimination requirements of section 410(a)(4). The administrative rules contained in § 1.401 (a)–3(e) (relating to the determination of the contributions or benefits provided by the employer under the Social Security Act) will also apply for purposes of determining whether the plan meets the requirements of section 401. For purposes of subparagraph (1)(ii) of this paragraph, contributions will not be considered as provided under a funded plan merely because the domestic subsidiary employer pays the tax imposed by section 3111 (relating to tax on employers under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act) with respect to such employee or is required under the laws of a foreign jurisdiction to pay social insurance taxes or to make similar payments with respect to the wages paid to the employee.

(3) *Definitions*—(i) *Domestic subsidiary.* For purposes of this section, a corporation shall be treated as a domestic subsidiary for any taxable year only if each of the following requirements is satisfied:

(A) It is a domestic corporation 80 percent or more of the outstanding voting stock of which is owned by another domestic corporation;

(B) 95 percent of more of its gross income for the three-year period immediately preceding the close of its taxable year which ends on or before the close of the taxable year of such other domestic corporation (or for such part of such period during which it was in existence) was derived from sources without the United States, determined pursuant to sections 861 through 864 and the regulations thereunder; and

(C) 90 percent or more of its gross income for such period (or such part) was derived from the active conduct of a trade or business.

If for the period (or part thereof) referred to in (B) and (C) of this subdivision such corporation has no gross income, the provisions of (B) and (C) shall be treated as satisfied if it is reasonable to anticipate that, with respect to the first taxable year thereafter for which such corporation has gross income, such provisions will be satisfied.

(ii) *Domestic parent corporation.* The domestic parent corporation of any domestic subsidiary is the domestic corporation which owns 80 percent or more of the outstanding voting stock of such domestic subsidiary.

(c) *Special rules*—(1) *Nondiscrimination requirements.* For purposes of applying sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b)(1)(B) (section 401(a)(3)(B), as in effect on Septemeber 1, 1974, for plan years to which section 410 does not apply) and the regulation thereunder (relating to nondiscrimination concerning benefits and contributions and coverage of employees) with respect to an employee of the domestic subsidiary who is treated as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) If the employee is an officer, shareholder, or (with respect to plan years to which section 410 does not apply) a person whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees of the domestic subsidiary of the domestic parent corporation, he shall be treated as having such capacity with respect to the domestic parent corporation; and

(ii) The determination as to whether the employee is a highly compensated employee shall be made by comparing

his total compensation determined under subparagraph (2) of this paragraph with the compensation of all the employees of the domestic parent corporation (including individuals treated as employees of the domestic parent corporation pursuant to section 407 and this section).

(2) *Determination of compensation.* For purposes of applying section 401(a) (5) and the regulations thereunder, relating to classifications that will not be considered discriminatory, with respect to an employee of the domestic subsidiary who is treated as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) The total compensation of the employee shall be the remuneration of the employee from the domestic subsidiary (including any allowances that are paid to the employee because of his employment in a foreign country) which would constitute his total compensation if his services had been performed for such domestic parent corporation; and

(ii) The basic or regular rate of compensation of the employee shall be determined for the employee in the same manner as it is determined under section 401 for other employees of the domestic parent corporation.

(d) *Termination of status as deemed employee not to be treated as separation from service for purposes of captial gain provisions and limitation of tax.* For purposes of applying the rules, relating to treatment of certain distributions which are made after an employee's separation from service, set forth in section 72(n) as in effect on September 1, 1974 (with respect to taxable years ending after December 31, 1969, and to which section 402(e) does not apply), and in sections 402 (a)(2) and (e) and 403(a)(2) (with respect to distributions or payments made after December 31, 1973, and in taxable years beginning after December 31, 1973) with respect to an employee of a domestic subsidiary who is treated as an employee of a domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the employee shall not be considered as separated from the service of the domestic parent corporation solely by reason of the occurrence of any one or more of the following events:

(1) The fact that the corporation of which such individual is an employee ceases, for any taxable year, to be a domestic subsidiary within the mean of paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section;

(2) The employee' ceasing to be an employee of the domestic subsidiary of such domestic parent corporation, if he becomes an employee of another corporation controlled by such domestic parent corporation; or

(3) The termination of the provision of the plan described in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, requiring coverage of the United States citizens who are employees of domestic subsidiaries of the domestic parent corporation.

For purposes of subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, a corporation is considered to be controlled by a domestic parent corporation if the domestic parent corporation owns directly or indirectly more than 50 percent of the voting stock of the corporation.

(e) *Deductibility of contributions*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying sections 404 and 405(c) with respect to the deduction for contributions made to or under a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan described in section 401(a), and annuity plan described in section 403(a), or a bond purchase plan described in section 405(a), by a domestic parent corporation, or by another corporation which is entitled to deduct its contributions under section 404(a)(3)(B), on behalf of an employee of a domestic subsidiary treated as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) Except as provided in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, no deduction shall be allowed to the domestic parent corporation which would otherwise be entitled to deduct its contributions on behalf of such employee under one of such sections;

(ii) There shall be allowed as a deduction to the domestic subsidiary of which such individual is an employee an amount equal to the amount which (but for subdivision (i) of this subparagraph) would be deductible under section 404 or section 405(c) by the domestic parent corporation if the individual

were an employee of the domestic parent corporation and if his compensation were paid by the domestic corporation; and

(iii) Any reference to compensation shall be considered to be a reference to the total compensation of such individual determined by applying paragraph (c)(2) of this section).

(2) *Year of deduction.* Any amount deductible by the domestic subsidiary under section 407(d) and this paragraph shall be deductible for its taxable year with or within which ends the taxable year of the domestic parent corporation for which the contribution was made.

(3) *Special rules.* Whether contributions to a plan on behalf of an employee of the domestic subsidiary who is treated as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, or whether forfeitures with regard to such employee, will require an inclusion in the income of the domestic parent corporation or an adjustment in the basis of its stock in the domestic subsidiary, shall be determined in accordance with the rules of general application of subtitle A of chapter 1 of the Code (relating to income taxes). For an example, and unreimbursed contribution by the domestic parent corporation to a plan which meets the requirements of section 401(a) will be treated, to the extent each employee's rights to the contribution are nonforfeitable, as a contribution of capital to the domestic subsidiary to the extent that such contributions are made on behalf of the employees of such subsidiary.

(f) *Treatment as an employee of the domestic parent corporation under related provisions.* An individual who is treated as an employee of a domestic parent corporation under paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall also be treated as an employee of such domestic corporation, with respect to the plan having the provision described in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, for purposes of applying section 72(d) (relating to special rules for computing employees' contributions), section 72(f) (relating to special rules for computing employees' contributions), section 101(b) (relating to employees' section 101(b) (relating to employees' death benefits), section 2039 (relating to annuities), and section 2517 (relating to certain annuities under qualified plans) and the regulations thereunder.

(g) *Nonexempt trust.* If the plan of the domestic parent corporation is a qualified plan described under section 401(a), the fact that a trust which forms a part of such plan is not exempt from tax under section 501(a) shall not affect the treatment of an employee of a domestic subsidiary as an employee of a domestic parent corporation under section 407(a) and paragraph (a)(1) of this section.

(Sec. 411 Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42323, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.408–1 General rules.

(a) *In general.* Section 408 prescribes rules relating to individual retirement accounts and individual retirement annuities. In addition to the rules set forth in §§ 1.408–2 and 1.408–3, relating respectively to individual retirement accounts and individual retirement annuities, the rules set forth in this section shall also apply.

(b) *Exemption from tax.* The individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity is exempt from all taxes under subtitle A of the Code other than the taxes imposed under section 511, relating to tax on unrelated business income of charitable, etc., organizations.

(c) *Sanctions*—(1) *Excess contributions.* If an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity accepts and retains excess contributions, the individual on whose behalf the account is established or who is the owner of the annuity will be subject to the excise tax imposed by section 4973.

(2) *Prohibited transactions by owner or beneficiary of individual retirement account*—(i) Under section 408(e)(2), if, during any taxable year of the individual for whose benefit any individual retirement account is established, that individual or the individual's beneficiary engages in any transaction prohibited by section 4975 with respect to such account, such account ceases to be an individual retirement account as of the first day of such taxable year. In

any case in which any individual retirement account ceases to be an individual retirement account by reason of the preceding sentence as of the first day of any taxable year, section 408(d)(1) applies as if there were a distribution on such first day in an amount equal to the fair market value (on such first day) of all assets in the account (on such first day). The preceding sentence applies even though part of the fair market value of the individual retirement account as of the first day of the taxable year is attributable to excess contributions which may be returned tax-free under section 408(d)(4) or 408(d)(5).

(ii) If the trust with which the individual engages in any transaction described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph is established by an employer or employee association under section 408(c), only the employee who engages in the prohibited transaction is subject to disqualification of his separate account.

(3) *Prohibited transaction by person other than owner or beneficiary of account.* If any person other than the individual on whose behalf an individual retirement account is established or the individual's beneficiary engages in any transaction prohibited by section 4975 with respect to such account, such person shall be subject to the taxes imposed by section 4975.

(4) *Pledging account as security.* Under section 408(e)(4), if, during any taxable year of the individual for whose benefit an individual retirement account is established, that individual uses the account or any portion thereof as security for a loan, the portion so used is treated as distributed to that individual.

(5) *Borrowing on annuity contract.* Under section 408(e)(3), if during any taxable year the owner of an individual retirement annuity borrows any money under or by use of such contract, the contract ceases to be an individual retirement annuity as of the first day of such taxable year. See § 1.408–3(c).

(6) *Premature distributions.* If a distribution (whether a deemed distribution or an actual distribution) is made from an individual retirement account, or individual retirement annuity, to the individual for whose benefit the account was established, or who is the owner of the annuity, before the individual attains age 59½ (unless the individual has become disabled within the meaning of section 72(m)(7)), the tax under Chapter 1 of the Code for the taxable year in which such distribution is received is increased under section 408(f)(1) or (f)(2). The increase equals 10 percent of the amount of the distribution which is includible in gross income for the taxable year. Except in the case of the credits allowable under section 31, 39, or 42, no credit can be used to offset the increased tax described in this subparagraph. See, however, § 1.408–4(c)(3).

(d) *Limitation on contributions and benefits.* An individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity is subject to the limitation on contributions and benefits imposed by section 415 for years beginning after December 31, 1975.

(e) *Community property laws.* Section 408 shall be applied without regard to any community property laws.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52790, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.408–2 Individual retirement accounts.

(a) *In general.* An individual retirement account must be a trust or a custodial account (see paragraph (d) of this section). It must satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section in order to qualify as an individual retirement account. It may be established and maintained by an individual, by an employer for the benefit of his employees (see paragraph (c) of this section), or by an employee association for the benefit of its members (see paragraph (c) of this section).

(b) *Requirements.* An individual retirement account must be a trust created or organized in the United States (as defined in section 7701(a)(9)) for the exclusive benefit of an individual or his beneficiaries. Such trust must be maintained at all times as a domestic trust in the United States. The instrument creating the trust must be in writing and the following requirements must be satisfied.

(1) *Amount of acceptable contributions.* Except in the case of a contribution to a simplified employee pension described in section 408(k) and a rollover

contribution described in section 408(d)(3), 402(a)(5), 402(a)(7), 403(a)(4), 403(b)(8) or 409(b)(3)(C), the trust instrument must provide that contributions may not be accepted by the trustee for the taxable year in excess of $1,500 on behalf of any individual for whom the trust is maintained. An individual retirement account maintained as a simplified employee pension may provide for the receipt of up to $7,500 for a calendar year.

(2) *Trustee.* (i) The trustee must be a bank (as defined in section 408(n) and the regulations thereunder) or another person who demonstrates, in the manner described in paragraph (e) of this section, to the satisfaction of the Commissioner, that the manner in which the trust will be administered will be consistent with the requirements of section 408 and this section.

(ii) Section 11.408(a)(2)–1 of the Temporary Income Tax Regulations under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is superseded by this subparagraph (2).

(3) *Life insurance contracts.* No part of the trust funds may be invested in life insurance contracts. An individual retirement account may invest in annuity contracts which provide, in the case of death prior to the time distributions commence, for a payment equal to the sum of the premiums paid or, if greater, the cash value of the contract.

(4) *Nonforfeitability.* The interest of any individual on whose behalf the trust is maintained in the balance of his account must be nonforfeitable.

(5) *Prohibition against commingling.* (i) The assets of the trust must not be commingled with other property except in a common trust fund or common investment fund.

(ii) For purposes of this subparagraph, the term ''common investment fund'' means a group trust created for the purpose of providing a satisfactory diversification or investments or a reduction of administrative expenses for the individual participating trusts, and which group trust satisfies the requirements of section 408(c) (except that it need not be established by an employer or an association of employees) and the requirements of section 401(a) in the case of a group trust in which one of the individual participating trusts is an employees' trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a).

(iii) For purposes of this subparagraph, the term ''individual participating trust'' means an employees' trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or a trust which satisfies the requirements of section 408(a) provided that in the case of such an employees' trust, such trust would be permitted to participate in such a group trust if all the other individual participating trusts were employees' trusts described in section 401(a) which are exempt from tax under section 501(a).

(6) *Distribution of interest.* (i) The trust instrument must provide that the entire interest of the individual for whose benefit the trust is maintained must be distributed to him in accordance with paragraph (b)(6)(ii) or (iii) of this section.

(ii) Unless the provisions of paragraph (b)(6)(iii) of this section apply, the entire interest of the individual must be actually distributed to him not later than the close of his taxable year in which he attains age 70½.

(iii) In lieu of distributing the individual's entire interest as provided in paragraph (b)(6)(ii) of this section, the interest may be distributed commencing not later than the taxable year described in such paragraph (b)(6)(ii). In such case, the trust must expressly provide that the entire interest of the individual will be distributed to the individual and the individual's beneficiaries, in a manner which satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(6)(v) of this section, over any of the following periods (or any combination thereof)—

(A) The life of the individual,

(B) The lives of the individual and spouse,

(C) A period certain not extending beyond the life expectancy of the individual, or

(D) A period certain not extending beyond the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the individual and spouse.

(iv) The life expectancy of the individual or the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the individual and

spouse cannot exceed the period computed by use of the expected return multiples in § 1.72–9, or, in the case of payments under a contract issued by an insurance company, the period computed by use of the mortality tables of such company.

(v) If an individual's entire interest is to be distributed over a period described in paragraph (b)(6)(iii) of this section, beginning in the year the individual attains 70½ the amount to be distributed each year must be not less than the lesser of the balance of the individual's entire interest or an amount equal to the quotient obtained by dividing the entire interest of the individual in the trust at the beginning of such year (including amounts not in the individual retirement account at the beginning of the year because they have been withdrawn for the purpose of making a rollover contribution to another individual retirement plan) by the life expectancy of the individual (or the joint life and last survivor expectancy of the individual and spouse (whichever is applicable)), determined in either case as of the date the individual attains age 70 in accordance with paragraph (b)(6)(iv) of this section, reduced by one for each taxable year commencing after the individual's attainment of age 70½. An annuity or endowment contract issued by an insurance company which provides for non-increasing payments over one of the periods described in paragraph (b)(6)(iii) of this section beginning not later than the close of the taxable year in which the individual attains age 70½ satisfies this provision. However, no distribution need be made in any year, or a lesser amount may be distributed, if beginning with the year the individual attains age 70½ the aggregate amounts distributed by the end of any year are at least equal to the aggregate of the minimum amounts required by this subdivision to have been distributed by the end of such year.

(vi) If an individual's entire interest is distributed in the form of an annuity contract, then the requirements of section 408(a)(6) are satisfied if the distribution of such contract takes place before the close of the taxable year described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph, and if the individual's interest will be paid over a period described in subdivision (iii) of this subparagraph and at a rate which satisfies the requirements of subdivision (v) of this subparagraph.

(vii) In determining whether paragraph (b)(6)(v) of this section is satisfied, all individual retirement plans maintained for an individual's benefit (except those under which he is a beneficiary described in section 408(a)(7)) at the close of the taxable year in which he reaches age 70½ must be aggregated. Thus, the total payments which such individual receives in any taxable year must be at least equal to the amount he would have been required to receive had all the plans been one plan at the close of the taxable year in which he attained age 70½.

(7) *Distribution upon death.* (i) The trust instrument must provide that if the individual for whose benefit the trust is maintained dies before the entire interest in the trust has been distributed to him, or if distribution has been commenced as provided in paragraph (b)(6) of this section to the surviving spouse and such spouse dies before the entire interest has been distributed to such spouse, the entire interest (or the remaining part of such interest if distribution thereof has commenced) must, within 5 years after the individual's death (or the death of the surviving spouse) be distributed or applied to the purchase of an immediate annuity for this beneficiary or beneficiaries (or the beneficiary or beneficiaries of the surviving spouse) which will be payable for the life of such beneficiary or beneficiaries (or for a term certain not extending beyond the life expectancy of such beneficiary or beneficiaries) and which annuity contract will be immediately distributed to such beneficiary or beneficiaries. A contract described in the preceding sentence is not includible in gross income upon distribution. Section 1.408–4(e) provides rules applicable to the taxation of such contracts. The first sentence of this paragraph (b)(7) shall have no application if distributions over a term certain commenced before the death of the individual for whose benefit the trust was maintained and the term certain is for a period

permitted under paragraph (b)(6)(iii)(C) or (D) of this section.

(ii) Each such beneficiary (or beneficiary of a surviving spouse) may elect to treat the entire interest in the trust (or the remaining part of such interest if distribution thereof has commenced) as an account subject to the distribution requirements of section 408(a)(6) and paragraph (b)(6) of this section instead of those of section 408(a)(7) and paragraph (b)(7) of this section. Such an election will be deemed to have been made if such beneficiary treats the account in accordance with the requirements of section 408(a)(6) and paragraph (b)(6) of this section. An election will be considered to have been made by such beneficiary if either of the following occurs: (A) any amounts in the account (including any amounts that have been rolled over, in accordance with the requirements of section 408(d)(3)(A)(i), into an individual retirement account, individual retirement annuity, or retirement bond for the benefit of such individual) have not been distributed within the appropriate time period required by section 408(a)(7) and paragraph (b)(7) of this section; or (B) any additional amounts are contributed to the account (or to the account, annuity, or bond to which the beneficiary has rolled such amounts over, as described in (1) above) which are subject, or deemed to be subject, to the distribution requirements of section 408(a)(6) and paragraph (b)(6) of this section.

(8) *Definition of beneficiaries.* The term ''beneficiaries'' on whose behalf an individual retirement account is established includes (except where the context indicates otherwise) the estate of the individual, dependents of the individual, and any person designated by the individual to share in the benefits of the account after the death of the individual.

(c) *Accounts established by employers and certain association of employees*—(1) *In general.* A trust created or organized in the United States (as defined in section 7701(a)(9)) by an employer for the exclusive benefit of his employees or their beneficiaries, or by an association of employees for the exclusive benefit of its members or their beneficiaries, is treated as an individual retirement account if the requirements of paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section are satisfied under the written governing instrument creating the trust. A trust described in the preceding sentence is for the exclusive benefit of employees or members even though it may maintain an account for former employees or members and employees who are temporarily on leave.

(2) *General requirements.* The trust must satisfy the requirements of paragraphs (b) (1) through (7) of this section.

(3) *Special requirement.* There must be a separate accounting for the interest of each employee or member.

(4) *Definitions*—(i) *Separate accounting.* For purposes of paragraph (c)(3) of this section, the term ''separate accounting'' means that separate records must be maintained with respect to the interest of each individual for whose benefit the trust is maintained. The assets of the trust may be held in a common trust fund, common investment fund, or common fund for the account of all individuals who have an interest in the trust.

(ii) *Employee association.* For purposes of this paragraph and section 408(c), the term ''employee association'' means any organization composed of two or more employees, including but not limited to, an employee association described in section 501(c)(4). Such association may include employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1). There must be, however, some nexus between the employees (*e.g.*, employees of same employer, employees in the same industry, etc.) in order to qualify as an employee association described in this subdivision (ii).

(d) *Custodial accounts.* For purposes of this section and section 408(a), a custodial account is treated as a trust described in section 408(a) if such account satisfies the requirements of section 408(a) except that it is not a trust and if the assets of such account are held by a bank (as defined in section 401(d)(1) and the regulations thereunder) or such other person who satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. For purposes of this chapter, in the case of a custodial account treated as a trust by reason of the preceding sentence, the custodian

of such account will be treated as the trustee thereof.

(e)(1) *In general.* The trustee of a trust described in paragraph (b) of this section may be a person other than a bank if the person demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the manner in which the person will administer trusts will be consistent with the requirements of section 408. The person must demonstrate by written application that the requirements of paragraph (e)(2) to (e)(6) of this section will be met. The written application must be sent to address prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin (see § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter). For procedural and administrative rules, see paragraph (e)(7) of this section.

(2) *Fiduciary ability*. The applicant must demonstrate in detail its ability to act within the accepted rules of fiduciary conduct. Such demonstration must include the following elements of proof:

(i) *Continuity*. (A) The applicant must assure the uninterrupted performance of its fiduciary duties nonwithstanding the death or change of its owners. Thus, for example, there must be sufficient diversity in the ownership of the applicant to ensure that the death or change of its owners will not interrupt the conduct of its business. Therefore, the applicant cannot be an individual.

(B) Sufficient diversity in the ownership of an incorporated applicant is demonstrated in the following circumstances:

(*1*) Individuals each of whom owns more than 20 percent of the voting stock in the applicant own, in the aggregate, no more than 50 percent of such stock;

(*2*) The applicant has issued securities registered under section 12 (b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78l (b)) or required to be registered under section 12(g) (1) of that Act (15 U.S.C. 78l (g)(1)); or

(*3*) The applicant has a parent corporation within the meaning of section 1563 (a) (1) that has issued securities registered under section 12 (b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (15 U.S.C. 78l (b)) or required to be registered under Section 12 (g) (1) of that Act (15 U.S.C. 78l (g)(1)).

(C) Sufficient diversity in the ownership of an applicant that is a partnership means that—

(*1*) Individuals each of whom owns more than 20 percent of the profits interest in the partnership own, in the aggregate, no more than 50 percent of such profits interest, and

(*2*) Individuals each of whom owns more than 20 percent of the capital interest in the partnership own, in the aggregate, no more than 50 percent of such capital interest.

(D) For purposes of this subdivision, the ownership of stock and of capital and profits interests shall be determined in accordance with the rules for constructive ownership of stock provided in section 1563 (e) and (f) (2). For this purpose, the rules for constructive ownership of stock provided in section 1563(e) and (f) (2) shall apply to a capital or profits interest in a partnership as if it were a stock interest.

(ii) *Established location*. The applicant must have an established place of business in the United States where it is accessible during every business day.

(iii) *Fiduciary experience.* The applicant must have fiduciary experience or expertise sufficient to ensure that it will be able to perform its fiduciary duties. Evidence of fiduciary experience must include proof that a significant part of the business of the applicant consists of exercising fiduciary powers similar to those it will exercise if its application is approved. Evidence of fiduciary expertise must include proof that the applicant employs personnel experienced in the administration of fiduciary powers similar to those the applicant will exercise if its application is approved.

(iv) *Fiduciary responsibility*. The applicant must assure compliance with the rules of fiduciary conduct set out in paragraph (e)(5) of this section.

(v) *Financial responsibility*. The applicant must exhibit a high degree of solvency commensurate with the obligations imposed by this paragraph. Among the factors to be taken into account are the applicant's net worth, its liquidity, and its ability to pay its debts as they come due.

(3) *Capacity to account.* The applicant must demonstrate in detail its experience and competence with respect to accounting for the interests of a large number of individuals (including calculating and allocating income earned and paying out distributions to payees). Examples of accounting for the interests of a large number of individuals include accounting for the interests of a large number of shareholders in a regulated investment company and accounting for the interests of a large number of variable annuity contract holders.

(4) *Fitness to handle funds*—(i) *In general.* The applicant must demonstrate in detail its experience and competence with respect to other activities normally associated with the handling of retirement funds.

(ii) *Examples.* Examples of activities normally associated with the handling of retirement funds include:

(A) To Receive, issue receipts for, and safely keep securities;

(B) To collect income;

(C) To execute such ownership certificates, to keep such records, make such returns, and render such statements as are required for Federal tax purposes;

(D) To give proper notification regarding all collections;

(E) To collect matured or called principal and properly report all such collections;

(F) To exchange temporary for definitive securities;

(G) To give proper notification of calls, subscription rights, defaults in principal or interest, and the formation of protective committees;

(H) To buy, sell, receive, or deliver securities on specific directions.

(5) *Rules of fiduciary conduct.* The applicant must demonstrate that under applicable regulatory requirements, corporate or other governing instruments, or its established operating procedures:

(i) *Administration of fiduciary powers.* (A)(*1*) The owners or directors of the applicant will be responsible for the proper exercise of fiduciary powers by the applicant. Thus, all matters pertinent thereto, including the determination of policies, the investment and disposition of property held in a fiduciary capacity, and the direction and review of the actions of all employees utilized by the applicant in the exercise of its fiduciary powers, will be the responsibility of the owners or directors. In discharging this responsibility, the owners or directors may assign to designated employees, by action duly recorded, the administration of such of the applicant's fiduciary powers as may be proper to assign.

(*2*) A written record will be made of the acceptance and of the relinquishment or closing out of all fiduciary accounts, and of the assets held for each account.

(*3*) If the applicant has the authority or the responsibility to render any investment advice with regard to the assets held in or for each fiduciary account, the advisability of retaining or disposing of the assets will be determined at least once during each period of 12 months.

(B) All employees taking part in the performance of the applicant's fiduciary duties will be adequately bonded. Nothing in this subdivision (i)(B) shall require any person to be bonded in contravention of section 412(d) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1112(d)).

(C) The applicant will employ or retain legal counsel who will be readily available to pass upon fiduciary matters and to advise the applicant.

(D) In order to segregate the performance of its fiduciary duties from other business activities, the applicant will maintain a separate trust division under the immediate supervision of an individual designated for that purpose. The trust division may utilize the personnel and facilities of other divisions of the applicant, and other divisions of the applicant may utilize the personnel and facilities of the trust division, as long as the separate identity of the trust division is preserved.

(ii) *Adequacy of net worth*—(A) *Initial net worth requirement.* In the case of applications received after January 5, 1995, no initial application will be accepted by the Commissioner unless the applicant has a net worth of not less than $250,000 (determined as of the end of the most recent taxable year). Thereafter, the applicant must satisfy

the adequacy of net worth requirements of paragraph (e)(5)(ii)(B) and (C) of this section.

(B) No fiduciary account will be accepted by the applicant unless the applicant's net worth (determined as of the end of the most recent taxable year) exceeds the greater of—

(*1*) $100,000, or

(*2*) Four percent (or, in the case of a passive trustee described in paragraph (e)(6)(i)(A) of this section, two percent) of the value of all of the assets held by the applicant in fiduciary accounts (determined as of the most recent valuation date).

(C) The applicant will take whatever lawful steps are necessary (including the relinquishment of fiduciary accounts) to ensure that its net worth (determined as of the close of each taxable year) exceeds the greater of—

(*1*) $50,000, or

(*2*) Two percent (or, in the case of a passive trustee described in paragraph (e)(6)(i)(A) of this section, one percent) of the value of all of the assets held by the applicant in fiduciary accounts (determined as of the most recent valuation date).

(D) *Assets held by members of SIPC*—(*1*) For purposes of satisfying the adequacy-of-net-worth requirement of this paragraph, a special rule is provided for nonbank trustees that are members of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation (SIPC) created under the Securities Investor Protection Act of 1970 (SIPA)(15 U.S.C. 78aaa et seq., as amended). The amount that the net worth of a nonbank trustee that is a member of SIPC must exceed is reduced by two percent for purposes of paragraph (e)(5)(ii)(B)(*2*), and one percent for purposes of paragraph (e)(5)(ii)(C)(*2*), of the value of assets (determined on an account-by-account basis) held for the benefit of customers (as defined in 15 U.S.C. 78fff–2(e)(4)) in fiduciary accounts by the nonbank trustee to the extent of the portion of each account that does not exceed the dollar limit on advances described in 15 U.S.C. 78fff–3(a), as amended, that would apply to the assets in that account in the event of a liquidation proceeding under the SIPA.

(*2*) The provisions of this special rule for assets held in fiduciary accounts by members of SIPC are illustrated in the following example.

Example—(a) Trustee X is a broker-dealer and is a member of the Securities Investment Protection Corporation. Trustee X also has been approved as a nonbank trustee for individual retirement accounts (IRAs) by the Commissioner but not as a passive nonbank trustee. Trustee X is the trustee for four IRAs. The total assets of each IRA (for which Trustee X is the trustee) as of the most recent valuation date before the last day of Trustee X's taxable year ending in 1995 are as follows: the total assets for IRA–1 is $3,000,000 (all of which is invested in securities); the value of the total assets for IRA–2 is $500,000 ($200,000 of which is cash and $300,000 of which is invested in securities), the value of the total assets for IRA–3 is $400,000 (all of which is invested in securities); and the value of the total assets of IRA–4 is $200,000 (all of which is cash). The value of all assets held in fiduciary accounts, as defined in § 1.408–2(e)(6)(viii)(A), is $4,100,000.

(b) The dollar limit on advances described in 15 U.S.C. § 78fff–3(a) that would apply to the assets in each account in the event of a liquidation proceeding under the Securities Investor Protection Act of 1970 in effect as of the last day of Trustee X's taxable year ending in 1995 is $500,000 per account (no more than $100,000 of which is permitted to be cash). Thus, the dollar limit that would apply to IRA–1 is $500,000; the dollar limit for IRA–2 is $400,000 ($100,000 of the cash and the $300,000 of the value of the securities); the dollar limit for IRA–3 is $400,000 (the full value of the account because the value of the account is less than $500,000 and no portion of the account is cash); and the dollar limit for IRA–4 is $100,000 (the entire account is cash and the dollar limit per account for cash is $100,000). The aggregate dollar limits of the four IRAs is $1,400,000.

(c) For 1996, the amount determined under § 1.408–2(e)(5)(ii)(B) is determined as follows for Trustee X: (1) four percent of $4,100,000 equals $164,000; (2) two percent of $1,400,000 equals $28,000; and (3) $164,000 minus $28,000 equals $136,000. Thus, because $136,000 exceeds $100,000, the minimum net worth necessary for Trustee X to accept new accounts for 1996 is $136,000.

(d) For 1996, the amount determined under § 1.408–2(e)(5)(ii)(C) for Trustee X is determined as follows: (1) two percent of $4,100,000 equals $82,000; (2) one percent of $1,400,000 equals $14,000; and (3) $82,000 minus $14,000 equals $68,000. Thus, because $68,000 exceeds $50,000, the minimum net worth necessary for Trustee X to avoid a mandatory relinquishment of accounts for 1996 is $68,000.

(E) The applicant will determine the value of the assets held by it in trust at

least once in each calendar year and no more than 18 months after the preceding valuation. The assets will be valued at their fair market value, except that the assets of an employee pension benefit plan to which section 103(b)(3)(A) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1023(b)(3)(A)) applies will be considered to have the value stated in the most recent annual report of the plan.

(iii) *Audits.* (A) At least once during each period of 12 months, the applicant will cause detailed audits of the fiduciary books and records to be made by a qualified public accountant. At that time, the applicant will ascertain whether the fiduciary accounts have been administered in accordance with law, this paragraph, and sound fiduciary principles. The audits shall be conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and shall involve whatever tests of the fiduciary books and records of the applicant are considered necessary by the qualified public accountant.

(B) In the case of an applicant which is regulated, supervised, and subject to periodic examination by a State or Federal agency, such applicant may adopt an adequate continuous audit system in lieu of the periodic audits required by paragraph (e)(5)(iii)(A) of this section.

(C) A report of the audits and examinations required under this subdivision, together with the action taken thereon, will be noted in the fiduciary records of the applicant.

(iv) *Funds awaiting investment or distribution.* Funds held in a fiduciary capacity by the applicant awaiting investment or distribution will not be held uninvested or undistributed any longer than is reasonable for the proper management of the account.

(v) *Custody of investments.* (A) Except for investments pooled in a common investment fund in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (e)(5)(vi) of this section, the investments of each account will not be commingled with any other property.

(B) Assets of accounts requiring safekeeping will be deposited in an adequate vault. A permanent record will be kept of assets deposited in or withdrawn from the vault.

(vi) *Common investment funds.* The assets of an account may be pooled in a common investment fund (as defined in paragraph (e)(5)(viii)(C) of this section) if the applicant is authorized under applicable law to administer a common investment fund and if pooling the assets in a common investment fund is not in contravention of the plan documents or applicable law. The common investment fund must be administered as follows:

(A) Each common investment fund must be established and maintained in accordance with a written agreement, containing appropriate provisions as to the manner in which the fund is to be operated, including provisions relating to the investment powers and a general statement of the investment policy of the applicant with respect to the fund; the allocation of income, profits and losses; the terms and conditions governing the admission or withdrawal of participations in the funds; the auditing of accounts of the applicant with respect to the fund; the basis and method of valuing assets held by the fund, setting forth specific criteria for each type of asset; the minimum frequency for valuation of assets of the fund; the period following each such valuation date during which the valuation may be made (which period in usual circumstances may not exceed 10 business days); the basis upon which the fund may be terminated; and such other matters as may be necessary to define clearly the rights of participants in the fund. A copy of the agreement must be available at the principal office of the applicant for inspection during all business hours, and upon request a copy of the agreement must be furnished to the employer, the plan administrator, any participant or beneficiary of an account, or the individual for whose benefit the account is established or that individual's beneficiary.

(B) All participations in the common investment fund must be on the basis of a proportionate interest in all of the investments.

(C) Not less frequently than once during each period of 3 months the applicant must determine the value of the assets in the fund as of the date set for the valuation of assets. No participation may be admitted to or withdrawn

from the fund except (*1*) on the basis of such valuation and (*2*) as of such valuation date. No participation may be admitted to or withdrawn from the fund unless a written request for or notice of intention of taking such action has been entered on or before the valuation date in the fiduciary records of the applicant. No request or notice may be canceled or countermanded after the valuation date.

(D)(*1*) The applicant must at least once during each period of 12 months cause an adequate audit to be made of the common investment fund by a qualified public accountant.

(*2*) The applicant must at least once during each period of 12 months prepare a financial report of the fund which, based upon the above audit, must contain a list of investments in the fund showing the cost and current value of each investment; a statement for the period since the previous report showing purchases, with cost; sales, with profit or loss; any other investment changes; income and disbursements; and an appropriate notation as to any investments in default.

(*3*) The applicant must transmit and certify the accuracy of the financial report to the administrator of each plan participating in the common investment fund within 120 days after the end of the plan year.

(E) When participations are withdrawn from a common investment fund, distributions may be made in cash or ratably in kind, or partly in cash and partly in kind: *Provided,* That all distributions as of any one valuation date must be made on the same basis.

(F) If for any reason an investment is withdrawn in kind from a common investment fund for the benefit of all participants in the fund at the time of such withdrawal and such investment is not distributed ratably in kind, it must be segregated and administered or realized upon for the benefit ratably of all participants in the common investment fund at the time of withdrawal.

(vii) *Books and records.* (A) The applicant must keep its fiduciary records separate and distinct from other records. All fiduciary records must be so kept and retained for as long as the contents thereof may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. The fiduciary records must contain full information relative to each account.

(B) The applicant must keep an adequate record of all pending litigation to which it is a party in connection with the exercise of fiduciary powers.

(viii) *Definitions.* For purposes of this paragraph (e)(5), and paragraph (e)(2)(v), and paragraph (e)(7) of this section—

(A) The term ''account'' or ''fiduciary account'' means a trust described in section 401(a) (including a custodial account described in section 401(f)), a custodial account described in section 403(b)(7), or an individual retirement account described in section 408(a) (including a custodial account described in section 408(h)).

(B) The term ''plan administrator'' means an administrator as defined in § 1.414(g)–1.

(C) The term ''common investment fund'' means a trust that satisfies the following requirements:

(*1*) The trust consists of all or part of the assets of several accounts that have been established with the applicant, and

(*2*) The trust is described in section 401(a) and is exempt from tax under section 501(a), or is a trust that is created for the purpose of providing a satisfactory diversification of investments or a reduction of administrative expenses for the participating accounts and that satisfies the requirements of section 408(c).

(D) The term ''fiduciary records'' means all matters which are written, transcribed, recorded, received or otherwise come into the possession of the applicant and are necessary to preserve information concerning the acts and events relevant to the fiduciary activities of the applicant.

(E) The term ''qualified public accountant'' means a qualified public accountant, as defined in section 103(a)(3)(D) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, 29 U.S.C. 1023(a)(3)(D), who is independent of the applicant.

(F) The term ''net worth'' means the amount of the applicant's assets less

the amount of its liabilities, as determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

(6) *Special rules*—(i) *Passive trustee.* (A) An applicant that undertakes to act only as a passive trustee may be relieved of one or more of the requirements of this paragraph upon clear and convincing proof that such requirements are not germane, under all the facts and circumstances, to the manner in which the applicant will administer any trust. A trustee is a passive trustee only if under the written trust instrument the trustee has no discretion to direct the investment of the trust funds or any other aspect of the business administration of the trust, but is merely authorized to acquire and hold particular investments specified by the trust instrument. Thus, for example, in the case of an applicant that undertakes merely to acquire and hold the stock of regulated investment companies, the requirements of paragraph (e)(5)(i)(A)(*3*) in its place, and (i)(D), and (vi) of this section shall not apply and no negative inference shall be drawn from the applicant's failure to demonstrate its experience of competence with respect to the activities described in paragraph (e)(4)(ii)(E) to (H) of this section.

(B) The notice of approval issued to an applicant that is approved by reason of this subdivision shall state that the applicant is authorized to act only as a passive trustee.

(ii) *Federal or State regulation.* Evidence that an applicant is subject to Federal or State regulation with respect to one or more relevant factors shall be given weight in proportion to the extent that such regulatory standards are consonant with the requirements of section 401. Such evidence may be submitted in addition to, or in lieu of, the specific proofs required by this paragraph.

(iii) *Savings account.* (A) An applicant will be approved to act as trustee under this subdivision if the following requirements are satisfied:

(*1*) The applicant is a credit union, industrial loan company, or other financial institution designated by the Commissioner;

(*2*) The investment of the trust assets will be solely in deposits in the applicant;

(*3*) Deposits in the applicant are insured (up to the dollar limit prescribed by applicable law) by an agency or instrumentality of the United States, or by an organization established under a special statute the business of which is limited to insuring deposits in financial institutions and providing related services.

(B) Any applicant that satisfies the requirements of this subdivision is hereby approved, and (notwithstanding subparagraph (2) of this paragraph) is not required to submit a written application. This approval takes effect on the first day after December 22, 1976, on which the applicant satisfies the requirements of this subdivision, and continues in effect for so long as the applicant continues to satisfy those requirements.

(C) If deposits are insured, but not in the manner provided in paragraph (e)(6)(iii)(A)(*3*) of this section, the applicant must submit an application. The application, notwithstanding subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, will be limited to a complete description of the insurance of applicant's deposits. The applicant will be approved if the Commissioner approves of the applicant's insurance.

(iv) *Notification of Commissioner.* The applicant must notify the Commissioner in writing of any change that affects the continuing accuracy of any representation made in the application required by this paragraph, whether the change occurs before or after the applicant receives a notice of approval. The notification must be addressed to address prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin (see § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

(v) *Substitution of trustee.* No applicant will be approved unless the applicant undertakes to act as trustee only under trust instruments which contain a provision to the effect that the grantor is to substitute another trustee upon notification by the Commissioner that such substitution is required because the applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of this paragraph or

is not keeping such records, or making such returns, or rendering such statements as are required by forms or regulations.

(7) *Procedure and administration*—(i) *Notice of approval.* If the applicant is approved, a written notice of approval will be issued to the applicant. The notice of approval will state the day on which it becomes effective, and (except as otherwise provided therein) will remain effective until revoked. This paragraph does not authorize the applicant to accept any fiduciary account before such notice of approval becomes effective.

(ii) *Notice of disapproval.* If the applicant is not approved, a written notice will be furnished to the applicant containing a statement of the reasons why the applicant has not been approved.

(iii) *Copy to be furnished.* The applicant must not accept a fiduciary account until after the plan administrator or the person for whose benefit the account is to be established is furnished with a copy of the written notice of approval issued to the applicant. This provision is effective six months after April 20, 1979 for new accounts accepted thereafter. For accounts accepted before that date, the administrator must be notified before the later of the effective date of this provision or six months after acceptance of the account.

(iv) *Grounds for revocation.* The notice of approval issued to an applicant will be revoked if the Commissioner determines that the applicant is unwilling or unable to administer fiduciary accounts in a manner consistent with the requirements of this paragraph. Generally, the notice will not be revoked unless the Commissioner determines that the applicant has knowingly, willfully, or repeatedly failed to administer fiduciary accounts in a manner consistent with the requirements of this paragraph, or has administered a fiduciary account in a grossly negligent manner.

(v) *Procedures for revocation.* The notice of approval issued to an applicant may be revoked in accordance with the following procedures:

(A) If the Commissioner proposes to revoke the notice of approval issued to an applicant, the Commissioner will advise the applicant in writing of the proposed revocation and of the reasons therefor.

(B) Within 60 days after the receipt of such written advice, the applicant may protest the proposed revocation by submitting a written statement of facts, law, and arguments opposing such revocation to address prescribed by the Commissioner in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin (see § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter. In addition, the applicant may request a conference in the National Office.

(C) If the applicant consents to the proposed revocation, either before or after a National Office conference, or if the applicant fails to file a timely protest, the Commissioner will revoke the notice of approval that was issued to the applicant.

(D) If, after considering the applicant's protest and any information developed in conference, the Commissioner determines that the applicant is unwilling or unable to administer fiduciary accounts in a manner consistent with the requirements of this paragraph, the Commissioner will revoke the notice of approval that was issued to the applicant and will furnish the applicant with a written statement of findings on which the revocation is based.

(E) If at any time the Commissioner determines that immediate action is necessary to protect the interest of the Internal Revenue Service or of any fiduciary account, the notice of approval issued to the applicant will be suspended at once, pending a final decision to be based on the applicant's protest and any information developed in conference.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52791, Aug. 8, 1980, as amended by T.D. 8635, 60 FR 65549, Dec. 20, 1995; 61 FR 11307, Mar. 20, 1996]

§ 1.408–3 Individual retirement annuities.

(a) *In general.* An individual retirement annuity is an annuity contract or endowment contract (described in paragraph (e)(1) of this section) issued by an insurance company which is qualified to do business under the law

of the jurisdiction in which the contract is sold and which satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section. A participation certificate in a group contract issued by an insurance company described in this paragraph will be treated as an individual retirement annuity if the contract satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section; the certificate of participation sets forth the requirements of paragraphs (1) through (5) of section 408 (b); the contract provides for a separate accounting of the benefit allocable to each participant-owner; and the group contract is for the exclusive benefit of the participant owners and their beneficiaries. For purposes of this title, a participant-owner of a group contract described in this paragraph shall be treated as the owner of an individual retirement annuity. A contract will not be treated as other than an individual retirement annuity merely because it provides for waiver of premium on disability. An individual retirement annuity contract which satisfies the requirements of section 408 (b) need not be purchased under a trust if the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section are satisfied. An individual retirement endowment contract may not be held under a trust which satisfies the requirements of section 408 (a). Distribution of the contract is not a taxable event. Distributions under the contract are includible in gross income in accordance with the provisions of § 1.408–4 (e).

(b) *Requirements*—(1) *Transferability*. The annuity or the endowment contract must not be transferable by the owner. An annuity or endowment contract is transferable if the owner can transfer any portion of his interest in the contract to any person other than the issuer thereof. Accordingly, such a contract is transferable if the owner can sell, assign, discount, or pledge as collateral for a loan or as security for the performance of an obligation or for any other purpose his interest in the contract to any person other than the issuer thereof. On the other hand, a contract is not to be considered transferable merely because the contract contains: a provision permitting the individual to designate a beneficiary to receive the proceeds in the event of his death, a provision permitting the individual to elect a joint and survivor annuity, or other similar provisions.

(2) *Annual premium*. Except in the case of a contribution to a simplified employee pension described in section 408 (k), the annual premium on behalf of any individual for the annuity or the endowment contract cannot exceed $1,500. Any refund of premiums must be applied before the close of the calendar year following the year of the refund toward the payment of future premiums or the purchase of additional benefits.

(3) *Distribution*. The entire interest of the owner must be distributed to him in the same manner and over the same period as described in § 1.408–2 (b) (6).

(4) *Distribution upon death*. If the owner dies before the entire interest has been distributed to him, or if distribution has commenced to the surviving spouse, the remaining interest must be distributed in the same manner, over the same period, and to the same beneficiaries as described in § 1.408–2 (b) (7).

(5) *Nonforfeitability*. The entire interest of the owner in the annuity or endowment contract must be nonforfeitable.

(6) *Flexible premium*. [Reserved]

(c) *Disqualification*. If during any taxable year the owner of an annuity borrows any money under the annuity or endowment contract or by use of such contract (including, but not limited to, pledging the contract as security for any loan), such contract will cease to be an individual retirement annuity as of the first day of such taxable year, and will not be an individual retirement annuity at any time thereafter. If an annuity or endowment contract which constitutes an individual retirement annuity is disqualified as a result of the preceding sentence, an amount equal to the fair market value of the contract as of the first day of the taxable year of the owner in which such contract is disqualified is deemed to be distributed to the owner. Such owner shall include in gross income for such year an amount equal to the fair market value of such contract as of such first day. The preceding sentence applies even though part of the fair market value of the individual retirement

annuity as of the first day of the taxable year is attributable to excess contributions which may be returned tax-free under section 408(d)(4) or 408(d)(5).

(d) *Premature distribution tax on deemed distribution.* If the individual has not attained age 59½ before the beginning of the year in which the disqualification described in paragraph (c) of this section occurs, see section 408(f)(2) for additional tax on premature distributions.

(e) *Endowment contracts*—(1) *Additional requirement for endowment contracts.* No contract providing life insurance protection issued by a company described in paragraph (a) of this section shall be treated as an endowment contract for purposes of this section if—

(i) Such contract matures later than the taxable year in which the individual in whose name the contract is purchased attains the age of 70½;

(ii) Such contract is not for the exclusive benefit of such individual or his beneficiaries;

(iii) Premiums under the contract may increase over the term of the contract;

(iv) When all premiums are paid when due, the case value of such contract at maturity is less than the death benefit payable under the contract at any time before maturity;

(v) The death benefit does not, at some time before maturity, exceed the greater of the cash value or the sum of premiums paid under the contract;

(vi) Such contract does not provide for a cash value;

(vii) Such contract provides that the life insurance element of such contract may increase over the term of such contract, unless such increase is merely because such contract provides for the purchase of additional benefits;

(viii) Such contract provides insurance other than life insurance and waiver of premiums upon disability; or

(ix) Such contract is issued after November 6, 1978.

(2) *Treatment of proceeds under endowment contract upon death of individual.* In the case of the payment of a death benefit under an endowment contract upon the death of the individual in whose name the contract is purchased, the portion of such payment which is equal to the cash value immediately before the death of such individual is not excludable from gross income under section 101(a) and is treated as a distribution from an individual retirement annuity. The remaining portion, if any, of such payment constitutes current life insurance protection and is excludable under section 101(a). If a death benefit is paid under an endowment contract at a date or dates later than the death of the individual, section 101(d) is applicable only to the portion of the benefit which is attributable to the amount excludable under section 101(a).

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52792, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.408–4 Treatment of distributions from individual retirement arrangements.

(a) *General rule*—(1) *Inclusion in income.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, any amount actually paid or distributed or deemed paid or distributed from an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity shall be included in the gross income of the payee or distributee for the taxable year in which the payment or distribution is received.

(2) *Zero basis.* Notwithstanding section 1015(d) or any other provision of the Code, the basis (or investment in the contract) of any person in such an account or annuity is zero. For purposes of this section, an assignment of an individual's rights under an individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity shall, except as provided in § 1.408–4(g) (relating to transfer incident to divorce), be deemed a distribution to such individual from such account or annuity of the amount assigned.

(b) *Rollover contribution*—(1) *To individual retirement arrangement.* Paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall not apply to any amount paid or distributed from an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity to the individual for whose benefit the account was established or who is the owner of the annuity if the entire amount received (including the same amount of money and any other property) is paid into an individual retirement account, annuity (other than an endowment contract), or bond created

for the benefit of such individual not later than the 60th day after the day on which he receives the payment or distribution.

(2) *To qualified plan.* Paragraph (a)(1) of this section does not apply to any amount paid or distributed from an individual retirement account or individual retirement annuity to the individual for whose benefit the account was established or who is the owner of the annuity if—

(i) No amount in the account or no part of the value of the annuity is attributable to any source other than a rollover contribution from an employees' trust described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a) or a rollover contribution from an annuity plan described in section 403(a) and the earnings on such sums, and

(ii) The entire amount received (including the same amount of money and any other property) represents the entire amount in the account and is paid into another such trust or plan (for the benefit of such individual) not later than the 60th day after the day on which the payment or distribution is received.

This subparagraph does not apply if any portion of the rollover contribution described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section is attributable to an employees' trust forming part of a plan or an annuity under which the individual was an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) at the time contributions were made on his behalf under the plan.

(3) *To section 403(b) contract.* [Reserved]

(4) *Frequency limitation.* (i) For taxable years beginning on or before December 31, 1977, paragraph (b)(1) of this section does not apply to any amount received by an individual from an individual retirement account, annuity or bond if at any time during the 3-year period ending on the day of receipt, the individual received any other amount from an individual retirement account, annuity or bond which was not includible in his gross income because of the application of paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(ii) [Reserved]

(c) *Excess contributions returned before due date of return*—(1) *Excess contribution.* For purposes of this paragraph, excess contributions are the excess of the amounts contributed to an individual retirement account or paid for an individual retirement annuity during the taxable year over the amount allowable as a deduction under section 219 or 220 for the taxable year.

(2) *General rule.* (i) Paragraph (a)(1) of this section does not apply to the distribution of any excess contribution paid during a taxable year to an account or annuity if: the distribution is received on or before the date prescribed by law (including extensions) for filing the individual's return for such taxable year; no deduction is allowed under section 219 or section 220 with respect to the excess contribution; and the distribution is accompanied by the amount of net income attributable to the excess contribution as of the date of the distribution as determined under subdivision (ii).

(ii) The amount of net income attributable to the excess contributions is an amount which bears the same ratio to the net income earned by the account during the computation period as the excess contribution bears to the sum of the balance of the account as of the first day of the taxable year in which the excess contribution is made and the total contribution made for such taxable year. For purposes of this paragraph, the term ''computation period'' means the period beginning on the first day of the taxable year in which the excess contribution is made and ending on the date of the distribution from the account.

(iii) For purposes of paragraph (c)(2)(ii), the net income earned by the account during the computation period is the fair market value of the balance of the account immediately after the distribution increased by the amount of distributions from the account during the computation period, and reduced (but not below zero) by the sum of: (A) the fair market value of the balance of the account as of the first day of the taxable year in which the excess contribution is made and (B) the contributions to the account made during the computation period.

(3) *Time of inclusion.* (i) For taxable years beginning before January 1, 1977, the amount of net income determined under subparagraph (2) is includible in the gross income of the individual for the taxable year in which it is received. The amount of net income thus distributed is subject to the tax imposed by section 408(f)(1) for the year includible in gross income.

(ii) [Reserved]

(4) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. On January 1, 1975, A, age 55, who is a calendar-year taxpayer, contributes $1,500 to an individual retirement account established for his benefit. For 1975, A is entitled to a deduction of $1,400 under section 219. For 1975, A does not claim as deductions any other items listed in section 62. A's gross income for 1975 is $9,334. On April 1, 1976, $107 is distributed to A from his individual retirement account. As of such date, the balance of the account is $1,498 [$1,605 − $107]. There were no other distributions from the account as of such date. The net amount of income earned by the account is $105 [$1,498 + $107 − (0 + $1,500)]. The net income attributable to the excess contribution is $7. [$105 × ($100/$1,500)]. A's adjusted gross income for 1975 is his gross income for 1975 ($9,334) reduced by the amount allowable to A as a deduction under section 219 ($1,400), or $7,934. A will include the $7 of the $107 distributed on April 1, 1976, in his gross income for 1976. Further, A will pay an additional income tax of $.70 for 1976 under section 408(f)(1).

(d) *Deemed distribution*—(1) *General rule.* In any case in which an individual retirement account ceases to be an individual retirement account by reason of the application of section 408(e)(2), paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall apply as if there were a distribution on the first day of the taxable year in which such account ceases to be an individual retirement account of an amount equal to the fair market value on such day of all of the assets in the account on such day. In the case of a deemed distribution from an individual retirement annuity, see § 1.408–3(d).

(2) *Using account as security.* In any case in which an individual for whose benefit an individual retirement account is established uses, directly or indirectly, all or any portion of the account as security for a loan, paragraph (a)(1) of this section shall apply as if there were distributed on the first day of the taxable year in which the loan was made an amount equal to that portion of the account used as security for such loan.

(e) *Distribution of annuity contracts.* Paragraph (a)(1) of this section does not apply to any annuity contract which is distributed from an individual retirement account and which satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (b) (1), (3), (4) and (5) of section 408. Amounts distributed under such contracts will be taxable to the distributee under section 72. For purposes of applying section 72 to a distribution from such a contract, the investment in such contract is zero.

(f) *Treatment of assets distributed from an individual retirement account for the purchase of an endowment contract.* Under section 408(e)(5), if all, or any portion, of the assets of an individual retirement account are used to purchase an endowment contract described in § 1.408–3(e) for the benefit of the individual for whose benefit the account is established—

(1) The excess, if any, of the total amount of assets used to purchase such contract over the portion of the assets attributable to life insurance protection shall be treated as a rollover contribution described in section 408(d)(3), and

(2) The portion of the assets attributable to life insurance protection shall be treated as a distribution described in paragraph (a)(91) of this section, except that the provisions of section 408(f) shall not apply to such amount.

(g) *Transfer incident to divorce*—(1) *General rule.* The transfer of an individual's interest, in whole or in part, in an individual retirement account, individual retirement annuity, or a retirement bond, to his former spouse under a valid divorce decree or a written instrument incident to such divorce shall not be considered to be a distribution from such an account or annuity to such individual or his former spouse; nor shall it be considered a taxable transfer by such individual to his former spouse notwithstanding any other provision of Subtitle A of the Code.

(2) *Spousal account.* The interest described in this paragraph (g) which is

transferred to the former spouse shall be treated as an individual retirement account of such spouse if the interest is an individual retirement account; an individual retirement annuity of such spouse if such interest is an individual retirement annuity; and a retirement bond of such spouse if such interest is a retirement bond.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52793, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.408–5 Annual reports by trustees or issuers.

(a) *In general.* The trustee of an individual retirement account or the issuer of an individual retirement annuity shall make annual calendar year reports concerning the status of the account or annuity. The report shall contain the information required in paragraph (b) and be furnished or filed in the manner and time specified in paragraph (c).

(b) *Information required to be included in the annual reports.* The annual calendar year report shall contain the following information for transactions occurring during the calendar year—

(1) The amount of contributions;

(2) The amount of distributions;

(3) In the case of an endowment contract, the amount of the premium paid allocable to the cost of life insurance;

(4) The name and address of the trustee or issuer; and

(5) Such other information as the Commissioner may require.

(c) *Manner and time for filing.* (1) The annual report shall be furnished to the individual on whose behalf the account is established or in whose name the annuity is purchased (or the beneficiary of the individual or owner). The report shall be furnished on or before the 30th day of June following the calendar year for which the report is required.

(2) The Commissioner may require the annual report to be filed with the Service at the time the Commissioner specifies.

(d) *Penalties.* Section 6693 prescribes penalties for failure to file the annual report.

(e) *Effective date.* This section shall apply to reports for calendar years after 1978.

(f) *Reports for years prior to 1979.* For years prior to 1979, a trustee or issuer shall make reports in the time and manner as the Commissioner requires.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52795, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.408–6 Disclosure statements for individual retirement arrangements.

(a) *In general*—(1) *General rule.* Trustees and issuers of individual retirement accounts and annuities are, under the authority of section 408(i), required to provide disclosure statements. This section sets forth these requirements.

(2) [Reserved]

(b)–(c) [Reserved]

(d) *Requirements.* (1)—(3) [Reserved]

(4) *Disclosure statements*—(i) Under the authority contained in section 408(i), a disclosure statement shall be furnished in accordance with the provisions of this subparagraph by the trustee of an individual retirement account described in section 408(a) or the issuer of an individual retirement annuity described in section 408(b) or of an endowment contract described in section 408(b) to the individual (hereinafter referred to as the ''benefited individual'') for whom such an account, annuity, or contract is, or is to be, established.

(ii)(A)*(1)* The trustee or issuer shall furnish, or cause to be furnished, to the benefited individual, a disclosure statement satisfying the requirements of subdivisions (iii) through (viii) of this subparagraph, as applicable, and a copy of the governing instrument to be used in establishing the account, annuity, or endowment contract. The copy of such governing instrument need not be filled in with financial and other data pertaining to the benefited individual; however, such copy must be complete in all other respects. The disclosure statement and copy of the governing instrument must be received by the benefited individual at least seven days preceding the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase of the account, annuity, or endowment contract. A disclosure statement or copy of the governing instrument required by this subparagraph may be received by the benefited individual less than seven days preceding, but no later than, the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase, if the benefited individual is permitted to revoke the account, annuity, or endowment contract pursuant to a procedure which

satisfies the requirements of subdivision (ii)(A)(*2*) of this subparagraph.

(*2*) A procedure for revocation satisfies the requirements of this subdivision (ii)(A)(*2*) of this subparagraph if the benefited individual is permitted to revoke the account, or endowment contract by mailing or delivering, at his option, a notice of revocation on or before a day not less than seven days after the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase and, upon revocation, is entitled to a return of the entire amount of the consideration paid by him for the account, annuity, or endowment contract without adjustment for such items as sales commissions, administrative expenses or fluctuation in market value. The procedure may require that the notice be in writing or that it be oral, or it may require both a written and an oral notice. If an oral notice is required or permitted, the procedure must permit it to be delivered by telephone call during normal business hours. If a written notice is required or permitted, the procedure must provide that, if mailed, it shall be deemed mailed on the date of the postmark (or if sent by certified or registered mail, the date of certification or registration) if it is deposited in the mail in the United States in an envelope, or other appropriate wrapper, first class postage prepaid, properly addressed.

(B) If after a disclosure statement has been furnished, or caused to be furnished, to the benefited individual pursuant to paragraph (d)(4)(ii)(A) of this section and—

(*1*) On or before the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase, or

(*2*) On or before the last day on which the benefited individual is permitted to revoke the account, annuity, or endowment contract (if the benefited individual has a right to revoke the account, annuity, or endowment contract pursuant to the rules of subdivision (ii)(A) of this subparagraph).

there becomes effective a material adverse change in the information set forth in such disclosure statement or a material change in the governing instrument to be used in establishing the account, annuity, or contract, the trustee or issuer shall furnish, or cause to be furnished, to the benefited individual such amendments to any previously furnished disclosure statement or governing instrument as may be necessary to adequately inform the benefited individual of such change. The trustee or issuer shall be treated as satisfying this subdivision (ii)(B) of this subparagraph only if material required to be furnished by this subdivision is received by the benefited individual at least seven days preceding the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase of the account, annuity, or endowment contract or if the benefited individual is permitted to revoke the account, annuity, or endowment contract on or before a date not less than seven days after the date on which such material is received, pursuant to a procedure for revocation otherwise satisfying the provisions of subdivision (ii)(A)(*2*) of this subparagraph.

(C) If the governing instrument is amended after the account, annuity, or endowment contract is no longer subject to revocation pursuant to subdivision (ii)(A) or (B) of this subparagraph, the trustee or issuer shall not later than the 30th day after the later of the date on which the amendment is adopted or becomes effective, deliver or mail to the last known address of the benefited individual a copy of such amendment and, if such amendment affects a matter described in subdivisions (iii) through (viii) of this subparagraph, a disclosure statement with respect to such matter meeting the requirements of subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph.

(D) For purposes of subdivision (ii)(A) and (B) of this subparagraph, if a disclosure statement, governing instrument, or an amendment to either, is mailed to the benefited individual, it shall be deemed (in the absence of evidence to the contrary) to be received by the benefited individual seven days after the date of mailing.

(E) In the case of a trust described in section 408(c) (relating to certain retirement savings arrangements for employees or members of associations of employees), the following special rules shall be applied:

(*1*) For purposes of this subparagraph, references to the benefited individual's account, annuity, or endowment contract shall refer to the benefited individual's interest in such trust, and

(*2*) The provisions of subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph shall be applied by substituting ''the date on which the benefited individual's interest in such trust commences'' for ''the earlier of the date of establishment or purchase'' wherever it appear therein.

Thus, for example, if an employer establishes a trust described in section 408(c) for the benefit of employees, and the trustee furnishes an employee with a disclosure statement and a copy of the governing instrument (as required by this subparagraph) on the date such employee's interest in the trust commences, such employee must be given a right to revoke such interest within a period of at least seven days. If any contribution has been made within such period (whether by the employee or by the employer), the full amount of such contribution must be paid to such employee pursuant to subdivision (ii)(A)(*2*) of this subparagraph.

(iii) The disclosure statement required by this subparagraph shall set forth in nontechnical language the following matters as such matters relate to the account, annuity, or endowment contract (as the case may be);

(A) Concise explanations of—

(*1*) The statutory requirements prescribed in section 408(a) (relating to an individual retirement account) or section 408(b) (relating to an individual retirement annuity and an endowment contract), and any additional requirements (whether or not required by law) that pertain to the particular retirement savings arrangement.

(*2*) The income tax consequences of establishing an account, annuity, or endowment contract (as the case may be) which meets the requirements of section 408(a) relating to an individual retirement account) or section 408(b) (relating to an individual retirement annuity and an endowment contract), including the deductibility of contributions to, the tax treatment of distributions (other than premature distributions) from, the availability of income tax free rollovers to and from, and the tax status of such account, annuity, or endowment contract.

(*3*) The limitations and restrictions on the deduction for retirement savings under section 219, including the ineligibility of certain individuals who are active participants in a plan described in section 219(b)(2)(A) or for whom amounts are contributed under a contract described in section 219(b)(2)(B) to make deductible contributions to an account or for an annuity or endowment contract.

(*4*) The circumstances under which the benefited individual may revoke the account, annuity, or endowment contract, and the procedure therefor (including the name, address, and telephone number of the person designated to receive notice of such revocation). Such explanation shall be prominently displayed at the beginning of the disclosure statement.

(B) Statements to the effect that—

(*1*) If the benefited individual or his beneficiary engages in a prohibited transaction, described in section 4975(c) with respect to an individual retirement account, the account will lose its exemption from tax by reason of section 408(e)(2)(A), and the benefited individual must include in gross income, for the taxable year during which the benefited individual or his beneficiary engages in the prohibited transaction the fair market value of the account.

(*2*) If the owner of an individual retirement annuity or endowment contract described in section 408(b) borrows any money under, or by use of, such annuity or endowment contract, then, under section 408(e)(3), such annuity or endowment contract loses its section 408(b) classification, and the owner must include in gross income, for the taxable year during which the owner borrows any money under, or by use of, such annuity or endowment contract, the fair market value of the annuity or endowment contract.

(*3*) If a benefited individual uses all or any portion of an individual retirement account as security for a loan, then, under section 408(e)(4), the portion so used is treated as distributed to such individual and the benefited individual must include such distribution in gross income for the taxable year during which he so uses such account.

(*4*) An additional tax of 10 percent is imposed by section 408(f) on distributions (including amounts deemed distributed as the result of a prohibited loan or use as security for a loan) made

before the benefited individual has attained age 59½, unless such distribution is made on account of death or disability, or unless a rollover contribution is made with such distribution.

(*5*) Sections 2039(e) (relating to exemption from estate tax of annuities under certain trusts and plans) and 2517 (relating to exemption from gift tax of specified transfers of certain annuities under qualified plans) apply (including the manner in which such sections apply) to the account, annuity, or endowment contract.

(*6*) Section 402(a)(2) and (e) (relating to tax on lump sum distributions) is not applicable to distributions from an account, annuity, or endowment contract.

(*7*) A minimum distribution is required under section 408(a) (6) or (7) and 408(b) (3) or (4) (including a brief explanation of the amount of minimum distribution) and that if the amount distributed from an account, annuity, or endowment contract during the taxable year of the payee is less than the minimum required during such year, an excise tax, which shall be paid by the payee, is imposed under section 4974, in an amount equal to 50 percent of the excess of the minimum required to be distributed over the amount actually distributed during the year.

(*8*) An excise tax is imposed under section 4973 on excess contributions (including a brief explanation of an excess contribution).

(*9*) The benefited individual must file Form 5329 (Return for Individual Retirement Savings Arrangement) with the Internal Revenue for each taxable year during which the account, annuity, or endowment contract is maintained.

(*10*) The account or contract has or has not (as the case may be) been approved as to form for use as an account, annuity, or endowment contract by the Internal Revenue Service. For purposes of this subdivision, if a favorable opinion or determination letter with respect to the form of a prototype trust, custodial account, annuity, or endowment contract has been issued by the Internal Revenue Service, or the instrument which establishes an individual retirement trust account or an individual retirement custodial account utilizes the precise language of a form currently provided by the Internal Revenue Service (including any additional language permitted by such form), such account or contract may be treated as approved as to form.

(*11*) The Internal Revenue Service approval is a determination only as to the form of the account, annuity, or endowment contract, and does not represent a determination of the merits of such account, annuity, or endowment contract.

(*12*) The proceeds from the account, annuity or endowment contract may be used by the benefited individual as a rollover contribution to another account or annuity or retirement bond in accordance with the provisions of section 408(d)(3).

(*13*) In the case of an endowment contract described in section 408(b), no deduction is allowed under section 219 for that portion of the amounts paid under the contract for the taxable year properly allocable to the cost of life insurance.

(*14*) If applicable, in the event that the benefited individual revokes the account, annuity, or endowment contract, pursuant to the procedure described in the disclosure statement (see subdivision (A)(*4*) of this subdivision (iii)), the benefited individual is entitled to a return of the entire amount of the consideration paid by him for the account, annuity, or endowment contract without adjustment for such items as sales commissions, administrative expenses or fluctuation in market value.

(*15*) Further information can be obtained from any district office of the Internal Revenue Service.

To the extent that information on the matters described in subdivisions (iii) (A) and (B) of this subparagraph is provided in a publication of the Internal Revenue Service relating to individual retirement savings arrangements, such publication may be furnished by the trustee or issuer in lieu of providing information relating to such matters in a disclosure statement.

(C) The financial disclosure required by paragraph (d)(4) (v), (vi), and (vii) of this section.

(iv) In the case of an amendment to the terms of an account, annuity, or

endowment contract described in paragraph (d)(4)(i) of this section, the disclosure statement required by this subparagraph need not repeat material contained in the statement furnished pursuant to paragraph (d)(4)(iii) of this section, but it must set forth in nontechnical language those matters described in paragraph (d)(4)(iii) of this section which are affected by such amendment.

(v) With respect to an account, annuity, or endowment contract described in paragraph (d)(4)(i) of this section (other than an account or annuity which is to receive only a rollover contribution described in paragraph (d)(4)(vi) of this section and to which no deductible contributions will be made), the disclosure statement must set forth in cases where either an amount is guaranteed over period of time (such as in the case of a nonparticipating endowment or annuity contract), or a projection of growth of the value of the account, annuity, or endowment contract can reasonably be made (such as in the case of a participating endowment or annuity contract (other than a variable annuity) or passbook savings account), the following:

(A) To the extent that an amount is guaranteed,

(*1*) The amount, determined without regard to any portion of a contribution which is not deductible, that would be guaranteed to be available to the benefited individual if (*i*) level annual contributions in the amount of $1,000 were to be made on the first day of each year, and (*ii*) the benefited individual were to withdraw in a single sum the entire amount of such account, annuity, or endowment contract at the end of each of the first five years during which contributions are to be made, at the end of the year in which the benefited individual attains the ages of 60, 65, and 70, and at the end of any other year during which the increase of the guaranteed available amount is less than the increase of the guaranteed available amount during any preceding year for any reason other than decrease of cessation of contributions, and

(*2*) A statement that the amount described in subdivision (v)(A)(*1*) of this subparagraph is guaranteed, and the period for which guaranteed;

(B) To the extent a projection of growth of the value of the account, annuity, or endowment contract can reasonably be made but the amounts are not guaranteed.

(*1*) The amount, determined without regard to any portion of a contribution which is not deductible, and upon the basis of an earnings rate no greater than, and terms no different from, those currently in effect, that would be available to the benefited individual if (*i*) level annual contributions in the amount of $1,000 were to be made on the first day of each year, and (*ii*) the benefited individual were to withdraw in a single sum the entire amount of such account, annuity, or endowment contract at the end of each of the first five years during which contributions are to be made, at the end of each of the years in which the benefited individual attains the ages of 60, 65, and 70, and at the end of any other year during which the increase of the available amount is less than the increase of the available amount during any preceding year for any reason other than decrease or cessation of contributions, and

(*2*) A statement that the amount described in paragraph (d)(4)(v)(B)(*1*) of this section is a projection and is not guaranteed and a statement of the earnings rate and terms on the basis of which the projection is made;

(C) The portion of each $1,000 contribution attributable to the cost of life insurance, which would not be deductible, for each year during which contributions are to be made; and

(D) The sales commission (including any commission attributable to the sale of life insurance), if any, to be charged in each year, expressed as a percentage of gross annual contributions (including any portion attributable to the cost of life insurance) to be made for each year.

(vi) With respect to an account or annuity described in paragraph (d)(4)(i) of this section to which a rollover contribution described in section 402(a)(5)(A), 403(a)(4)(A), 408(d)(3)(A) or 409(b)(3)(C) will be made, the disclosure statement must set forth, in cases where an amount is guaranteed over a

period of time (such as in the case of a non-participating annuity contract, or a projection of growth of the value of the account or annuity can reasonably be made (such as in the case of a participating annuity contract (other than a variable annuity) or a passbook savings account), the following:

(A) To the extent guaranteed,

(1) The amount that would be guaranteed to be available to the benefited individual if *(i)* Such a rollover contribution in the amount of $1,000 were to be made on the first day of the year, *(ii)* No other contribution were to be made, and *(iii)* The benefited individual were to withdraw in a single sum the entire amount of such account or annuity at the end of each of the first five years after the contribution is made, at the end of the year in which the benefited individual attains the ages of 60, 65, and 70, and at the end of any other year during which the increase of the guaranteed available amount is less than the increase of the guaranteed available amount during any preceding year, and

(2) A statement that the amount described in paragraph (d)(vi)(A)(*1*) of this section is guaranteed;

(B) To the extent that a projection of growth of the value of the account or annuity can reasonably be made but the amounts are not guaranteed,

(1) The amount, determined upon the basis of an earnings rate no greater than, and terms no different from, those currently in effect, that would be available to the benefited individual if *(i)* such a rollover contribution in the amount of $1,000 were to be made on the first day of the year, *(ii)* no other contribution were to be made, and *(iii)* the benefited individual were to withdraw in a single sum the entire amount of such account or annuity at the end of each of the first five years after the contribution is made, at the end of each of the years in which the benefited individual attains the ages 60, 65, 70, and at the end of any other year during which the increase of the available amount is less than the increase of the available amount during any preceding year, and

(2) A statement that the amount described in paragraph (d)(4)(vi)(B) *(1)* of this section is a projection and is not guaranteed and a statement of the earnings rate and terms on the basis of which the projection is made; and

(C) The sales commission, if any, to be charged in each year, expressed as a percentage of the assumed $1,000 contribution.

(vii) With respect to an account, annuity, or endowment contract described in paragraph (d)(4)(i) of this section, in all cases not subject to paragraph (d)(4) (v) or (vi) of this section (such as in the case of a mutual fund or variable annuity), the disclosure statement must set forth information described in subdivisions (A) through (C) of this subdivisions (vii) based (as applicable with respect to the type or types of contributions to be received by the account, annuity, or endowment contract) upon the assumption of (1) level annual contributions of $1,000 on the first day of each year, (2) a rollover contribution of $1,000 on the first day of the year and no other contributions, or (3) a rollover contribution of $1,000 on the first day of the year plus level annual contributions of $1,000 on the first day of each year.

(A) A description (in nontechnical language) with respect to the benefited individual's interest in the account, annuity, or endowment contract, of:

(1) Each type of charge, and the amount thereof, which may be made against a contribution,

(2) The method for computing and allocating annual earnings, and

(*3*) Each charge (other than those described in complying with paragraph (d)(4)(vii)(A)(*1*) of this section) which may be applied to such interest in determining the net amount of money available to the benefited individual and the method of computing each such charge;

(B) A statement that growth in value of the account, annuity, or endowment contract is neither guaranteed nor projected; and

(C) The portion of each $1,000 contribution attributable to the cost of life insurance, which would not be deductible, for every year during which contributions are to be made.

(viii) A disclosure statement, or an amendment thereto, furnished pursuant to the provisions of this subparagraph may contain information in addition to that required by paragraph (d)(4)(iii) through (vii) of this section. However, such disclosure statement will not be considered to comply with the provisions of this subparagraph if the substance of such additional material or the form in which it is presented causes such disclosure statement to be false or misleading with respect to the information required to be disclosed by this paragraph.

(ix) The provisions of section 6693, relating to failure to provide reports on individual retirement accounts or annuities, shall apply to any trustee or issuer who fails to furnish, or cause to be furnished, a disclosure statement, a copy of the governing instrument, or an amendment to either, as required by this paragraph.

(x) This section shall be effective for disclosure statements and copies of governing instruments mailed, or delivered without mailing, after February 14, 1977.

(xi) This section does not reflect the amendments made by section 1501 of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 1734) relating to retirement savings for certain married individuals.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52795, Aug. 8, 1980; 45 FR 56802, Aug. 26, 1980]

§ 1.408–7 Reports on distributions from individual retirement plans.

(a) *Requirement of report.* The trustee of an individual retirement account or the issuer of an individual retirement annuity who makes a distribution during any calendar year to an individual from such account or under such annuity shall make a report on Form W–2P (in the case of distributions that are not total distributions) or Form 1099R (in the case of total distributions), and their related transmittal forms, for such year. The return must show the name and address of the person to whom the distribution was made, the aggregate amount of such distribution, and such other information as is required by the forms.

(b) *Amount subject to this section.* The amounts subject to reporting under paragraph (a) include all amounts distributed or made available to which section 408(d) applies.

(c) *Time and place for filing.* The report required under this section for any calendar year shall be filed after the close of that year and on or before February 28 of the following year with the appropriate Internal Revenue Service Center.

(d) *Statement to recipients.* (1) Each trustee or issuer required to file Form 1099R or Form W–2P under this section shall furnish to the person whose identifying number is (or should be) shown on the forms a copy of the form.

(2) Each statement required by this paragraph to be furnished to recipients shall be furnished to such person after November 30 of the year of the distribution and on or before January 31 of the following year.

(e) *Effective date.* This section is effective for calendar years beginning after December 31, 1977.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52798, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.409–1 Retirement bonds.

(a) *In general.* Section 409 authorizes the issuance of bonds under the Second Liberty Bond Act the purchase price of which would be deductible under section 219. Section 409 also prescribes the tax treatment of such bonds. See paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Income tax treatment of bonds*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, the entire proceeds upon redemption of a retirement bond described in section 409(a) shall be included in the gross income of the taxpayer entitled to such proceeds. If a bond has not been tendered for redemption by the registered owner before the close of the taxable year in which he attains age 70½, he must include in his gross income for such taxable year the amount of the proceeds he would have received if the bond had been redeemed at age 70½. The provisions of sections 72 and 1232 do not apply to a retirement bond.

(2) *Exceptions.* (i) If a retirement bond is redeemed within 12 months after the issue date, the proceeds are excluded from gross income if no deduction is allowed under section 219 on account of the purchase of such bond. For definition of issue date, see 31 CFR 346.1(c).

(ii) If a retirement bond is redeemed after the close of the taxable year in which the registered owner attains age 70½ the proceeds from the redemption of the bond are excludable from the gross income of the registered owner or his beneficiary to the extent that such proceeds were includible in the gross income of the registered owner for such taxable year.

(iii) If a retirement bond is surrendered for reissuance in the same or lesser face amount, the difference between current redemption value of the bond surrendered for reissuance and the current surrender value of the bond reissued is includible in the gross income of the registered owner.

(3) *Basis.* The basis of a retirement bond is zero.

(c) *Rollover.* The first sentence of paragraph (b)(1) of this section shall not apply in any case in which a retirement bond is redeemed by the registered owner before the close of the taxable year in which he attains the age of 70½ if he transfers the entire amount of the proceeds of such redemption to—

(1) An individual retirement account described in section 408(a) or an individual retirement annuity described in section 408(b) (other than an endowment contract described in § 1.408–3(e)), or

(2) An employees' trust which is described in section 401(a) which is exempt from tax under section 501(a), or an annuity plan described in section 403(a), for the benefit of the registered owner, on or before the 60th day after the day on which he received the proceeds of such redemption. This subparagraph shall not apply in the case of a transfer to a trust or plan described in (c)(2) of this section unless no part of the purchase price of the retirement bond redeemed is attributable to any source other than a rollover contribution from such an employees' trust or annuity plan (other than an annuity plan or employees' trust forming part of a plan under which the individual was an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) at the time contributions were made on his behalf under the plan).

(d) *Additional tax*—(1) *Early redemption.* Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, under section 409(c) if a retirement bond is redeemed by the registered owner before he attains age 59½, his tax under chapter 1 of the Code is increased by an amount equal to 10 percent of the proceeds of the redemption includible in his gross income for the taxable year. Except in the case of the credits allowable under sections 31, 39, or 42, no credit can be used to offset the tax described in the preceding sentence.

(2) *Limitations.* Paragraph (d)(1) of this section shall not apply if—

(i) During the taxable year of the registered owner in which a retirement bond is redeemed, the registered owner becomes disabled within the meaning of section 72(m)(7), or

(ii) A retirement bond is tendered for redemption in accordance with paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section.

[T.D. 7714, 45 FR 52799, Aug. 8, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)–1 Minimum participation standards; general rules.

(a) *In general.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless the plan satisfies—

(1) The minimum age and service requirements of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)–3,

(2) The maximum age requirements of section 410(a)(2) and § 1.410(a)–4, and

(3) The minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b)(1) and § 1.410(b)–1.

(b) *Organization of regulations relating to minimum participation standards—(*1) *General rules.* This section prescribes general rules relating to the minimum participation standards provided by Section 410.

(2) *Effective dates.* Section 1.410(a)–2 provides rules under section 1017 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 relating to effective dates under section 410.

(3) *Age and service conditions.* Section 1.410(a)–3 provides rules under section 410(a)(1) relating to minimum age and service conditions.

(4) *Maximum age and time of participation.* Section 1.410(a)–4 provides rules under section 410(a) (2) and (4) relating to maximum age and time of participation.

(5) *Year of service; breaks in service.* For rules relating to years of service and breaks in service, see 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans). See § 1.410(a)–5 for rules under section 410(a)(3)(B) relating to seasonal industries and for certain rules under section 410(a)(5) relating to breaks in service.

(6) *Breaks in service.* Section 1.410(a)–6 provides special rules under section 1017(f) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 relating to amendment of break in service rules.

(7) *Elapsed time.* Section 1.410 (a)–7 provides rules under sections 410 and 411 relating to the elapsed time method of crediting years of service.

(8) *Coverage.* Section 1.410(b)–1 provides rules relating to the minimum coverage requirements provided by section 410(b)(1).

(9) *Church election.* Section 1.410(d)–1 provides rules relating to the election by a church to have participation, vesting, funding, etc., provisions apply.

(c) *Application of participation standards to certain plans*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, section 410 does not apply to—

(i) A governmental plan (within the meaning of section 414(d) and the regulations thereunder),

(ii) A church plan (within the meaning of section 414(e) and the regulations thereunder) which has not made the election provided by section 410(d) and the regulations thereunder,

(iii) A plan which has not provided for employer contributions at any time after September 2, 1974, and

(iv) A plan established and maintained by a society, order, or association described in section 501(c) (8) or (9), if no part of the contributions to or under such plan are made by employers of participants in such plan.

(2) *Participation requirements.* A plan described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall, for purposes of section 401(a), be treated as meeting the requirements of section 410 if such plan meets the coverage requirements resulting from the application of section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974. Such coverage requirements include the rules in § 1.410(b)–1(d) (special rules relating to minimum coverage requirements), that interpret statutory provisions substantially identical to section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974. In applying the rules of that paragraph (d) to plans described in this paragraph (c) employees whose principal duties consist in supervising the work of other employees shall be treated as officers, shareholders, and highly compensated employees.

(d) *Supersession.* Section 11.410(a)–1 through 11.410(d)–1 inclusive, of the Temporary Income Tax Regulation under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 are superseded by this section and §§ 1.410(a)–2 through 1.410(d)–1.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47193, Sept. 20, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980; T.D. 7735, 45 FR 74722, Nov. 12, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)–2 Effective dates.

(a) *Plans not in existence on January 1, 1974.* Under section 1017(a) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, in the case of a plan which was not in existence on January 1, 1974, section 410 and the regulations thereunder apply for plan years beginning after September 2, 1974. See paragraph (c) of this section for time plan is considered in existence.

(b) *Plans in existence on January 1, 1974.* Under section 1017(b) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, in the case of a plan which was in existence on January 1, 1974, section 410 and the regulations thereunder apply for plan years beginning after December 31, 1975. See paragraph (c) of this section for time plan is considered to be in existence.

(c) *Time of plan existence*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of this section, a plan is considered to be in existence on a particular day if—

(i) The plan on or before that day was reduced to writing and adopted by the employer (including, in the case of a corporate employer, formal approval by the employer's board of directors and, if required, shareholder), even though no amounts had been contributed under the plan as of such day, and

(ii) The plan was not terminated on or before that day.

(2) *Collectively bargained plan.* Notwithstanding subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, a plan described in section 413(a), relating to a plan maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, is considered to be in existance on a particular day if—

(i) On or before that day there is a legally enforceable agreement to establish such a plan signed by the employer, and

(ii) The employer contributions to be made to the plan are set forth in the agreement.

(3) *Special rule.* If a plan is considered to be in existence on January 1, 1974, under subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, any other plan with which such existing plan is merged or consolidated shall also be considered to be in existence on such date.

(d) *Certain existing plans may elect new provisions*—(1) *In general.* The plan administrator (as defined in section 414(g)) of a plan that was in existence on January 1, 1974, may elect to have the provisions of the Code relating to participation, vesting, funding, and form of benefit (as in effect from time to time) apply to a plan year selected by the plan year selected by the plan administrator which begins after September 2, 1974, but before the otherwise applicable effective dates determined under section 1017 (b) or (c), 1021, or 1024 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and to all subsequent plan years. The provisions referred to are the amendments to the Code made by sections 1011, 1012, 1013, 1015, 1016(a) (1) through (11) and (13) through (27), 1021, and 1022(b) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

(2) *Election is irrevocable.* Any election made under this paragraph, once made shall be irrevocable.

(3) *Procedure and time for making election.* An election under this paragraph shall be made by attaching a statement to either the annual return required under section 6058(a) (or an amended return) with respect to the plan which is filed for the first plan year for which the election is effective or to a written request for a determination letter relating to the qualification of the plan under section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) of the Code and, if trusteed, the exempt status under section 501(a) of the Code of a trust consituting a part of the plan. If the election is made with a written request for a determination letter, the election may be conditioned upon issuance of a favorable determination letter and will become irrevocable upon issuance of such letter. The statement shall indicate that the election is made under section 1017(d) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the first plan year for which the election is effective.

(e) *Examples.* The rules of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A plan is adopted on January 2, 1974, effective as of Janurary 1, 1974. The plan is not considered to have been in existence on Janurary 1, 1974.

Example (2). A plan was in existence on January 1, 1974, and was amended on November 1, 1974, to increase benefits. The fact that the plan was amended is not relevant and the amended plan is considered to be in existence on January 1, 1974.

Example (3). (i) A subsidiary business corporation is a member of a controlled group of corporations within the meaning of IRC section 1563(a). On November 1, 1974, the plan of the parent corporation is amended to provide coverage for employees of the subsidiary corporation. This amendment of the parent corporation's plan does not affect the effective date of section 410 with respect to the parent corporation's plan. No distinction is made for this purpose between employees of the parent corporation and employees of the subsidiary corporation.

(ii) If the subsidiary adopted a separate plan on November 1, 1974, under paragraph (a) of this section, section 410 would apply to that plan for its first plan year beginning after September 2, 1974. However, the adoption of a different plan by the subsidiary would not affect the time section 410 applies to the plan of the parent corporation. If, instead of adopting its own separate plan, the subsidiary merely executed an adoption agreement under the terms of the parent plan providing that a subsidiary, upon the execution of an adoption agreement, will become part of the parent plan, the effective date of section 410 with respect to such plan will not be affected by the adoption of the plan by the subsidiary.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47194, Sept. 20, 1977]

§ 1.410(a)–3 Minimum age and service conditions.

(a) *General rule.* Except as provided by paragraph (b) or (c) of this section,

a plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if the plan requires, as a condition of participation in the plan, that an employee complete a period of service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan extending beyond the later of—

(1) *Age 25.* The date on which the employee attains the age of 25; or

(2) *One year of service.* The date on which the employee completes 1 year of service.

(b) *Special rule for plan with 3-year 100 percent vesting.* A plan which provides that after not more than 3 years of service each participant's right to his accrued benefit under the plan is completely nonforfeitable (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) at the time such benefit accrues satisfies the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section if the period of service required by the plan as a condition of participation does not extend beyond the later of—

(1) *Age 25.* The date on which the employee attains the age of 25; or

(2) *Three years of service.* The date on which the employee completes 3 years of service.

(c) *Special rule for employees of certain educational institutions.* A plan maintained exclusively for employees of an educational institution (as defined in section 170(b)(1)(A)(ii)) by an employer exempt from tax under section 501(a) which provides that after 1 year of service each participant's right to his accrued benefit under the plan is completely nonforfeitable (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) at the time such benefit accrues satisfies the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section if the period of service required by the plan as a condition of participation does not extend beyond the later of—

(1) *Age 30.* The date on which the employee attains the age of 30; or

(2) *One year of service.* The date on which the employee completes 1 year of service.

(d) *Other conditions.* Section 410(a), § 1.410(a)–4, and this section relate solely to age and service conditions and do not preclude a plan from establishing conditions, other than conditions relating to age or service, which must be satisfied by plan participants. For example, such provisions would not preclude a qualified plan from requiring, as a condition of participation, that an employee be employed within a specified job classification. See section 410(b) and the regulations thereunder for rules with respect to coverage of employees under qualified plans.

(e) *Age and service requirements*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of applying the rules of this section, plan provisons may be treated as imposing age or service requirements even though the provisions do not specifically refer to age or service. Plan provisions which have the effect of requiring an age or service requirement with the employer or employers maintaing the plan will be treated as if they imposed an age or service requirement. In general, a plan under which an employee cannot participate unless he retires will impose an age and service requirement. However, a plan may provide benefits which supplement benefits provided for employees covered under a pension plan, as defined in section 3(2) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, satisfying the requirements of section 410(a)(1) without violating the age and service rules.

(2) *Examples.* The rules of this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Corporation A is divided into two divisions. In order to work in division 2 an employee must first have been employed in division 1 for 5 years. A plan provision which required division 2 employment for participation will be treated as a service requirement because such a provision has the effect of requiring 5 years of service.

Example (2). Plan B requires as a condition of participation that each employee have had a driver's license for 15 years or more. This provision will be treated as an age requirement because such a provision has the effect of requiring an employee to attain a specified age.

Example (3). A plan which requires 1 year of service as a condition of participation also excludes a part-time or seasonal employee if his customary employment is for not more than 20 hours per week or 5 months in any plan year. The plan does not qualify because the provision could result in the exclusion by reason of a minimum service requirement of an employee who has completed a year of service. The plan would not qualify even though after excluding all such employees,

the plan satisfied the coverage requirements of section 410(b).

Example (4). Employer A establishes a plan which covers employees after they retire and does not cover current employees unless they retire. Any employee who works past age 60 is treated as retired. The plan fails to satisfy the requirements of section 410(a) because the plan imposes a minimum age and service requirement in excess of that allowed by this section.

Example (5). Employer B establishes plan X, which provides that employees covered by qualified plan Y will receive benefits supplementing their benefits under plan Y to take into account cost of living increases after retirement. Plan X is not treated as imposing an age of service requirement.

Example (6). Employer C establishes a qualified plan satisfying the minimum age and service requirements. At a later time, entry into the plan is frozen so that employees not covered at that time cannot participate in the plan. The limitation on new participants is not treated as imposing a minimum age and service requirement.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47194, Sept. 20, 1977]

§ 1.410(a)–3T Minimum age and service conditions (temporary).

(a) [Reserved]

(b) *Special rule for plan with 2-year 100 percent vesting.* A plan which provides that after not more than 2 years of service each participant's right to his or her accrued benefit under the plan is completely nonforeitable (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) at the time such benefit accrues satisfies the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section if the period of service required by the plan as a condition of participation does not extend beyond the later of—

(1) [Reserved]

(2) *Two years of service.* The date on which the employee completes 2 years of service. For employees not described in § 1.411(a)–3T(e)(1), which describes employees with one hour of service in any plan year beginning after December 31, 1988, or later in the case of certain collectively bargained plans, the preceding sentence shall be applied by substituting ''3 years of service'' for ''2 years of service''.

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 239, Jan. 6, 1988]

§ 1.410(a)–4 Maximum age conditions and time of participation.

(a) *Maximum age conditions*—(1) *General rule.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if the plan excludes from participation (on the basis of age) an employee who has attained an age specified by the plan unless—

(i) The plan is a defined benefit plan or a target benefit plan, and

(ii) The employee begins employment with the employer after the employee has attained an age specified by the plan, which age is not more than 5 years before normal retirement age (within the meaning of section 411(a)(8) and § 1.411(a)–7.

For purposes of this paragraph, a target benefit plan is a defined contribution plan under which the amount of employer contributions allocated to each participant is determined under a plan formula which does not allow employer discretion and on the basis of the amount necessary to provide a target benefit specified by the plan for such participant. Such target benefit must be the type of benefit which is provided by a defined benefit plan and the targeted benefit must not discriminate in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated. For purposes of this paragraph, in the determination of the time an employee begins employment, any such time which is included in a period of service which may be disregarded under the break in service rules need not be taken into account.

(2) *Examples.* The rules provided by this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A defined benefit plan provides that an employee will become a participant upon completion of 3 years of service if at such time the employee is less than age 60. The normal retirement age under the plan is age 65. The plan also provides full and immediate vesting for each of the plan's participants. Under the plan, an employee hired at age 58 would be denied participation on account of service for the first 3 years and on account of maximum age for the remaining years even though the employee was hired more than 5 years prior to the normal retirement date. The plan therefore does not satisfy section 410(a)(2).

Example. (2). A defined benefit plan provides a normal retirement age of the later of

age 65 or completion of 10 years of service. Because no employee could ever be hired within 5 years of his normal retirement age, the plan could not exclude employees for being over a specified age.

Example (3). Prior to the effective date of section 410, a defined benefit plan with a normal retirement age of 65 contained a maximum age 55 requirement for participation. Because of the maximum age requirement, and employee hired at age 58 was excluded from the plan. This employee is age 61 at the time that section 410 first applies to the plan. The employee cannot be excluded from participation because of age. The exclusion under section 410(a)(2) is not applicable in this instance because the employee's age at the time of hire, 58, was not within 5 years of the normal retirement age specified in the plan.

Example (4). Employee A was hired at age 50 and participated in a defined benefit plan until separating from service at age 55 with 5 years of service and with no vested benefit. At age 61, employee A was rehired within 5 years of the normal retirement age of 65 after he incurred 6 consecutive breaks in service. Because A's consecutive number of 1-year breaks (6) exceeds his years of service prior to such breaks (5), his service before the breaks may be disregarded. Consequently, A's initial employment date falling within such period may be disregarded and the plan could exclude A on account of his age because his employment commenced within 5 years of normal retirement age.

(b) *Time of participation*—(1) *General rule.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless under the plan any employee who has satisfied the applicable minimum age and service requirements specified in § 1.410(a)–3, and who is otherwise entitled to participate in the plan, commences participation in the plan no later than the earlier of—

(i) The first day of the first plan year beginning after the date on which such employee first satisfied such requirements, or

(ii) The date 6 months after the date on which he first satisfied such requirements,

unless such employee was separated from service and has not returned before the date referred to in subdivision (i) or (ii), whichever is applicable. If such separated employee returns to service after either of such dates without incurring a 1-year break in service, the employee must commence participation immediately upon his return. In the case of a plan using the elapsed time method described in § 1.410(a)–7, such an employee who has a period of absence commencing before the date referred to in subdivision (i) or (ii) (whichever is applicable) must commence participation as of such applicable date no later than the date such absence ended. However, if an employee's prior service is disregarded on account of the plan's break-in-service rules then, for purposes of this subparagraph, such service is also disregarded for purposes of determining the date on which such employee first satisfied the minimum age and service requirements.

(2) *Examples.* The rules provided by this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A calendar year plan provides that an employee may enter the plan only on the first semi-annual entry date, January 1 or July 1, after he has satisfied the applicable minimum age and service requirements specified in section 410(a)(1). The plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph because an employee is eligible to participate no later than the earlier of (1) the first day of the first plan year beginning after he satisfied the applicable minimum age and service requirements, or (2) the date 6 months after he satisfied such requirements.

Example (2). A plan provides that an employee is not eligible to participate until the first day of the first plan year beginning after he has satisfied the minimum age and service requirements of section 410(a)(1). In this case, an employee who satisfies the ''6 month'' rule described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph will not be eligible to participate in the plan. Therefore, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this paragraph.

Example (3). A calendar year plan provides that an employee may enter the plan only on the first semi-annual entry date, January 1 or July 1, after he has satisfied the applicable minimum age and service requirements specified in section 410(a)(1). Employee A after 10 years of service separated from service in 1976 with a vested benefit. On February 1, 1990, A returns to employment covered by the plan. Assuming A completes a year of service after his return, A must participate immediately on his return, February 1. A's prior service cannot be disregarded, because he had a vested benefit when he separated from service. Therefore, the plan may not postpone his participation until July 1.

Example (4). Assume the same facts as in example (3). The plan has the break-in-service rule described in section 410(a)(5)(D) and

§ 1.410(a)–5(c)(4). Employee B, after he had 5 years of service but no vested benefit incurs 5 consecutive 1-year breaks. Because B's prior service can be disregarded, the plan may postpone B's participation in the plan under the rule described in section 410(a)(4) and this paragraph.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47195, Sept. 20, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)–5 Year of service; break in service.

(a) *Year of service.* For the rules relating to years of service under subparagraphs (A), (C), and (D) of section 410(a)(3), see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

Rules relating to a general rule for a year of service, hours of service, and maritime industries apply for purposes of section 410(a) and the regulations thereunder.

(b) *Seasonal industries.* For rules which relate to seasonal industries under section 410(a)(3)(B), see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefits plans.

(c) *Breaks in service*—(1) *General rule.* This paragraph provides rules with respect to breaks in service under section 410(a)(5). Except as provided in subparagraphs (2), (3), (4), and (5) of this paragraph, all of an employee's years of service with the employer or employers maintaining a plan are taken into account in computing his period of service under the plan for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)–3.

(2) *Employees under 3-year 100 percent vesting schedule—(*i) *General rule.* In the case of an employee who incurs a 1-year break in service under a plan which provides that after not more than 3 years of service, each participant's right to his accrued benefit under the plan in completely nonforfeitable (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) at the time such benefit accrues, the employee's service before the break in service is not required to be taken into account after the break in service in determining the employee's years of service under section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)-3 if such employee has not satisfied such service requirement.

(ii) *Example.* The rules of this subparagraph are illustrated by the following example.

Example. A qualified plan computing service by the actual counting of hours provides full and immediate vesting. The plan can not require as a condition of participation that an employee complete 3 consecutive years of service with the employer because the requirement as to consecutive years is not permitted under section 410(a) (5). However, such a plan can require 3 years without a break in service, i.e., 3 years with no intervening years in which the employee fails to complete more than 500 hours of service. Under a plan containing such a participation requirement, the following example illustrates when employees whould become eligible to participate.

Year	Hours of service completed		
	Employee A	Employee B	Employee C
1	1,000	1,000	1,000
2	1,000	1,000	500
3	1,000	700	1,000
4	1,000	1,000	700
5	1,000	1,000	1,000
6	1,000	1,000	1,000

NOTE.—Employee A will have satisfied the plan's service requirement at the end of year 3. Employee B at the end of year 4, and Employee C at the end of year 6.

(3) *One-year break in service*—(i) *In general.* In computing the period of service of an employee who has incurred a 1-year break in service, for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)–3, a plan may disregard the employee's service before the break until the employee completes a year of service after such break in service.

(ii) *Examples.* The rules provided by this subparagraph are illustrated by the following examples.

Example (1). Employee A completes a year of service under a plan computing service by the actual counting of hours for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1980, and incurs a 1-year break in service for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1981. The plan does not contain the provisions permitted by section 410(a)(5)(B) (relating to 3-year 100 percent vesting) and section 410(a)(5)(D) (relating to nonvested participants). Thereafter, he does not complete a year of service. As of January 1, 1982, in computing his period of service under the plan his service prior to December 31, 1981, is not

required to be taken into account for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410 (a)–3.

Example (2). The employee in example (1) completes a year of service for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1982. Prior to December 31, 1982, in computing the employee's period of service as of any date occurring in 1982, the employee's service before December 31, 1981, is not required to be taken into account for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 11.410(a)–3. Because the employee completed a year of service for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1982, however, his period of service is redetermined as of January 1, 1982. Upon completion of a year of service for 1982, the employee's period of service, determined as of any date occurring in 1982, includes service prior to December 31, 1981.

(4) *Nonvested participants*—(i) *General rule.* In the case of a participant in a plan who does not have any nonforfeitable right under the plan to his employer-derived accrued benefit and who incurs a 1-year break in service, for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410.(a)–3 the plan may disregard his years of service prior to such break if the number of his consecutive 1-year breaks in service equals or exceeds his aggregate number of years of service prior to such break. In the case of a plan using the elapsed time method described in Department of Labor regulations, the plan may disregard such years of service prior to such break if the period of severance is at least 1 year and the period of severance equals or exceeds the prior period of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. The plan may in computing such aggregate number of years of service prior to such break disregard any years of service which could have been disregarded under this subparagraph by reason of any prior break in service.

(ii) *Examples.* The rules of this subparagraph are illustrated by the following example:

Example. In 1980, A, who was hired at age 35, separates from the service of X Corporation after completing 4 years of service. At this time A had no vested benefits. In 1985, after incurring 5 consecutive one-year breaks in service, A was reemployed. Under section 410(a)(5)(D), A's 4 years of service may be disregarded because they are exceeded by the number of years of consecutive one-year breaks (5) after such service.

(d) *Special continuity rule for certain plans.* For special rules for computing years of service in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47196, Sept. 20, 1977; T.D. 7508, 42 FR 57123, Nov. 1, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)–6 Amendment of break in service rules; Transition period.

(a) *In general.* Under section 1017(f) (1) of the Employee retirement Income Security Act of 1974, a plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if the rules of the plan relating to breaks in service are amended, and—

(1) Such amendment is effective after January 1, 1974, and before the date on which section 410 becomes applicable to the plan, and

(2) Under such amendment, any employee's participation in the plan commences at any date later than the later of—

(i) The date on which his participation would commence under the break in service rules of section 410(a)(5), or

(ii) The earliest date on which his participation would commence under the plan as in effect on or after January 1, 1974.

(b) *Break in service rules.* For purposes of paragraph (a), the term ''break in service rules'' means the rules provided by a plan relating to circumstances under which a period of an employee's service or plan participation is disregarded for purposes of determining his rights to participate in the plan, if under such rules such service is disregarded by reason of the employee's failure to complete a required period of service within a specified period of time.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47197, Sept. 20, 1977; 43 FR 2721, Jan. 19, 1978]

§ 1.410(a)–7 Elapsed time.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Introduction to elapsed time method of crediting service.* (i) 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 sets forth the general method of crediting service for an

employee. The general method is based upon the actual counting of hours of service during the applicable 12-consecutive-month computation period. The equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3 are also methods for crediting hours of service during computaton periods. Under the general method and the equivalencies an employee receives a year's credit (in units of years of service or years of participation) for a computation period during which the employee is credited with a specified number of hours of service. In general, an employee's statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual is determined by totalling the number of years' credit to which an employee is entitled.

(ii) Under the alternative method set forth in this section, by contrast, an employee's statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual is not based upon the actual completion of a specified number of hours of service during a 12-consecutive-month period. Instead, such entitlement is determined generally with reference to the total period of time which elapses while the employee is employed (i.e., while the employment relationship exists) with the employer or employers maintaining the plan. The alternative method set forth in this section is designed to enable a plan to lessen the administrative burdens associated with the maintenance of records of an employee's hours of service by permitting each employee to be credited with his or her total period of service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan, irrespective of the actual hours of service completed in any 12-consecutive-month period.

(2) *Overview of the operation of the elapsed time method.* (i) Under the elapsed time method of crediting service, a plan is generally required to take into account the period of time which elapses while the employee is employed (*i.e.,* while the employment relationship exists) with the employer or employers maintaining the plan, regardless of the actual number of hours he or she completes during such period. Under this alternative method of crediting service, an employee's service is required to be taken into account for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting as of the date he or she first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 (a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan. Service is required to be taken into account for the period of time from the date the employee first performs such an hour of service until the date he or she severs from service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(ii) The date the employee severs from service is the earlier of the date the employee quits, is discharged, retires or dies, or the first anniversary of the date the employee is absent from service for any other reason (*e.g.,* disability, vacation, leave of absence, layoff, etc.). Thus, for example, if an employee quits, the severance from service date is the date the employee quits. On the other hand, if an employee is granted a leave of absence (and if no intervening event occurs), the severance from service date will occur one year after the date the employee was first absent on leave, and this one year of absence is required to be taken into account as service for the employer or employers maintaining the plan. Because the severance from service date occurs on the earlier of two possible dates (*i.e.,* quit, discharge, retirement or death *or* the first anniversary of an absence from service for any other reason), a quit, discharge, retirement or death within the year after the beginning of an absence for any other reason results in an immediate severance from service. Thus, for example, if an employee dies at the end of a four-week absence resulting from illness, the severance from service date is the date of death, rather than the first anniversary date of the first day of absence for illness.

(iii) In addition, for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting under the elapsed time method of crediting service, an employee who has severed from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement may be entitled to have a period of time of 12 months or less taken into account by the employer or employers maintaining the plan if the employee returns to service

within a certain period of time and performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 (a) (1). In general, the period of time during which the employee must return to service begins on the date the employee severs from service as a result of a quit, discharge or retirement and ends on the first anniversary of such date. However, if the employee is absent for any other reason (*e.g.,* layoff) and then quits, is discharged or retires, the period of time during which the employee may return and receive credit begins on the severance from service date and ends one year after the first day of absence (*e.g.,* first day of layoff). As a result of the operation of these rules, a severance from service (*e.g.,* a quit), or an absence (*e.g.,* layoff) followed by a severance from service, never results in a period of time of more than one year being required to be taken into account after an employee severs from service or is absent from service.

(iv) For purposes of benefit accrual under the elapsed time method of crediting service, an employee is entitled to have his or her service taken into account from the date he or she begins to participate in the plan until the severance from service date. Periods of severance under any circumstances are not required to be taken into account. For example, a participant who is discharged on December 14, 1980 and rehired on October 14, 1981 is not required to be credited with the 10 month period of severance for benefit accrual purposes.

(3) *Overview of certain concepts relating to the elapsed time method*—(i) *In general.* The rules with respect to the elapsed time method of crediting service are based on certain concepts which are defined in paragraph (b) of this section. These concepts are applied in the substantive rules contained in paragraphs (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g) of this section. The purpose of this subparagraph is to summarize these concepts.

(ii) *Employment commencement date.* (A) A concept which is necessary in order to credit service accurately under any service crediting method is the establishment of a starting point for crediting service. The employment commencement date, which is the date on which an employee first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 (a) (1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan, is used to establish the date upon which an employee must begin to receive credit for certain purposes (*e.g.,* eligibility to participate and vesting).

(B) In order to credit accurately an employee's total service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan, a plan also may provide for an ''adjusted'' employment commencement date (*i.e.,* a recalculation of the employment commencement date to reflect noncreditable periods of severance) or a reemployment commencement date as defined in paragraph (b) (3) of this section. Fundamentally, all three concepts rely upon the performance of an hour of service to provide a starting point for crediting service. One purpose of these three concepts is to enable plans to satisfy the requirements of this section in a variety of ways.

(C) The fundamental rule with respect to these concepts is that any plan provision is permissible so long as it satisfies the minimum standards. Thus, for example, although the rules of this section provide that credit must begin on the employment commencement date, a plan is permitted to ''adjust'' the employment commencement date to reflect periods of time for which service is not required to be credited. Similarly, a plan may wish to credit service under the elapsed time method as discrete periods of service and provide for a reemployment commencement date. Certain plans may wish to provide for both concepts, although it is not a requirement of this section that plans so provide.

(iii) *Severance from service date.* Another fundamental concept of the elapsed time method of crediting service is the severance from service date, which is defined as the earlier of the date on which an employee quits, retires, is discharged or dies, or the first anniversary of the first date of absence for any other reason. One purpose of the severance from service date is to provide the endpoint for crediting service under the elapsed time method. As

a general proposition, service is credited from the employment commencement date (*i.e.,* the starting point) until the severance from service date (*i.e.,* the endpoint). A complementary purpose of the severance from service date is to establish the starting point for measuring a period of severance from service in order to determine a ''break in service'' (see paragraph (a)(3)(v) of this section). A third purpose of such date is to establish the starting point for measuring the period of time which may be required to be taken into account under the service spanning rules (see paragraph (a)(3)(vi) of this section).

(iv) *Period of service.* A third elapsed time concept is the use of the ''period of service'' rather than the ''year of service'' in determining service to be taken into account for purposes of eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual. For purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting, the period of service runs from the employment commencement date or reemployment commencement date until the severance from service date. For purposes of benefit accrual, a period of service runs from the date that a participant commences participation under the plan until the severance from service date. Because the endpoint of the period of service is marked by the severance from service date, an employee is credited with the period of time which runs during any absence from service (other than for reason of a quit, retirement, discharge or death) which is 12 months or less. Thus, for example, a three week absence for vacation is taken into account as part of a period of service and does not trigger a severance from service date.

(v) *Period of severance.* A period of severance begins on the severance from service date and ends when an employee returns to service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan. The purpose of the period of severance is to apply the statutory ''break in service'' rules to an elapsed time method of crediting service.

(vi) *Service spanning.* Under the elapsed time method of crediting service, a plan is required to credit periods of service and, under the service spanning rules, certain periods of severance of 12 months or less for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting. Under the first service spanning rule, if an employee severs from service as a result of quit, discharge or retirement and then returns to service within 12 months, the period of severance is required to be taken into account. Also, a situation may arise in which an employee is absent from service for any reason other than quit, discharge, retirement or death and during the absence a quit, discharge or retirement occurs. The second service spanning rule provides in that set of circumstances that a plan is required to take into account the period of time between the severance from service date (*i.e.,* the date of quit, discharge or retirement) and the first anniversary of the date on which the employee was first absent, if the employee returns to service on or before such first anniversary date.

(4) *Organization and applicability.* (i) The substantive rules for crediting service under the elapsed time method with respect to eligibility to participate are contained in paragraph (c), the rules with respect to vesting are contained in subparagraph (d), and the rules with respect to benefit accrual are contained in paragraph (e). The format of the rules is designed to enable a plan to use the elapsed time method of crediting service either for all purposes or for any one or combination of purposes under sections 410 and 411. Thus, for example, a plan may credit service for eligibility to participate purposes by the use of the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 or by the use of any of the equivalences set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3, while the plan may credit service for vesting and benefit accrual purposes by the use of the elapsed time method of crediting service.

(ii) A plan using the elapsed time method of crediting service for one or more classifications of employees covered under the plan may use the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 or any of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3 for other classifications of employees, provided that such classifications are reasonable and are consistently applied. Thus, for example, a

plan may provide that part-time employees are credited under the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 and full-time employees are credited under the elapsed time method. A classification, however, will not be deemed to be reasonable or consistently applied if such classification is designed with an intent to preclude an employee or employees from attaining his or her statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting or benefit accrual. For example, a classification applied so that any full-time employee credited with less than 1,000 hours of service during a given 12-consecutive-month period would be considered part-time and subject to the general method of crediting service rather than the elapsed time method would not be reasonable.

(iii) Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(4)(i) and (ii) of this section, the use of the elapsed time method for some purposes or the use of the elapsed time method for some employees may, under certain circumstances, result in discrimination prohibited under section 401(a)(4), even though the use of the elapsed time method for such purposes, and for such employees, is permitted under this section.

(5) *More than one employer plans.* For special rules for computing years of service in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, see 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(b) *Definitions*—(1) *Employment commencement date.* For purposes of this section, the term ''employment commencement date'' shall mean the date on which the employee first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 (a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(2) *Severance from service date.* For purposes of this section, a ''severance from service'' shall occur on the earlier of—

(i) The date on which an employee quits, retires, is discharged or dies; or

(ii) The first anniversary of the first date of a period in which an employee remains absent from service (with or without pay) with the employer or employers maintaining the plan for any reason other than quit, retirement, discharge or death, such as vacation, holiday, sickness, disability, leave of absence or layoff.

(3) *Reemployment commencement date.* For purposes of this section, the term ''reemployment commencement date'' shall mean the first date, following a period of severance from service which is not required to be taken into account under the service spanning rules in paragraphs (c)(2)(iii) and (d)(1)(iii) of this section, on which the employee performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(4) *Participation commencement date.* For purposes of this section, the term ''participation commencement date'' shall mean the date a participant first commences participation under the plan.

(5) *Period of severance.* For purposes of this section, the term ''period of severance'' shall mean the period of time commencing on the severance from service date and ending on the date on which the employee again performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) for an employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(6) *Period of service*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of this section, the term ''period of service'' shall mean a period of service commencing on the employee's employment commencement date or reemployment commencement date, whichever is applicable, and ending on the severance from service date.

(ii) *Aggregation rule.* Unless a plan provides in some manner for an ''adjusted'' employment commencement date or similar method of consolidating periods of service, periods of service shall be aggregated unless such periods may be disregarded under section 410(a)(5) or 411(a)(4).

(iii) *Other federal law.* Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter, amend, modify, invalidate, impair or supersede any law of the United States or any rule or regulation issued under such law. Thus, for example, nothing in this section shall be construed as denying an employee credit for a ''period of

service'' if credit is required by a separate federal law. Furthermore, the nature and extent of such credit shall be determined under such law.

(c) *Eligibility to participate*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of section 410(a)(1)(A), a plan generally may not require as a condition of participation in the plan that an employee complete a period of service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan extending beyond the later of—

(i) The date on which the employee attains the age of 25; or

(ii) The date on which the employee completes a one-year period of service. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(2) *Determination of one-year period of service.* (i) For purposes of determining the date on which an employee satisfies the service requirement for initial eligibility to participate under the plan, a plan using the elapsed time method of crediting service shall provide that an employee who completes the 1-year period of service requirement on the first anniversary of his employment commencement date satisfies the minimum service requirement as of such date. In the case of an employee who fails to complete a one-year period of service on the first anniversary of his employment commencement date, a plan which does not contain a provision permitted by section 410(a)(5)(D) (rule of parity) shall provide for the aggregation of periods of service so that a one-year period of service shall be completed as of the date the employee completes 12 months of service (30 days are deemed to be a month in the case of the aggregation of fractional months) or 365 days of service.

(ii) For purposes of section 410(a)(1)(B)(i), a ''3-year period of service'' shall be deemed to be ''3 years of service.''

(iii) *Service spanning rules.* In determining a 1-year period of service for purposes of initial eligibility to participate and a period of service for purposes of retention of eligibility to participate, in addition to taking into account an employee's period of service, a plan shall take into account the following periods of severance—

(A) If an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement and the employee then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) within 12 months of the severance from service date, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance; and

(B) Notwithstanding paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, if an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement during an absence from service of 12 months or less for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, and then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) within 12 months of the date on which the employee was first absent from service, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance.

(iv) For purposes of determining an employee's retention of eligibility to participate in the plan, a plan shall take into account an employee's entire period of service unless certain periods of service may be disregarded under section 410(a)(5) of the Code.

(v) *Example.* Employee W, age 31, completed 6 months of service and was laid off. After 2 months of layoff, W quit. Five months later, W returned to service. For purposes of eligibility to participate, W was required to be credited with 13 months of service (8 months of service and 5 months of severance). If, on the other hand, W had not returned to service within the first 10 months of severance (*i.e.*, within 12 months after the first day of layoff), W would be required to be credited with only 8 months of service.

(3) *Entry date requirements*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of section 410(a)(4), it is necessary for a plan to provide that any employee who has satisfied the minimum age and service requirements, and who is otherwise entitled to participate in the plan, commences participation in the plan no later than the earlier of—

(A) The first day of the first plan year beginning after the date on which such employee satisfied such requirements, or

(B) The date six months after the date on which he satisfied such requirements, unless such employee was separated from service before the date referred to in subdivision (i) (A) or (B), whichever is applicable. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(ii) *Separation from service*—(A) *Definition.* For purposes of this section, the term ''separated from service'' includes a severance from service or an absence from service for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, regardless of the duration of such absence. Accordingly, if an employee is laid off for a period of six weeks, the employee shall be deemed to be ''separated from service'' during such period for purposes of the entry date requirements.

(B) *Application.* A period of severance which is taken into account under the service spanning rules in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section or an absence of 12 months or less may result in an employee satisfying the plan's minimum service requirement during such period of time. In addition, once an employee satisfies the plan's minimum service requirement, either before or during such period of time, such period of time may contain an entry date applicable to such employee. In the case of an employee whose period of severance is taken into account and such period contains an entry date applicable to the employee, he or she shall be made a participant in the plan (if otherwise eligible) no later than the date on which he or she ended the period of severance. In the case of an employee whose period of absence contains an entry date applicable to such employee, he or she, no later than the date such absence ended, shall be made a participant in the plan (if otherwise eligible) as of the first applicable entry date which occurred during such absence from service.

(iii) *Examples.* For purposes of the following examples, assume that the plan provides for a minimum age requirement of 25 and a minimum service requirement of one year, and provides for semi-annual entry dates.

(A) Employee A, age 35, worked for 10 months in a job classification covered under the plan, became disabled for nine consecutive months and then returned to service. During the period of absence, A completed a 1-year period of service and passed a semi-annual entry date after satisfying the minimum service requirement. Accordingly, the plan is required to make A a participant no later than his return to service effective as of the applicable entry date.

(B) Employee B, after satisfying the minimum age and service requirements, quit work before the next semi-annual entry date, and then returned to service before incurring a 1-year period of severance, but after such semi-annual entry date. Employee B is entitled to become a participant immediately upon his return to service effective as of the date of his return.

(4) *Break in service.* For purposes of applying the break in service rules under section 410(a)(5) (B) and (C), the term ''1-year period of severance'' shall be substituted for the term ''1-year break in service''. A 1-year period of severance shall be determined on the basis of a 12-consecutive-month period beginning on the severance from service date and ending on the first anniversary of such date, provided that the employee during such 12-consecutive-month period does not perform an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(5) *One-year hold-out*—(i) *General rule.* (A) For purposes of section 410(a)(5)(C), in determining the period of service of an employee who has incurred a 1-year period of severance, a plan may disregard the employee's period of service before such period of severance until the employee completes a 1-year period of service after such period of severance.

(B) *Example.* Assume that a plan provides for a minimum service requirement of 1-year and provides for semi-annual entry dates, but does not contain the provisions permitted by section 410(a)(5)(D) (relating to the rule of parity). Employee G, age 40, completed a seven-month period of service, quit and then returned to service 15 months later, thereby incurring a 1-year period of severance. After working four months, G was laid off for nine months

and then returned to work again. Although the plan may hold employee G out from participation in the plan until the completion of a 1-year period of service after the 1-year (or greater) period of severance, once the 1-year hold-out is completed, the plan is required to provide the employee with such statutory entitlement as arose during the 1-year hold-out. Accordingly, employee G satisfied the 1-year hold-out requirement as of the eighth month of layoff, and G is entitled to become a participant in the plan immediately upon his return to service after the nine-month layoff effective as of the first applicable entry date occurring after the date on which he satisfied the 1-year of service requirement (*i.e.,* the first applicable entry date after the first month of layoff). See the regulations under section 410 (a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(6) *Rule of parity*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of section 410(a)(5)(D), in the case of a participant who does not have any nonforfeitable right under the plan to his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions and who incurs a 1-year period of severance, a plan, in determining an employee's period of service for purposes of section 410(a)(1), may disregard his period of service if his latest period of severance equals or exceeds his prior periods of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(ii) In determining whether a completely nonvested employee's service may be disregarded under the rule of parity, a plan is not permitted to apply the rule until the employee incurs a 1-year period of severance. Accordingly, a plan may not disregard a period of service of less than one year until an employee has incurred a period of severance of at least one year.

(iii) *Example.* Assume that a plan provides for a minimum service requirement of one year and provides for the rule of parity. An employee works for three months, quits and then is rehired 10 months later. Such employee is entitled to receive 13 months of credit for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting (see the service spanning rules). Although the period of severance exceeded the period of service, the three months of service may not be disregarded because no 1-year period of severance occurred.

(d) *Vesting*—(1) *General rule.* (i) For purposes of section 411(a)(2), relating to vesting in accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, a plan which determines service to be taken in account on the basis of elapsed time shall provide that an employee is credited with a number of years of service equal to at least the number of whole years of the employee's period of service, whether or not such periods of service were completed consecutively.

(ii) In order to determine the number of whole years of an employee's period of service, a plan shall provide that non-successive periods of service must be aggregated and that less than whole year periods of service (whether or not consecutive) must be aggregated on the basis that 12 months of service (30 days are deemed to be a month in the case of the aggregation of fractional months) or 365 days of service equal a whole year of service.

(iii) *Service spanning rules.* In determining a participant's period of service for vesting purposes, a plan shall take into account the following periods of severance—

(A) If an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement and the employee then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) within 12 months of the severance from service date, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance; and

(B) Nothwithstanding paragraph (d)(1)(iii)(A) of this section, if an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement during an absence from service of 12 months or less for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, and then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) within 12 months of the date on which the employee was first absent from service, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance.

(iv) For purposes of determining an employee's nonforfeitable percentage

of accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, a plan, after calculating an employee's period of service in the manner prescribed in this paragraph, may disregard any remaining less than whole year, 12-month or 365-day period of service. Thus, for example, if a plan provides for the statutory five to fifteen year graded vesting, an employee with a period (or periods) of service which yield 5 whole year periods of service and an additional 321-day period of service is twenty-five percent vested in his or her employer-derived accrued benefits (based solely on the 5 whole year periods of service).

(2) *Service which may be disregarded.* (i) For purposes of section 411(a)(4), in determining the nonforfeitable percentage of an employee's right to his or her accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, all of an employee's period or periods of service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan shall be taken into account unless such service may be disregarded under paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, the following periods of service may be disregarded—

(A) The period of service completed by an employee before the date on which he attains age 22;

(B) In the case of a plan which requires mandatory employee contributions, the period of service which falls within the period of time to which a particular employee contribution relates, if the employee had the opportunity to make a contribution for such period of time and failed to do so;

(C) The period of service during any period for which the employer did not maintain the plan or a predecessor plan;

(D) The period of service which is not required to be taken into account by reason of a period of severance which constitutes a break in service within the meaning of paragraph (d)(4) of this section;

(E) The period of service completed by an employee prior to January 1, 1971, unless the employee completes a period of service of at least 3 years at any time after December 31, 1970; and

(F) The period of service completed before the first plan year for which this section applies to the plan, if such service would have been disregarded under the plan rules relating to breaks in service in effect at that time. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(3) *Seasonal industry.* [Reserved]

(4) *Break in service.* For purposes of applying the break in service rules, the term ''1-year period of severance'' shall be substituted for the term ''1-year break in service''. A 1-year period of severance shall be a 12-consecutive-month period beginning on the severance from service date and ending on the first anniversary of such date, provided that the employee during such 12-consecutive-month period fails to perform an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b–2(a)(1) for an employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(5) *One-year hold-out.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(B), in determining the nonforfeitable percentage of the right to accrued benefits derived from employer contributions of an employee who has incurred a 1-year period of severance, the period of service completed before such period of severance is not required to be taken into account until the employee has completed a 1-year period of service after his return to service. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(6) *Vesting in pre-break accruals.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(C), a ''1-year period of severance'' shall be deemed to constitute a ''1-year break in service.'' See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(7) *Rule of partity*—(i) *General rule.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(D), in the case of an employee who is a nonvested participant in employer-derived benefits at the time he incurs a 1-year period of severance, the period of service completed by such participant before such period of severance is not required to be taken into account for purposes of determining the vested percentage of his or her right to employer-derived benefits if at such time the consecutive period of severance equals or exceeds his prior periods of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(e) *Benefit accrual.* (1) For purposes of section 411(b), a plan may provide that a participant's service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan shall be determined on the basis of the participant's total period of service beginning on the participation commencement date and ending on the severance from service date.

(2) Under section 411(b)(3)(A), a defined benefit pension plan may determine an employee's service for purposes of benefit accrual on any basis which is reasonable and consistent and which takes into account all service during the employee's participation in the plan which is included in a period of service required to be taken into account under section 410(a)(5) (relating to service which must be taken into account for purposes of determining an employee's eligibility to participate). A plan which provides for the determination of an employee's service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan on the basis permitted under paragraph (e)(1) of this section will be deemed to meet the requirements of section 411(b)(3)(A), provided that the plan meets the requirements of 29 CFR 2530.204–3, relating to plans which determine an employee's service for purposes of benefit accrual on a basis other than computation periods. Specifically, under 29 CFR 2530.204–3, it must be possible to prove that, despite the fact that benefit accrual under such a plan is not based on computation periods, the plan's provisions meet at least one of the three benefit accrual rules of section 411(b)(1) under all circumstances. Further, 29 CFR 2530.204–3 prohibits such a plan from disregarding service under section 411(b)(3)(C) (which would otherwise permit a plan to disregard service performed by an employee during a computation period in which the employee is credited with less than 1,000 hours). See the regulations under section 411(b) (relating to benefit accrual).

(f) *Transfers between methods of crediting service*—(1) *Single plan.* A plan may provide that an employee's service for purposes of eligibility to participate, vesting or benefit accrual shall be determined on the basis of computation periods under the general method set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 for certain classes of employees but under the alternative method permitted under this section for other classes of employees if the plan provides as follows—

(i) In the case of an employee who transfers from a class of employees whose service is determined on the basis of computation periods to a class of employees whose service is determined on the alternative basis permitted under this section, the employee shall receive credit for a period of service consisting of—

(A) A number of years equal to the number of years of service credited to the employee before the computation period during which the transfer occurs; and

(B) The greater of *(1)* the period of service that would be credited to the employee under the elapsed time method for his service during the entire computation period in which the transfer occurs or *(2)* the service taken into account under the computation periods method as of the date of the transfer.

In addition, the employee shall receive credit for service subsequent to the transfer commencing on the day after the last day of the computation period in which the transfer occurs.

(ii) In the case of an employee who transfers from a class of employees whose service is determined on the alternative basis permitted under this section to a class of employees whose service is determined on the basis of computation periods—

(A) The employee shall receive credit, as of the date of the transfer, for a number of years of service equal to the number of 1-year periods of service credited to the employee as of the date of the transfer, and

(B) The employee shall receive credit, in the computation period which includes the date of the transfer, for a number of hours of service determined by applying one of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3 (e) (1) to any fractional part of a year credited to the employee under this section as of the date of the transfer. Such equivalency shall be set forth in the plan and shall apply to all similarly situated employees.

(2) *More than one plan.* In the case of an employee who transfers from a plan

using either the general method of determining service on the basis of computation periods set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 or the method of determining service permitted under this section to a plan using the other method of determining service, all service required to be credited under the plan to which the employee transfers shall be determined by applying the rules of paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(g) *Amendments to change method of crediting service.* A plan may be amended to change the method of crediting service for any purpose or for any class of employees between the general method set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200–2 and the method permitted under this section, if such amendment contains provisions under which each employee with respect to whom the method of crediting service is changed is treated in the same manner as an employee who transfers from one class of employees to another under paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(h) *Transitional rule.* For plans in existence on [insert the date of the publication of this document], the provisions of paragraph (f) of this section are effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1983.

[T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)–8 Five consecutive 1-year breaks in service, transitional rules under the Retirement Equity Act of 1984.

Sections 410(a)(5)(D) and 411(a)(6)(D), as amended by the Retirement Equity Act of 1984 (REA 1984), permit a plan to disregard years of service that were disregarded under the plan provisions satisfying those sections (as in effect on August 22, 1984) as of the day before the REA amendments apply to the plan. Under section 302(a) of REA 1984, the new break-in-service rules generally apply to plan years beginning after December 31, 1984. Thus, for example, assume a plan has a calendar plan year and disregarded years of service as permitted by sections 410(a)(5)(D) and 411(a)(6)(D) as in effect on August 22, 1984. An employee completed two years of service in 1981 and 1982, and then incurred two consecutive 1-year breaks in service in 1983 and 1984. The plans may disregard the prior years of service even though the employee did not incur five consecutive 1-year breaks in service. On the other hand, assume the employee completed three consecutive years of service beginning in 1980, and incurred two 1-year breaks in service in 1983 and 1984. Because, as of December 31, 1984, the years of service credited before 1983 could not be disregarded, whether the plan may subsequently disregard those years of service would be governed by the rules enacted by REA 1984.

[T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31851, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§ 1.410(a)–8T Year of service; break in service (temporary).

(a)–(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Breaks in service.*

(1) [Reserved]

(2) *Employees under 2-year 100 percent vesting schedule*—(i) *General rule.* In the case of an employee who incurs a 1-year break in service under a plan which provides that after not more than 2 years of service each participant's right to his accrued benefit under the plan is completely nonforfeitable (within the meaning of section 411 and the regulations thereunder) at the time such benefit accrues, the employee's service before the break in service is not required to be taken into account after the break in service in determining the employee's years of service under section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)–3 if such employee has not satisfied such service requirement.

(ii) *Example.* The rules of this subparagraph are illustrated by the following example:

Example. A qualified plan computing service by the actual counting of hours provides full and immediate vesting. The plan can not require as a condition of participation that an employee complete 2 consecutive years of service with the employer because the requirement as to consecutive years is not permitted under section 410(a)(5). However, such a plan can require 2 years without a break in service, i.e., 2 years with no intervening years in which the employee fails to complete more than 500 hours of service. Under a plan containing such a participation requirement, the following example illustrates when employees would become eligible to participate.

Year	Hours of service completed		
	Employee A	Employee B	Employee C
1	1,000	1,000	1,000
2	1,000	700	500
3	1,000	1,000	1,000
4	1,000	1,000	700
5	1,000	1,000	1,000

NOTE: Employee A will have satisfied the plan's service requirement at the end of year 2, Employee B at the end of year 3, and Employee C at the end of year 5.

(3) *One-year break in service*—

(i) [Reserved]

(ii) *Examples.* The rules provided by this subparagraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Employee A completes a year of service under a plan computing service by the actual counting of hours for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1989, and incurs a 1-year break in service for the 12-month period ending December 31, 1990. The plan does not contain the provisions permitted by section 410(a)(5)(B) (relating to 2-year 100 percent vesting) and section 410(a)(5)(D) (relating to nonvested participants). Thereafter, he does not complete a year of service. As of January 1, 1991, in computing his period of service under the plan his service prior to December 31, 1990, is not required to be taken into account for purposes of section 410(a)(1) and § 1.410(a)–3.

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 239, Jan. 6, 1988]

§ 1.410(a)–9 Maternity and paternity absence.

(a) *Elapsed time*—(1) *Rule.* For purposes of applying the rules of § 1.410(a)–7 (relating to the elapsed time method of crediting service) to absences described in sections 410(a)(5)(E) and 411(a)(6)(E) (relating to maternity or paternity absence), the severance from service date of an employee who is absent from service beyond the first anniversary of the first day of absence by reason of a maternity or paternity absence described in section 410(a)(5)(E)(i) or 411(a)(6)(E)(i) is the second anniversary of the first day of such absence. The period between the first and second anniversaries of the first day of absence from work is neither a period of service nor a period of severance. This rule applies to maternity and paternity absences beginning on or after the first day of the first plan year in which the plan is required to credit service under sections 410(a)(5)(E) and 411(a)(6)(E).

(2) *Example.* The rules of this section are illustrated by the following example:

Assume an individual works until June 30, 1986; is first absent from employment on July 1, 1986, on account of maternity or paternity absence; and on July 1, 1989, performs an hour of service. The period of service must include the period from employment commencement date until June 30, 1987 (one year after the date of separation for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement, or death). The period from July 1, 1987, to June 30, 1988, is neither a period of service nor a period of severance. The period of severance would be from July 1, 1988, to June 30, 1989.

(b) *Other methods.* This paragraph provides a safe harbor for plans that compute years of service under the hours of service methods or permitted equivalencies. Such a plan will be treated as satisfying the requirements of sections 410(a)(5)(E) and 411(a)(6)(E) if the plan increases the minimum period of consecutive 1-year breaks required to disregard any service (or deprive any employee of any right) by one. Thus, a plan will satisfy sections 410(a)(5)(E) and 411(a)(6)(E) without having to compute service for maternity or paternity and sections 410(a)(5)(D) and 411 (a)(4)(D) and (a)(6)(C), by increasing the period of consecutive breaks–in–service from 5 to 6.

[T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31852, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§ 1.410(a)–9T Elapsed time (temporary).

(a)–(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Eligibility to participate.*

(1) [Reserved]

(2) *Determination of one-year period of service.*

(i) [Reserved]

(ii) For purposes of section 410(a)(1)(B)(i), a ''2-year period of service'' shall be deemed to be ''2 years of service.''

(d) *Vesting*—(1) *General rule.*

(i)—(iii) [Reserved]

(iv) For purposes of determining an employee's nonforfeitable percentage of accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, a plan, after calculating an employee's period of service in the manner prescribed in this

paragraph, may disregard any remaining less than whole year, 12-month or 365-day period of service. Thus, for example, if a plan provides for the statutory three to seven year graded vesting, an employee with a period (or periods) of service which yields 3 whole year periods of service and an additional 321-day period of service is twenty percent vested in his or her employer-derived accrued benefits (based solely on the 3 whole year periods of service).

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 239, Jan. 6, 1988]

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[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47641, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10954, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46838, Sept. 3, 1993; T.D. 8548, 59 FR 32914, June 27, 1994]

§1.410(b)–1 Minimum coverage requirements (before 1994).

(a) *In general.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of the plan is not a qualified trust) unless the plan satisfies section 410(b)(1). For plan years prior to the applicable effective date set forth in §1.410(b)–10, a plan satisfies section 410(b)(1) if it satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) or (b)(2) of this section. See also §1.410(b)–2 for plan years beginning on or after the applicable effective date set forth in §1.410(b)–10.

(b) *Coverage tests*—(1) *Percentage test.* A plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph if it benefits—

(i) Seventy percent or more of all employees, or

(ii) Eighty percent or more of all employees who are eligible to benefit under the plan if 70 percent or more of all the employees are eligible to benefit under the plan,

excluding in each case employees who have not satisfied the minimum age and service requirements (if any) prescribed by the plan, as of the date coverage is tested, as a condition of participation and employees permitted to be excluded under paragraph (c) of this section. The percentage requirements of this subparagraph refer to a percentage of active employees, including employees temporarily on leave, such as those in the Armed Forces of the United States, if such employees are eligible under the plan.

(2) *Classification test.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 410(b)(1) and this subparagraph if it benefits such employees as qualify under a classification of employees set up by the employer, which classification is found by the Internal Revenue Service not to be discriminatory in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated. For purposes of this subparagraph, except as provided by paragraph (c) of this section, all active employees (including employees who do not satisfy the minimum age or service requirements of the plan) are taken into account.

(c) *Exclusion of certain employees.* Under section 410(b)(2), for purposes of section 410(b)(1) and paragraph (b) of this section, there shall be excluded from consideration employees described in subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this paragraph.

(1) *Bargaining unit.* Under section 410(b)(2)(A) and this paragraph, there may be excluded from consideration employees not included in the plan who are included in a unit of employees covered by an agreement which the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective bargaining agreement between employee representatives and one or more employers, if the Internal Revenue Service finds that retirement benefits were the subject of good faith bargaining between such employee representatives and such employer or employers. For purposes of determining whether such bargaining occurred, it is not material that such employees are not covered by another plan or that the plan was not considered in such bargaining.

(2) *Air pilots.* Under section 410(b)(2)(B) and this paragraph there may be excluded from consideration, in the case of a plan established or maintained pursuant to an agreement which the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective bargaining agreement between air pilots represented in accordance with title II of the Railway Labor Act and one or more employers all employees not covered by such agreement. Section 410(b)(2)(B) and this subparagraph do not apply to a plan if the plan provides contributions or benefits for employees whose principal duties are

not customarily performed aboard aircraft in flight.

(3) *Nonresident aliens.* Under section 410(b)(2)(C) and this paragraph, there may be excluded from consideration employees who are nonresident aliens and who receive no earned income (within the meaning of section 911(b) and the regulations thereunder) from the employer which constitutes income from sources within the United States (within the meaning of section 861(a)(3) and the regulations thereunder).

(d) *Special rules*—(1) *Highly compensated.* The classification of an employee as highly compensated for purposes of section 410(b)(1)(B) and § 1.410(b)–1(b)(2) is made on the basis of the facts and circumstances of each case, taking into account the level of the employee's compensation and the level of compensation paid by the employer to other employees, whether or not covered by the plan. Average compensation levels determined on a local, regional, or national basis, are not relevant for this purpose. Further, the classification of an employee as highly compensated is not made solely on the basis of the number or percentage of employees whose compensation exceeds, or is exceeded by, the employee's.

(2) *Discrimination.* The determination as to whether a plan discriminates in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated is made on the basis of the facts and circumstances of each case, allowing a reasonable difference between the ratio of such employees benefited by the plan to all such employees of the employer and the ratio of the employees (other than officers, shareholders, or highly compensated) of the employer benefited by the plan to all employees (other than officers, shareholders, or highly compensated). A showing that a specified percentage of employees covered by a plan are not officers, shareholders, or highly compensated, is not in itself sufficient to establish that the plan does not discriminate in favor of employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated.

(3) *Multiple plans*—(i) An employer may designate two or more plans as constituting a single plan which is intended to qualify for purposes of section 410(b)(1) and this section, in which case all plans so designated shall be considered as a single plan in determining whether the requirements of such section are satisfied by each of the separate plans. A determination that the combination of plans so designated does not satisfy such requirements does not preclude a determination that one or more of such plans, considered separately, satisfies such requirements.

(ii) Notwithstanding subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, a plan which is subject to the limitations of section 401(a)(17) of the Code or section 301(d)(3) of the Tax Reduction Act of 1975 cannot be considered with any other plan which covers any employee covered by such plan.

(4) *Profit-sharing plans.* Employees under a profit-sharing plan who receive the amounts allocated to their accounts before the expiration of a period of time or the occurrence of a contingency specified in the plan shall not be considered covered by the plan. Thus, in case a plan permits employees to receive immediately the amounts allocated to their accounts, or to have such amounts paid to a profit-sharing plan for them, the employees who receive the shares immediately shall not be considered covered by the plan.

(5) *Certain classifications.* See section 401(a)(5) and the regulations thereunder for rules relating to classifications of employees which are not considered to be discriminatory per se for purposes of section 410(b)(1)(B) and § 1.410(b)–1(b)(2).

(6) *Integration with Social Security Act.* See section 401(a)(5) and the regulations thereunder for rules relating to integration of plans with the Social Security Act.

(7) *Different age and service requirements*—(i) *Application.* The rules of this subparagraph (7) apply to a plan which must satisfy the minimum age and service requirements of section 410(a)(1)(A) in order to be a qualified plan. Accordingly, the rules are inapplicable to plans described in section 410(c)(1) (see § 1.410(a)–1(c)(1)); plans satisfying the alternative minimum age and service requirements of section 410(a)(1)(B) but not satisfying the requirements of section 410(a)(1)(A); and plans which provide contributions or

benefits for employees, some or all of whom are owner-employees (see section 401(a)(10)).

(ii) *General rules.* A provision for different age and service requirements for present and future employees either upon establishment or subsequent amendment is not, of itself, discriminatory under section 410(b)(1)(B) even though present employees who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated cannot meet the age and service requirements for future employees at the time the plan is established or amended and even though present participants who are officers, shareholders, or highly compensated would not have satisfied the age and service requirements for future employees at the time they became participants in the plan. Furthermore, prohibited discrimination will be deemed not to arise in operation, solely because of such different requirements, when future employees are added to the employer's work force.

(8) *Certain controlled groups.* In applying the percentage test and classification test described in paragraph (b) (1) and (2) of this section for a year, all the employees of corporations or trades and businesses whose employees are treated as employed by a single employer by reason of section 414 (b) or (c) must be taken into account. The preceding sentence shall apply for a plan year if, on 1 day in each quarter of such plan year, such corporations are members of a controlled group of corporations (within the meaning of section 414(b)) of such trades or businesses are under common control (within the meaning of section 414(c)).

(9) *Transitional rule.* In the case of a cash and deferred profit-sharing plan, in existence on June 27, 1974, the requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section are satisfied if over one-half of the participants in the plan are among the lowest paid two-thirds of all eligible employees. This subparagraph shall not apply after December 31, 1977.

(e) *Example.* The rules provided by this section are illustrated by the following example:

Example. An employer established a noncontributory defined benefit plan covering all employees of its ABC Division who are hired prior to age 60 and who are at least 25 years old. The normal retirement age under the plan is age 65. The employer has 100 employees including 20 employees who are under age 25 and 10 employees who were hired over age 60. The plan does not cover 15 employees who are over age 25 and were hired before age 60 because they are not in the ABC Division. Of these 15 excluded employees, 3 have less than 1 year of service. In addition, 12 of the 55 employees covered have less than one year of service. The plan can be shown not to satisfy the requirements of IRC section 410(b)(1)(A) as follows:

(i) Number of employees	100
(ii) Number of employees excluded on account of minimum age and service	20
(iii) (i)–(ii)	80
(iv) Number of employees who must be covered if plan is to satisfy IRC section 410(b)(1)(A), 70% of (iii)	56
(v) Number of employees actually covered	55

Because the number of employees covered is less than the number of employees who must be covered, the plan does not satisfy the percentage coverage requirements of IRC section 410(b)(1)(A).

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47197, Sept. 20, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7735, 45 FR 74722, Nov. 12, 1980; T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47643, Sept. 19, 1991; T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46839, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.410(b)–2 Minimum coverage requirements (after 1993).

(a) *In general.* A plan is a qualified plan for a plan year only if the plan satisfies section 410(b) for the plan year. A plan satisfies section 410(b) for a plan year if and only if it satisfies paragraph (b) of this section with respect to employees for the plan year and paragraph (c) of this section with respect to former employees for the plan year. The rules in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section apply to all plans as a condition of qualification, including plans under which no employee is able to accrue any additional benefits (for example, frozen plans). Paragraphs (d), (e), and (f) of this section provide special rules for nonelective section 403(b) plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i), for governmental and church plans subject to section 410(c), and for certain acquisitions or dispositions, respectively. See § 1.410(b)–7 for rules for determining the ''plan'' subject to section 410(b).

(b) *Requirements with respect to employees*—(1) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b) for a plan year if and only if it satisfies at least one of the

tests in paragraphs (b)(2) through (b)(7) of this section for the plan year.

(2) *Ratio percentage test*—(i) *In general.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2) for a plan year if and only if the plan's ratio percentage for the plan year is at least 70 percent. This test incorporates both the percentage test of section 410(b)(1)(A) and the ratio test of section 410(b)(1)(B). See § 1.410(b)–9 for the definition of ratio percentage.

(ii) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the ratio percentage test of this paragraph (b)(2).

Example 1. For a plan year, Plan A benefits 70 percent of an employer's nonhighly compensated employees and 100 percent of the employer's highly compensated employees. The plan's ratio percentage for the year is 70 percent (70 percent/100 percent), and thus the plan satisfies the ratio percentage test.

Example 2. For a plan year, Plan B benefits 40 percent of the employer's nonhighly compensated employees and 60 percent of the employer's highly compensated employees. Plan B fails to satisfy the ratio percentage test because the plan's ratio percentage is only 66.67 percent (40 percent/60 percent).

(3) *Average benefit test.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(3) for a plan year if and only if the plan satisfies both the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 and the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 for the plan year.

(4) *Certain tax credit employee stock ownership plans.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(4) for a plan year if and only if the plan—

(i) Is a tax credit employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 409(a)),

(ii) Is the only plan of the employer that is intended to qualify under section 401(a), and

(iii) Is a plan that satisfies the rule set forth in section 410(b)(6)(D).

This paragraph (b)(4) is available only for plan years for which the tax credit employee stock ownership plan receives contributions for which the employer is allowed a tax credit under section 41 (as in effect prior to its repeal by the Tax Reform Act of 1986) or section 48(n) (as in effect prior to its amendment by the Tax Reform Act of 1984). The requirement of this paragraph (b)(4) that the plan be the only plan of the employer that is intended to qualify under section 401(a) is not satisfied if the employer has only one plan, but that plan is treated as two or more separate plans under the mandatory disaggregation rules of § 1.410(b)–7(c).

(5) *Employers with no nonhighly compensated employees.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(5) for a plan year if and only if the plan is maintained by an employer that has no nonhighly compensated employees at any time during the plan year.

(6) *Plans benefiting no highly compensated employees.* A plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(6) for a plan year if and only if the plan benefits no highly compensated employees for the plan year.

(7) *Plans benefiting collectively bargained employees.* A plan that benefits solely collectively bargained employees for a plan year satisfies this paragraph (b)(7) for the plan year. If a plan (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7(b)) benefits both collectively bargained employees and noncollectively bargained employees for a plan year, § 1.410(b)–7(c)(4) provides that the portion of the plan that benefits collectively bargained employees is treated as a separate plan from the portion of the plan that benefits noncollectively bargained employees. Thus, the mandatorily disaggregated portion of the plan that benefits the collectively bargained employees automatically satisfies this paragraph (b)(7) for the plan year and hence section 410(b). See § 1.410(b)–9 for the definitions of collectively bargained employee and noncollectively bargained employee.

(c) *Requirements with respect to former employees*—(1) *Former employees tested separately.* Former employees are tested separately from employees for purposes of section 410(b). Thus, former employees are disregarded in applying the ratio percentage test, the nondiscriminatory classification test, and the average benefit percentage test with respect to the coverage of employees under a plan, and employees are disregarded in applying this section with respect to the coverage of former employees under a plan.

(2) *Testing former employees.* A plan satisfies section 410(b) with respect to former employees if and only if, under all of the relevant facts and circumstances (including the group of

nonexcludable former employees not benefiting under the plan), the group of former employees benefiting under the plan does not discriminate significantly in favor of highly compensated former employees.

(d) *Nonelective contributions under section 403(b) plans.* For plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989, a plan subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) with respect to nonelective contributions (i.e., contributions not made pursuant to a salary reduction agreement) is treated as a plan subject to the requirements of this section. For this purpose, a plan described in the preceding sentence must satisfy the requirements of this section without regard to section 410(c) and paragraph (e) of this section. For plan years beginning before the effective date set forth in §1.410(b)–10(d), any plan described in section 410(c)(1)(A) (regarding governmental plans) satisfies the requirements of this section.

(e) *Certain governmental and church plans.* The requirements of section 410(b) do not apply to a plan described in section 410(c)(1) (other than a plan subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) or a plan with respect to which an election has been made under section 410(d)). Such a plan must satisfy section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974. For this purpose, a plan that satisfies section 410(b) (without regard to this paragraph (e)) is treated as satisfying section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974. For plan years beginning before the effective date set forth in §1.410(b)–10(d), any plan described in section 410(c)(1)(A) (regarding governmental plans) satisfies the requirements of this section and is thus treated as satisfying the requirements of section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974. See §1.410(b)–10(b)(2) for a special rule for plans of tax-exempt organizations.

(f) *Certain acquisitions or dispositions.* Section 410(b)(6)(C) (relating to certain acquisitions or dispositions) provides a special rule whereby a plan may be treated as satisfying section 410(b) for a limited period of time after an acquisition or disposition if it satisfies section 410(b) (without regard to the special rule) immediately before the acquisition or disposition and there is no significant change in the plan or in the coverage of the plan other than the acquisition or disposition. For purposes of section 410(b)(6)(C) and this paragraph (f), the terms ''acquisition'' and ''disposition'' refer to an asset or stock acquisition, merger, or other similar transaction involving a change in employer of the employees of a trade or business.

(g) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability, provide any additional rules that may be necessary or appropriate in applying the minimum coverage requirements of section 410(b), including (without limitation) additional rules limiting or expanding the methods in §1.410(b)–5(d) and (e) for determining employee benefit percentages.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47643, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10817, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46839, Sept. 3, 1993; T.D. 8548, 59 FR 32914, June 27, 1994]

§1.410(b)–3 Employees and former employees who benefit under a plan.

(a) *Employees benefiting under a plan*—(1) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under a plan for a plan year if and only if for that plan year, in the case of a defined contribution plan, the employer receives an allocation taken into account under §1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(ii), or in the case of a defined benefit plan, the employee has an increase in a benefit accrued or treated as an accrued benefit under section 411(d)(6).

(2) *Exceptions to allocation or accrual requirement*—(i) *Section 401(k) and 401(m) plans.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(1) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under a section 401(k) plan for a plan year if and only if the employee is an eligible employee under the plan as defined in §1.401(k)–1(g)(4) for the plan year. Similarly, an employee is treated as benefiting under a section 401(m) plan for a plan year if and only if the employee is an eligible employee as defined in §1.401(m)–1(f)(4) for the plan year.

(ii) *Section 415 limits*—(A) *General rule for defined benefit plans.* In determining whether an employee is treated as benefiting under a defined benefit plan for

a plan year, plan provisions that implement the limits of section 415 are disregarded. Any plan provision that provides for increases in an employee's accrued benefit under the plan due solely to adjustments under section 415(d)(1), additional years of participation or service under section 415(b)(5), or changes in the defined contribution fraction under section 415(e) is also disregarded, but only if such provision applies uniformly to all employees in the plan.

(B) *Defined benefit plans taking section 415 limits into account under section 401(a)(4) testing.* Paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(A) of this section does not apply in the case of a defined benefit plan that uses the option in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(2)(ii)(B) to take into account plan provisions implementing the provisions of section 415 in determining accrual rates under the section 401(a)(4) general test.

(C) *Defined contribution plans.* A defined contribution plan is permitted to apply the rule in the first sentence of paragraph (a)(2)(ii)(A) of this section in determining whether an employee is treated as benefiting under the plan, provided it applies the rule on a consistent basis for all employees in the plan.

(iii) *Certain employees treated as benefiting*—(A) *In general.* An employee is treated as benefiting under a plan for a plan year if the employee satisfies all of the applicable conditions for accruing a benefit or receiving an allocation for the plan year but fails to have an increase in accrued benefit or to receive an allocation solely because of one or more of the conditions set forth in paragraphs (a)(2)(iii) (B) through (F) of this section.

(B) *Certain plan limits.* The employee's benefit would otherwise exceed a limit that is applicable on a uniform basis to all employees in the plan. Thus, for example, if the formula under a defined benefit plan takes into account only the first 30 years of service for accrual purposes, an employee who has completed more than 30 years of service is still treated as benefiting under the plan.

(C) *Benefits previously accrued.* The benefit previously accrued by the employee is greater than the benefit that would be determined under the plan if the benefit previously accrued were disregarded. This could happen, for example, when the plan is applying the wear-away formula of § 1.401(a)(4)–13(c)(4)(ii) and the employee's frozen accrued benefit exceeds the benefit determined under the current formula.

(D) *Benefit offset arrangements.* The plan offsets the employee's current benefit accrual under an offset arrangement described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(f)(9) (without regard to whether the offset is attributable to pre-participation service or past service).

(E) *Target benefit plans.* In the case of a target benefit plan that satisfies the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2) by satisfying the safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3), the employee's theoretical reserve is greater than or equal to the actuarial present value of the fractional rule benefit.

(F) *Post-normal retirement age adjustments.* The employee has attained normal retirement age under a defined benefit plan and fails to accrue a benefit because of the provisions of section 411(b)(1)(H)(iii) regarding adjustments for delayed retirement.

(iv) *Section 412(i) plans*—(A) *General rule.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(1) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under an insurance contract plan within the meaning of section 412(i) for a plan year if and only if a premium is paid on behalf of the employee for the plan year.

(B) *Exceptions.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(2)(iv)(A) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under an insurance contract plan within the meaning of section 412(i) for a plan year if the sole reason that a premium is not paid on behalf of the employee is one of the reasons described in paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section. In addition, an employee is treated as benefiting under an insurance contract plan, within the meaning of section 412(i), that is a defined benefit plan if a premium is not paid on behalf of the employee solely because the insurance contracts that have previously been purchased on behalf of the employee guarantee to provide for the employee's projected normal retirement benefit without regard to future premium payments.

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the determination of whether an employee is benefiting under a plan for purposes of section 410(b).

Example 1. An employer has 35 employees who are eligible under a defined benefit plan. The plan requires 1,000 hours of service to accrue a benefit. Only 30 employees satisfy the 1,000-hour requirement and accrue a benefit. The five employees who do not satisfy the 1,000-hour requirement during the plan year are taken into account in testing the plan under section 410(b) but are treated as not benefiting under the plan.

Example 2. An employer maintains a section 401(k) plan. Only employees who are at least age 21 and who complete one year of service are eligible employees under the plan within the meaning of § 1.401(k)–1(g)(4). Under the rule of paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section, only employees who have satisfied these age and service conditions are treated as benefiting under the plan.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 2,* except that the employer also maintains a section 401(m) plan that provides matching contributions contingent on elective contributions under the section 401(k) plan. The matching contributions are contingent on employment on the last day of the plan year. Under § 1.401(m)–1(f)(4), because matching contributions are contingent on employment on the last day of the plan year, not all employees who are eligible employees under the section 401(k) plan are eligible employees under the section 401(m) plan. Thus, employees who have satisfied the age and service conditions but who do not receive a matching contribution because they are not employed on the last day of the plan year are treated as not benefiting under the section 401(m) portion of the plan.

(b) *Former employees benefiting under a plan*—(1) *In general.* A former employee is treated as benefiting for a plan year if and only if the plan provides an allocation or benefit increase described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section to the former employee for the plan year. Thus, for example, a former employee benefits under a defined benefit plan for a plan year if the plan is amended to provide an ad hoc cost-of-living adjustment in the former employee's benefits. In contrast, because an increase in benefits payable under a plan pursuant to an automatic cost-of-living provision adopted and effective before the beginning of the plan year is previously accrued, a former employee is not treated as benefiting in a subsequent plan year merely because the former employee receives an increase pursuant to such an automatic cost-of-living provision. Any accrual or allocation for an individual during the plan year that arises from the individual's status as an employee is treated as an accrual or allocation of an employee. Similarly, any accrual or allocation for an individual during the plan year that arises from the individual's status as a former employee is treated as an accrual or allocation of a former employee. It is possible for an individual to accrue a benefit both as an employee and as a former employee in a given plan year. During the plan year in which an individual ceases performing services for the employer, the individual is treated as an employee in applying section 410(b) with respect to employees and is treated as a former employee in applying section 410(b) with respect to former employees.

(2) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the determination of whether a former employee benefits under a plan for purposes of section 410(b).

Example 1. Employer A amends its defined benefit plan in the 1995 plan year to provide an ad hoc cost-of-living increase of 5 percent for all retirees. Former employees who receive this increase are treated as benefiting under the plan for the 1995 plan year.

Example 2. Employer B maintains a defined benefit plan with a calendar plan year. In the 1995 plan year, Employer B amends the plan to provide that an employee who has reached early retirement age under the plan and who retires before July 31 of the 1995 plan year will receive an unreduced benefit, even though the employee has not yet reached normal retirement age. This early retirement window benefit is provided to employees based on their status as employees. Thus, although individuals who take advantage of the benefit become former employees, the window benefit is treated as provided to employees and is not treated as a benefit for former employees.

Example 3. The facts are the same as *Example 2,* except that on September 1, 1995, Employer B also amends the defined benefit plan to provide an ad hoc cost-of-living increase effective for all former employees. An individual who ceases performing services for the employer before July 31, 1995, under the early retirement window, and then receives the ad hoc cost-of-living increase, is treated as benefiting for the 1995 plan year both as an employee with respect to the

early retirement window, and as a former employee with respect to the ad hoc COLA.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47644, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10954, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46839, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.410(b)–4 Nondiscriminatory classification test.

(a) *In general.* A plan satisfies the nondiscriminatory classification test of this section for a plan year if and only if, for the plan year, the plan benefits the employees who qualify under a classification established by the employer in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section, and the classification of employees is nondiscriminatory under paragraph (c) of this section.

(b) *Reasonable classification established by the employer.* A classification is established by the employer in accordance with this paragraph (b) if and only if, based on all the facts and circumstances, the classification is reasonable and is established under objective business criteria that identify the category of employees who benefit under the plan. Reasonable classifications generally include specified job categories, nature of compensation (i.e., salaried or hourly), geographic location, and similar bona fide business criteria. An enumeration of employees by name or other specific criteria having substantially the same effect as an enumeration by name is not considered a reasonable classification.

(c) *Nondiscriminatory classification*—(1) *General rule.* A classification is nondiscriminatory under this paragraph (c) for a plan year if and only if the group of employees included in the classification benefiting under the plan satisfies the requirements of either paragraph (c)(2) or (c)(3) of this section for the plan year.

(2) *Safe harbor.* A plan satisfies the requirement of this paragraph (c)(2) for a plan year if and only if the plan's ratio percentage is greater than or equal to the employer's safe harbor percentage, as defined in paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section. See § 1.410(b)-9 for the definition of a plan's ratio percentage.

(3) *Facts and circumstances*—(i) *General rule.* A plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (c)(3) if and only if—

(A) The plan's ratio percentage is greater than or equal to the unsafe harbor percentage, as defined in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section, and

(B) The classification satisfies the factual determination of paragraph (c)(3)(ii) of this section.

(ii) *Factual determination.* A classification satisfies this paragraph (c)(3)(ii) if and only if, based on all the relevant facts and circumstances, the Commissioner finds that the classification is nondiscriminatory. No one particular fact is determinative. Included among the facts and circumstances relevant in determining whether a classification is nondiscriminatory are the following—

(A) The underlying business reason for the classification. The greater the business reason for the classification, the more likely the classification is to be nondiscriminatory. Reducing the employer's cost of providing retirement benefits is not a relevant business reason.

(B) The percentage of the employer's employees benefiting under the plan. The higher the percentage, the more likely the classification is to be nondiscriminatory.

(C) Whether the number of employees benefiting under the plan in each salary range is representative of the number of employees in each salary range of the employer's workforce. In general, the more representative the percentages of employees benefiting under the plan in each salary range, the more likely the classification is to be nondiscriminatory.

(D) The difference between the plan's ratio percentage and the employer's safe harbor percentage. The smaller the difference, the more likely the classification is to be nondiscriminatory.

(E) The extent to which the plan's average benefit percentage (determined under § 1.410(b)-5) exceeds 70 percent.

(4) *Definitions*—(i) *Safe harbor percentage.* The safe harbor percentage of an employer is 50 percent, reduced by ¾ of a percentage point for each whole percentage point by which the nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage exceeds 60 percent. See

paragraph (c)(4)(iv) for a table that illustrates the safe harbor percentage and unsafe harbor percentage.

(ii) *Unsafe harbor percentage.* The unsafe harbor percentage of an employer is 40 percent, reduced by ¾ of a percentage point for each whole percentage point by which the nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage exceeds 60 percent. However, in no case is the unsafe harbor percentage less than 20 percent.

(iii) *Nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage.* The nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage of an employer is the percentage of all the employees of the employer who are nonhighly compensated employees. Employees who are excludable employees for purposes of the average benefit test are not taken into account.

(iv) *Table.* The following table sets forth the safe harbor and unsafe harbor percentages at each nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage:

Nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage	Safe harbor percentage	Unsafe harbor percentage
0–60	50.00	40.00
61	49.25	39.25
62	48.50	38.50
63	47.75	37.75
64	47.00	37.00
65	46.25	36.25
66	45.50	35.50
67	44.75	34.75
68	44.00	34.00
69	43.25	33.25
70	42.50	32.50
71	41.75	31.75
72	41.00	31.00
73	40.25	30.25
74	39.50	29.50
75	38.75	28.75
76	38.00	28.00
77	37.25	27.25
78	36.50	26.50
79	35.75	25.75
80	35.00	25.00
81	34.25	24.25
82	33.50	23.50
83	32.75	22.75
84	32.00	22.00
85	31.25	21.25
86	30.50	20.50
87	29.75	20.00
88	29.00	20.00
89	28.25	20.00
90	27.50	20.00
91	26.75	20.00
92	26.00	20.00
93	25.25	20.00
94	24.50	20.00
95	23.75	20.00
96	23.00	20.00
97	22.25	20.00
98	21.50	20.00
99	20.75	20.00

(5) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this paragraph (c).

Example 1. Employer A has 200 nonexcludable employees, of whom 120 are nonhighly compensated employees and 80 are highly compensated employees. Employer A maintains a plan that benefits 60 nonhighly compensated employees and 72 highly compensated employees. Thus, the plan's ratio percentage is 55.56 percent ([60/120]/[72/80]=50%/90%=0.5556), which is below the percentage necessary to satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2). The employer's nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage is 60 percent (120/200); thus, Employer A's safe harbor percentage is 50 percent and its unsafe harbor percentage is 40 percent. Because the plan's ratio percentage is greater than the safe harbor percentage, the plan's classification satisfies the safe harbor of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the plan benefits only 40 nonhighly compensated employees. The plan's ratio percentage is thus 37.03 percent ([40/120]/[72/80]=33.33%/90%=0.3703). Under these facts, the plan's classification is below the unsafe harbor percentage and is thus considered discriminatory.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that the plan benefits 45 nonhighly compensated employees. The plan's ratio percentage is thus 41.67 percent ([45/120]/[72/80]=37.50%/90%=0.4167), above the unsafe harbor percentage (40 percent) and below the safe harbor percentage (50 percent). The Commissioner may determine that the classification is nondiscriminatory after considering all the relevant facts and circumstances.

Example 4. Employer B has 10,000 nonexcludable employees, of whom 9,600 are nonhighly compensated employees and 400 are highly compensated employees. Employer B maintains a plan that benefits 600 nonhighly compensated employees and 100 highly compensated employees. Thus, the plan's ratio percentage is 25.00 percent ([600/9,600]/[100/400]=6.25%/25%=0.2500), which is below the percentage necessary to satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2). Employer B's nonhighly compensated employee concentration percentage is 96 percent (9,600/10,000); thus, Employer B's safe harbor percentage is 23 percent, and its unsafe harbor percentage

is 20 percent. Because the plan's ratio percentage (25.00 percent) is greater than the safe harbor percentage (23.00 percent), the plan's classification satisfies the safe harbor of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

Example 5. The facts are the same as in *Example 4*, except that the plan benefits only 400 nonhighly compensated employees. The plan's ratio percentage is thus 16.67 percent ([400/9,600]/[100/400]=4.17%/25%=0.1667). The plan's ratio percentage is below the unsafe harbor percentage and thus the classification is considered discriminatory.

Example 6. The facts are the same as in *Example 4*, except that the plan benefits 500 nonhighly compensated employees. The plan's ratio percentage is thus 20.83 percent ([500/9,600]/[100/400]=5.21%/25%=0.2083), above the unsafe harbor percentage (20 percent) and below the safe harbor percentage (23 percent). The Commissioner may determine that the classification is nondiscriminatory after considering all the facts and circumstances.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47645, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10954, Mar. 31, 1992]

§ 1.410(b)–5 Average benefit percentage test.

(a) *General rule.* A plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test of this section for a plan year if and only if the average benefit percentage of the plan for the plan year is at least 70 percent. A plan is deemed to satisfy this requirement if it satisfies paragraph (f) of this section for the plan year.

(b) *Determination of average benefit percentage.* The average benefit percentage of a plan for a plan year is the percentage determined by dividing the actual benefit percentage of the nonhighly compensated employees in plans in the testing group for the testing period that includes the plan year by the actual benefit percentage of the highly compensated employees in plans in the testing group for that testing period. See paragraph (d)(3)(ii) of this section for the definition of testing period.

(c) *Determination of actual benefit percentage.* The actual benefit percentage of a group of employees for a testing period is the average of the employee benefit percentages, calculated separately with respect to each of the employees in the group for the testing period. All nonexcludable employees of the employer are taken into account for this purpose, even if they are not benefiting under any plan that is taken into account.

(d) *Determination of employee benefit percentages*—(1) *Overview.* This paragraph (d) provides rules for determining employee benefit percentages. See paragraph (e) of this section for alternative methods for determining employee benefit percentages.

(2) *Employee contributions and employee-provided benefits disregarded.* Only employer-provided contributions and benefits are taken into account in determining employee benefit percentages. Therefore, employee contributions (including both employee contributions allocated to separate accounts and employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts), and benefits derived from such contributions, are not taken into account in determining employee benefit percentages.

(3) *Plans and plan years taken into account*—(i) *Testing group.* All plans included in the testing group under § 1.410(b)–7(e)(1), and only those plans, are taken into account in determining an employee's employee benefit percentage.

(ii) *Testing period.* An employee's employee benefit percentage is determined on the basis of plan years ending with or within the same calendar year. These plan years are referred to in this section as the relevant plan years or, in the aggregate, as the testing period.

(4) *Contributions or benefits basis.* Employee benefit percentages may be determined on either a contributions or a benefits basis. Employee benefit percentages for any testing period must be determined on the same basis (contributions or benefits) for all plans in the testing group.

(5) *Determination of employee benefit percentage*—(i) *General rule.* The employee benefit percentage for an employee for a testing period is the rate that would be determined for that employee for purposes of applying the general test for nondiscrimination in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2, 1.401(a)(4)–3, 1.401(a)(4)–8 or 1.401(a)(4)–9, if all the plans in the testing group were aggregated for purposes of section 410(b). Thus, if employee benefit percentages are determined on a contributions basis, each employee's employee benefit percentage is the aggregate normal allocation rate that would be determined for the

employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(b)(2)(ii)(A) (if the plans in the testing group include both defined benefit and defined contribution plans), the allocation rate that would be determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2) (if the plans in the testing group include only defined contribution plans), or the equivalent normal allocation rate that would be determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(2) (if the plans in the testing group include only defined benefit plans). Similarly, if employee benefit percentages are determined on a benefits basis, each employee's employee benefit percentage is the aggregate normal accrual rate that would be determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–9(b)(2)(ii)(B), the normal accrual rate that would be determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–3(d), or the equivalent accrual rate that would be determined for the employee under § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(2), depending on whether the plans in the testing group include both defined benefit and defined contribution plans, only defined benefit plans, or only defined contribution plans.

(ii) *Plans with differing plan years.* If not all the plans in the testing group share the same plan year, § 1.410(b)–7(d)(5) would ordinarily prohibit them from being aggregated for purposes of section 410(b). In such a case, employee benefit percentages are determined by applying the rules of paragraph (d)(5)(i) of this section separately to each subset of plans in the testing group that share the same plan year (or the same accrual computation period) and aggregating the results for all plans in the testing group. Thus, an employee's employee benefit percentage is determined as the sum of these separate employee benefit percentages that are determined consistently for all the plans in the testing group (except for differences attributable solely to the differences in plan years).

(iii) *Options and consistency requirements.* In determining employee benefit percentages under this paragraph (d)(5), any optional or alternative methods or rules available for determining rates in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2, 1.401(a)(4)–3, 1.401(a)(4)–8, or 1.401(a)(4)–9, whichever is applicable, may be applied. Thus, for example, employee benefit percentages may generally be calculated using any of the alternative methods of determining average annual compensation or plan year compensation under § 1.401(a)(4)–12, and using any underlying definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s). Except as otherwise specifically permitted, the determination of employee benefit percentages must be made on a consistent basis for all employees and for all plans in the testing group as required by §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(2)(vi), 1.401(a)(4)–3(d)(2)(i), 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(2)(iv), 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(2)(iv) or 1.401(a)(4)–9(b)(2)(iv).

(6) *Permitted disparity*—(i) *In general.* Permitted disparity may be imputed in determining employee benefit percentages as provided in §§ 1.401(a)(4)–2, 1.401(a)(4)–3, 1.401(a)(4)–8, or 1.401(a)(4)–9, whichever is applicable. When separate employee benefit percentages are determined for individual plans under paragraph (e)(2) of this section (or for subsets of plans that have the same plan year as described in paragraph (d)(5)(ii) of this section), permitted disparity may be imputed for an employee only in one individual plan (or subset of plans) and may not be imputed for the same employee in another individual plan (or subset of plans). However, if the same average annual compensation or plan year compensation is used to determine employee benefit percentages in more than one plan, the employee's employee benefit percentages for those plans may be summed prior to imputing permitted disparity.

(ii) *Plans which may not use permitted disparity.* Permitted disparity may be reflected in the determination of rates only to the extent that the plans for which rates are being determined are plans for which the permitted disparity of section 401(l) is available. Thus, for example, if a section 401(k) plan is included in the testing group and permitted disparity is imputed under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(iv), then employee benefit percentages are determined by first calculating an adjusted allocation rate (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–7(b)(1)) without regard to the amount of allocations under the section 401(k) plan and adding to it the allocation rate for the section 401(k) plan. See § 1.401(l)–1(a)(4) for a list of

types of plans for which permitted disparity is not available.

(7) *Requirements for certain plans providing early retirement benefits*—(i) *General rule.* If any defined benefit plan in the testing group provides for early retirement benefits in addition to normal retirement benefits to any highly compensated employee, and the average actuarial reduction for any one of these benefits commencing in the five years prior to the plan's normal retirement age is less than four percent per year, then the aggregate most valuable allocation rate, equivalent most valuable allocation rate, aggregate most valuable accrual rate, or most valuable accrual rate must be substituted for the related normal rates in paragraph (d)(5) of this section.

(ii) *Exception.* Paragraph (d)(7)(i) of this section does not apply if early retirement benefits with average actuarial reductions described in that paragraph are currently available, within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–4(b), under plans in the testing group to a percentage of nonhighly compensated employees that is at least 70 percent of the percentage of highly compensated employees to whom these benefits are currently available.

(e) *Additional optional rules*—(1) *Overview.* This paragraph (e) contains various alternative methods for determining employee benefit percentages for a testing period.

(2) *Determination of employee benefit percentages as the sum of separately determined rates*—(i) *In general.* Employee benefit percentages may be determined as the sum of separately determined employee benefit percentages for each of the plans in the testing group that are aggregated under paragraphs (d)(5)(i) or (ii) of this section, provided that these employee benefit percentages are determined on a consistent basis for all of these plans pursuant to paragraph (d)(5)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Exception from consistency requirement.* The consistency requirement of paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section is not violated merely because employee benefit percentages are not determined in a consistent manner for all of the plans in the testing group and the inconsistencies in determination of rates among plans are described in paragraph (e)(2)(iii) of this section. The exception in this paragraph (e)(2)(ii) applies only if it is reasonable to believe that the inconsistencies do not result in an average benefit percentage that is significantly higher than the average benefit percentage that would be determined had employee benefit percentages been determined on a consistent basis pursuant to paragraph (d)(5)(iii) of this section.

(iii) *Permitted inconsistencies.* The following inconsistencies between plans are permitted under this paragraph (e)(2)—

(A) Use of different underlying definitions of section 414(s) compensation in the determination of rates;

(B) Use of different definitions of average annual compensation;

(C) Use of different testing ages;

(D) Use of different fresh-start dates;

(E) Use of different actuarial assumptions for normalization; or

(F) Disregard of actuarial increases after normal retirement age and QPSA charges without regard to any requirement for uniformity in the actuarial increases or QPSA charges.

(3) *Determination of employee benefit percentages without regard to plans of another type*—(i) *General rule.* Employee benefit percentages may be determined under plans of one type (i.e., defined benefit plans or defined contribution plans) by treating all plans of the other type (i.e., defined contribution plans or defined benefit plans, respectively) as if they were not part of the testing group, using the method provided in this paragraph (e)(3). If this method is used to determine whether a defined contribution plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test, employee benefit percentages under all defined contribution plans in the testing group must be determined on a contributions basis, and benefits under any defined benefit plans may not be included in the employee benefit percentage. Similarly, if this method is used to determine whether a defined benefit plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test, employee benefit percentages under all defined benefit plans in the testing group must be determined on a benefits basis, and allocations under any defined contribution plans may not

be included in the employee benefit percentage.

(ii) *Restriction on use of separate testing group determination method.* A plan does not satisfy the average benefit percentage test using the method provided in this paragraph (e)(3) unless each of the plans in the testing group of the other type (i.e., defined benefit plan or defined contribution plan) than the plan being tested satisfies the average benefit test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(3) using the method in this paragraph (e)(3) or satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2).

(iii) *Treatment of permitted disparity.* Although under the general rule of this paragraph (e)(3) plans of another type are disregarded in determining employee benefit percentages, the permitted disparity used by those plans (including any permitted disparity that is used by those plans to satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)–1(b)(2)) is nonetheless taken into account in determining the extent to which permitted disparity may be used in determining employee benefit percentages.

(iv) *Example.* The following example illustrates the rules of this paragraph (e)(3):

Example. Employer A maintains two defined benefit plans, neither of which covers a group of employees that satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2), and a profit-sharing plan and a section 401(k) plan, each of which benefits a group of employees that satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2). The defined benefit plans will satisfy the average benefit percentage test if the actual benefit percentage of all nonexcludable nonhighly compensated employees, computed on a benefits basis without regard to contributions under the profit-sharing plan or the section 401(k) plan, is at least 70 percent of the actual benefit percentage of all nonexcludable highly compensated employees, computed on a benefits basis without regard to contributions under the profit-sharing plan or the section 401(k) plan.

(4) *Simplified method for determining employee benefit percentages for certain defined benefit plans*—(i) *In general.* An employee's employee benefit percentage with respect to a plan may be determined under the simplified method of paragraph (e)(4)(ii) of this section, provided the following conditions are satisfied:

(A) The only plans included in the testing group are defined benefit plans, and employee benefit percentages under these plans are determined on a benefits basis.

(B) Employee benefit percentages under the plans in the testing group are not required to be determined by taking into account early retirement benefits under paragraph (d)(7) of this section.

(C) The plan is a safe harbor defined benefit plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b).

(ii) *Simplified method*—(A) *Section 401(l) plans.* Under the simplified method of this paragraph (e)(4)(ii), an employee's employee benefit percentage with respect to a section 401(l) plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(3) (i.e., a unit credit plan) may be deemed equal to the employee's excess benefit percentage or gross benefit percentage (as defined in § 1.401(*l*)–1(c) (14) or (18), respectively), whichever is applicable under the plan's benefit formula in the plan year. In the case of a section 401(l) plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4) (i.e., a fractional accrual plan), an employee's employee benefit percentage with respect to that plan may be deemed equal to the rate at which the excess or gross benefit, whichever is applicable, accrues for the employee in the plan year, taking into account the plan's benefit formula and the employee's projected service at normal retirement age. The use of this simplified method will be treated as an imputation of permitted disparity. See paragraph (d)(6) of this section for a restriction on multiple use of permitted disparity.

(B) *Other plans.* Under the simplified method of this paragraph (e)(4)(ii), an employee's employee benefit percentage with respect to a plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(3) that is not a section 401(*l*) plan and that is not imputing permitted disparity may be deemed equal to the employee's benefit rate in the plan year under the plan's benefit formula. In the case of a plan described in § 1.401(a)(4)–3(b)(4) that is not a section 401(*l*) plan and that is not imputing permitted disparity, an employee's employee benefit percentage with respect to that plan may be deemed equal to the rate at which the benefit accrues

for the employee in the plan year, taking into account the plan's benefit formula and an employee's projected service at normal retirement age.

(5) *Three-year averaging period.* An employee's employee benefit percentage may be determined for a testing period as the average of the employee's employee benefit percentages determined separately for the testing period and for the immediately preceding one or two testing periods (referred to in this section as an averaging period). Employee benefit percentages of a particular employee that are averaged together within an averaging period must be determined on a consistent basis for all testing periods within the averaging period.

(6) *Alternative methods of determining compensation.* Employee benefit percentages may be determined on the basis of any definition of compensation that satisfies § 1.414(s)–1(d) (without regard to whether the definition satisfies § 1.414(s)–1(d)(3)), provided that the same definition is used for all employees and it is reasonable to believe that the definition does not result in an average benefit percentage that is significantly higher than the average benefit percentage that would be determined had employee benefit percentages been determined using a definition of compensation that also satisfies § 1.414(s)–1(d)(3).

(f) *Special rule for certain collectively bargained plans.* A plan (as determined without regard to the mandatory disaggregation rule of § 1.410(b)–7(c)(5)) that benefits both collectively bargained employees and noncollectively bargained employees is deemed to satisfy the average benefit percentage test of this section if—

(1) The provisions of the plan applicable to each employee in the plan are identical to the provisions of the plan applicable to every other employee in the plan, including the plan benefit or allocation formula, any optional forms of benefit, any ancillary benefit, and any other right or feature under the plan, and

(2) The plan would satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2), if §§ 1.410(b)–6(d) and 1.410(b)–7(c)(5) (the excludable employee and mandatory disaggregation rules for collectively bargained and noncollectively bargained employees) did not apply.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47646, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10817, 10954, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46840, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.410(b)–6 Excludable employees.

(a) *Employees*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying section 410(b) with respect to employees, all employees of the employer, other than the excludable employees described in paragraphs (b) through (i) of this section, are taken into account. Excludable employees are not taken into account with respect to a plan even if they are benefiting under the plan, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) *Rules of application.* Except as specifically provided otherwise, excludable employees are determined separately with respect to each plan for purposes of testing that plan under section 410(b). Thus, in determining whether a particular plan satisfies the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2), paragraphs (b) through (i) of this section are applied solely with reference to that plan. Similarly, in determining whether two or more plans that are permissively aggregated and treated as a single plan under § 1.410(b)–7(d) satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2), paragraphs (b) through (i) of this section are applied solely with reference to the deemed single plan. In determining whether a plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5, the rules of this section are applied by treating all plans in the testing group as a single plan.

(b) *Minimum age and service exclusions*—(1) *In general.* If a plan applies minimum age and service eligibility conditions permissible under section 410(a)(1) and excludes all employees who do not meet those conditions from benefiting under the plan, then all employees who fail to satisfy those conditions are excludable employees with respect to that plan. An employee is treated as meeting the age and service requirements on the date that any employee with the same age and service (including service permitted to be taken into account for purposes of nondiscrimination testing under § 1.401(a)(4)–11(d)(3)) would be eligible to

commence participation in the plan, as provided in section 410(b)(4)(C).

(2) *Multiple age and service conditions.* If a plan, including a plan for which an employer chooses the treatment under paragraph (b)(3) of this section, has two or more different sets of minimum age and service eligibility conditions, those employees who fail to satisfy all of the different sets of age and service conditions are excludable employees with respect to the plan. Except as provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, an employee who satisfies any one of the different sets of conditions is not an excludable employee with respect to the plan. Differences in the manner in which service is credited (e.g., hours of service calculated in accordance with 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 for hourly employees and elapsed time calculated in accordance with § 1.410(a)–7 for salaried employees) for purposes of applying a service condition are not taken into account in determining whether multiple age and service eligibility conditions exist.

(3) *Plans benefiting certain otherwise excludable employees*—(i) *In general.* An employer may treat a plan benefiting otherwise excludable employees as two separate plans, one for the otherwise excludable employees and one for the other employees benefiting under the plan. See § 1.410(b)–7(c)(3) regarding permissive disaggregation of plans benefiting otherwise excludable employees. The effect of this rule is that employees who would be excludable under paragraph (b)(1) of this section (applied without regard to section 410(a)(1)(B)) but for the fact that the plan does not apply the greatest permissible minimum age and service conditions may be treated as excludable employees with respect to the plan. This treatment is available only if the plan satisfies section 410(b) and § 1.410(b)–2 with respect to these otherwise excludable employees in the manner described in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section.

(ii) *Testing portion of plan benefiting otherwise excludable employees.* In determining whether the plan that benefits employees who would otherwise be excludable under paragraph (b)(1) of this section (applied without regard to section 410(a)(1)(B)) satisfies section 410(b) and § 1.410(b)–2, employees who have satisfied the greatest permissible minimum age and service conditions with respect to the plan are excludable employees. In addition, if the plan being tested applies minimum age and service conditions and those conditions are less than the maximum permissible minimum age and service conditions, employees who have not satisfied the lower minimum age and service conditions actually provided for in the plan are excludable employees. Thus, for example, if the plan requires attainment of age 18 and 3 months of service, employees who have not attained age 18 or 3 months of service with the employer are excludable employees.

(4) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the minimum age and service condition rules of this paragraph (b). In each example, the employer is not treated as operating qualified separate lines of business under section 414(r).

Example 1. An employer maintains Plan A for hourly employees and Plan B for salaried employees. Plan A has no minimum age or service condition. Plan B has no minimum age condition and requires 1 year of service. The employer treats Plans A and B as a single plan for purposes of section 410(b). Because Plan A imposes no minimum age or service condition, all employees of the employer automatically satisfy the minimum age and service conditions of Plan A. Therefore, no employees are excludable under this paragraph (b) in testing Plans A and B for purposes of section 410(b).

Example 2. An employer maintains three plans. Plan C benefits employees in Division C who satisfy the plan's minimum age and service condition of age 21 and 1 year of service. Plan D benefits employees in Division D who satisfy the plan's minimum age and service condition of age 18 and 1 year of service. Plan E benefits employees in Division E who satisfy the plan's minimum age and service condition of age 21 and 6 months of service. The employer treats Plans D and E as a single plan for purposes of section 410(b). In testing Plan C under the ratio percentage test or the nondiscriminatory classification test of section 410(b), employees who are not at least age 21 or who do not have at least 1 year of service are excludable employees under paragraph (b)(1) of this section. In testing Plans D and E, employees who do not satisfy the age and service requirements of either of the two plans are excludable employees under paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Thus, an employee is excludable with respect to Plans D and E only if the employee is not at least age 18 with at least 1 year of service or is not at least age 21 with

at least 6 months of service. Thus, an employee who is 19 years old and has 11 months of service is excludable. Similarly, an employee who is 17 years old and has performed 2 years of service is also excludable.

Example 3. An employer maintains three plans. Plan F benefits all employees in Division F (the plan does not apply any minimum age or service condition). Plan G benefits employees in Division G who satisfy the plan's minimum age and service condition of age 18 and 1 year of service. Plan H benefits employees in Division H who satisfy the plan's minimum age and service condition of age 21 and 6 months of service. In testing the employer's plans under the average benefit percentage test provided in § 1.410(b)–5, Plans F, G, and H are treated as a single plan and, as such, use the lowest minimum age and service condition under the rule of paragraph (b)(2) of this section. Therefore, because Plan F does not apply any minimum age or service condition, no employee is excludable under this paragraph (b).

Example 4. An employer maintains Plan J, which does not apply any minimum age or service conditions. Plan J benefits all employees in Division 1 but does not benefit employees in Division 2. Although Plan J has no minimum age or service condition, the employer wants to exclude employees whose age and service is below the permissible minimums provided in section 410(b)(1)(A). The employer has 110 employees who either do not have 1 year of service or are not at least age 21. Of these 110 employees, 10 are highly compensated employees and 100 are nonhighly compensated employees. Five of these highly compensated employees, or 50 percent, work in Division 1 and thus benefit under Plan J. Thirty-five of these nonhighly compensated employees, or 35 percent, work in Division 1 and thus benefit under Plan J. Plan J satisfies the ratio percentage test of section 410(b) with respect to employees who do not satisfy the greatest permissible minimum age and service requirement because the ratio percentage of that group of employees is 70 percent. Thus, in determining whether or not Plan J satisfies section 410(b), the 110 employees may be treated as excludable employees in accordance with paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section.

(c) *Certain nonresident aliens*—(1) *General rule.* An employee who is a nonresident alien (within the meaning of section 7701(b)(1)(B)) and who receives no earned income (within the meaning of section 911(d)(2)) from the employer that constitutes income from sources within the United States (within the meaning of section 861(a)(3)) is treated as an excludable employee.

(2) *Special treaty rule.* In addition, an employee who is a nonresident alien (within the meaning of section 7701(b)(1)(B)) and who does receive earned income (within the meaning of section 911(d)(2)) from the employer that constitutes income from sources within the United States (within the meaning of section 861(a)(3)) is permitted to be excluded, if all of the employee's earned income from the employer from sources within the United States is exempt from United States income tax under an applicable income tax convention. This paragraph (c)(2) applies only if all employees described in the preceding sentence are so excluded.

(d) *Collectively bargained employees*—(1) *General rule.* A collectively bargained employee is an excludable employee with respect to a plan that benefits solely noncollectively bargained employees. If a plan (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–7(b)) benefits both collectively bargained employees and noncollectively bargained employees for a plan year, § 1.410(b)–7(c)(4) provides that the portion of the plan that benefits the collectively bargained employees is treated as a separate plan from the portion of the plan that benefits the noncollectively bargained employees. Thus, a collectively bargained employee is always an excludable employee with respect to the mandatorily disaggregated portion of any plan that benefits noncollectively bargained employees.

(2) *Definition of collectively bargained employee*—(i) *In general.* A collectively bargained employee is an employee who is included in a unit of employees covered by an agreement that the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective bargaining agreement between employee representatives and one or more employers, provided that there is evidence that retirement benefits were the subject of good faith bargaining between employee representatives and the employer or employers. An employee is a collectively bargained employee regardless of whether the employee benefits under any plan of the employer. See section 7701(a)(46) and § 301.7701–17T of this chapter for additional requirements applicable to the collective bargaining agreement. An

employee who performs hours of service during the plan year as both a collectively bargained employee and a noncollectively bargained employee is treated as a collectively bargained employee with respect to the hours of service performed as a collectively bargained employee and a noncollectively bargained employee with respect to the hours of service performed as a noncollectively bargained employee. See § 1.410(b)–7(c) for disaggregation rules for plans benefiting collectively bargained and noncollectively bargained employees.

(ii) *Special rules for certain employees in multiemployer plans*—(A) *In general.* For purposes of this paragraph (d), in testing the disaggregated portion of a multiemployer plan benefiting noncollectively bargained employees, a noncollectively bargained employee who benefits under the plan may be treated as a collectively bargained employee with respect to all of the employee's hours of service under the rules of paragraphs (d)(2)(ii) (B) through (E) of this section, if the employee is or was a member of a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement and that agreement or a successor agreement provides for the employee to benefit under the plan in the current plan year. For this purpose, provisions of a participation agreement or similar document are taken into account in determining whether a collective bargaining agreement provides for an employee to benefit under a multiemployer plan.

(B) *Employees who were collectively bargained employees during a portion of the current plan year.* An employee described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(A) of this section who performs services for one or more employers that are parties to the collective bargaining agreement, for the plan, or for the employee representative both as a collectively bargained employee and as a noncollectively bargained employee during a plan year may be treated as a collectively bargained employee for the plan year, provided that at least half of the employee's hours of service during the plan year are performed as a collectively bargained employee.

(C) *Employees who were collectively bargained employees during the collective bargaining agreement.* An employee described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(A) of this section who was a collectively bargained employee with respect to all of the employee's hours of service during a plan year (including employees who are treated as collectively bargained employees with respect to all of their hours of service during a plan year under paragraph (d)(2)(ii) (B) or (E) of this section) may be treated as a collectively bargained employee with respect to all of the employee's hours of service for the duration of the collective bargaining agreement applicable for such plan year or, if later, until the end of the following plan year. For this purpose, a collective bargaining agreement is applicable for a plan year if it provided for the employee to benefit in the plan and was effective for any portion of that plan year. This paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(C) does not apply unless the terms of the plan providing for benefit accruals treat the employee in a manner that is generally no more favorable than similarly-situated employees who are collectively bargained employees.

(D) *Employees who previously were collectively bargained employees.* An employee who was treated as a collectively bargained employee pursuant to paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(C) of this section may be treated as a collectively bargained employee with respect to all of the employee's hours of service after the end of the period described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(C) of this section, provided that the employee is performing services for one or more employers that are parties to the collective bargaining agreement, for the plan, or for the employee representative. This paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(D) does not apply unless the terms of the plan providing for benefit accruals treat the employee in a manner that is generally no more favorable than similarly-situated employees who are collectively bargained employees, and no more than five percent of the employees covered under the multiemployer plan are noncollectively bargained employees (determined without regard to this paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(D)). In determining whether more than five percent of the employees covered under the multiemployer plan are noncollectively bargained employees, those employees

who are described in paragraphs (d)(2)(ii) (B) and (C) of this section are treated as collectively bargained employees.

(E) *Transition rule.* For a plan year beginning before the applicable effective date of these regulations as set forth in § 1.410(b)–10 (b) or (d), any employee described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(A) of this section may be treated as a collectively bargained employee with respect to all of the employee's hours of service for that plan year.

(F) *Consistency requirement.* The rules in paragraphs (d)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section must be applied to all employees on a reasonable and consistent basis for the plan year.

(iii) *Covered by a collective bargaining agreement*—(A) *General rule.* For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, an employee is included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement if and only if the employee is represented by a bona fide employee representative that is a party to the collective bargaining agreement under which the plan is maintained. Thus, for example, an employee of either a plan or the employee representative that is a party to the collective bargaining agreement under which the plan is maintained is not included in a unit of employees covered by the collective bargaining agreement under which the plan is maintained merely because the employee is covered under the plan pursuant to an agreement entered into by the plan or employee representative on behalf of the employee (other than in the capacity of an employee representative with respect to the employee). This is the case even if all of such employees benefiting under the plan constitute only a de minimis percentage of the total employees benefiting under the plan.

(B) *Plans covering professional employees*—(*1*) *In general.* An employee is not considered included in a unit of employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement for a plan year for purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(iii)(A) of this section if, for the plan year, more than 2 percent of the employees who are covered pursuant to the agreement are professionals. This rule applies to all employees under the agreement, nonprofessionals as well as professionals. Thus, no employees covered by such an agreement are excludable employees with respect to employees who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

(*2*) *Multiple collective bargaining agreements.* This paragraph (d)(2)(iii)(B) is applied separately with respect to each collective bargaining agreement. Thus, for example, if a plan benefits two groups of employees, one included in a unit of employees covered by collective bargaining agreement X, more than 2 percent of whom are professionals, and another included in a unit of employees covered by collective bargaining agreement Y, none of whom are professionals, the group covered by agreement X is not considered covered by a collective bargaining agreement and the group covered by agreement Y is considered covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

(*3*) *Application of minimum coverage tests.* If a plan covers more than 2 percent professional employees, no employees in the plan are treated as covered by a collective bargaining agreement. A plan that covers more than 2 percent professional employees must satisfy section 410(b) without regard to section 413(b) and the special rule in § 1.410(b)–2(b)(7) of this section (regarding collectively bargained plans). In such cases, all nonexcludable employees must be taken into account. For this purpose, employees included in other collective bargaining units are excludable employees. However, the employees who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement and the employees who are covered by an agreement that has more than 2 percent professionals are not excludable employees.

(iv) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the collective bargaining unit rules of this section.

Example 1. An employer has 700 collectively bargained employees (none of whom is a professional employee) and 300 noncollectively bargained employees (200 of whom are highly compensated employees). For purposes of applying the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) to Plan X, which benefits only the 300 noncollectively bargained employees, the 700 collectively bargained employees are treated as excludable employees pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section.

Example 2. (i) An employer has 1,500 employees in the following categories:

	Noncollectively bargained employees	Collectively bargained employees	Total
Highly compensated employees	100	100	200
Nonhighly compensated employees	900	400	1,300
Total	1,000	500	1,500

The employer maintains Plan Y, which benefits 1,100 employees, including all of the noncollectively bargained employees (except for 100 nonhighly compensated employees who are noncollectively bargained employees), and 200 of the collectively bargained employees (including the 100 highly compensated employees who are collectively bargained employees). There are no professional employees covered by the collective bargaining agreement. In accordance with § 1.410(b)–7(c)(4), the employer must apply the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) to Plan Y as if the plan were two separate plans, one benefiting the noncollectively bargained employees and the other benefiting the collectively bargained employees.

(ii) In testing the portion of Plan Y that benefits the noncollectively bargained employees, the collectively bargained employees are excludable employees. That portion's ratio percentage is 88.89 percent ([800/900] /[100/100] = 88.89%/100% =0.8889), and thus it satisfies the ratio percentage test. The portion of Plan Y that benefits collectively bargained employees automatically satisfies section 410(b) under the special rule in § 1.410(b)–2(b)(7).

(e) *Employees of qualified separate lines of business.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1 (b), in testing a plan that benefits employees of one qualified separate line of business, the employees of the other qualified separate lines of business of the employer are treated as excludable employees. The rule in this paragraph (e) does not apply for purposes of satisfying the nondiscriminatory classification requirement of section 410(b)(5)(B). See §§ 1.414(r)–1(c)(2) and 1.414(r)–8 (separate application of section 410(b) to the employees of a qualified separate line of business). In addition, the rule in this paragraph (e) does not apply to a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c) (2) (ii) for a plan year.

(f) *Certain terminating employees*—(1) *In general.* An employee may be treated as an excludable employee for a plan year with respect to a particular plan if—

(i) The employee does not benefit under the plan for the plan year,

(ii) The employee is eligible to participate in the plan,

(iii) The plan has a minimum period of service requirement or a requirement that an employee be employed on the last day of the plan year (last-day requirement) in order for an employee to accrue a benefit or receive an allocation for the plan year,

(iv) The employee fails to accrue a benefit or receive an allocation under the plan solely because of the failure to satisfy the minimum period of service or last-day requirement,

(v) The employee terminates employment during the plan year with no more than 500 hours of service, and the employee is not an employee as of the last day of the plan year (for purposes of this paragraph (f)(1)(v), a plan that uses the elapsed time method of determining years of service may use either 91 consecutive calendar days or 3 consecutive calendar months instead of 500 hours of service, provided it uses the same convention for all employees during a plan year), and

(vi) If this paragraph (f) is applied with respect to any employee with respect to a plan for a plan year, it is applied with respect to all employees with respect to the plan for the plan year.

(2) *Hours of service.* For purposes of this paragraph (f), the term ''hours of service'' has the same meaning as provided for such term by 29 CFR 2530.200b–2 under the general method of crediting service for the employee. If one of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b–3 is used for crediting service under the plan, the 500-hour requirement must be adjusted accordingly.

(3) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the provision of this paragraph (f).

Example 1. An employer has 35 employees who are eligible to participate under a defined contribution plan. The plan provides

that an employee will not receive an allocation of contributions for a plan year unless the employee is employed by the employer on the last day of the plan year. Only 30 employees are employed by the employer on the last day of the plan year. Two of the five employees who terminated employment before the last day of the plan year had 500 or fewer hours of service during the plan year, and the remaining three had more than 500 hours of service during the year. Of the five employees who were no longer employed on the last day of the plan year, the two with 500 hours of service or less during the plan year are treated as excludable employees for purposes of section 410(b), and the remaining three who had over 500 hours of service during the plan year are taken into account in testing the plan under section 410(b) but are treated as not benefiting under the plan.

Example 2. An employer has 30 employees who are eligible to participate under a defined contribution plan. The plan requires 1,000 hours of service to receive an allocation of contributions or forfeitures. Ten employees do not receive an allocation because of their failure to complete 1,000 hours of service. Three of the 10 employees who failed to satisfy the minimum service requirement completed 500 or fewer hours of service and terminated their employment. Two of the employees completed more than 500, but fewer than 1,000 hours of service and terminated their employment. The remaining five employees did not terminate employment. Under the rule in paragraph (f) of this section, the three terminated employees who completed 500 or fewer hours of service are treated as excludable employees for the portion of the plan year they are employed. The other seven employees who do not receive an allocation are taken into account in testing the plan under section 410(b) but are treated as not benefiting under the plan.

Example 3. An employer maintains two plans, Plan A for salaried employees and Plan B for hourly employees. Of the 100 salaried employees, two do not receive an allocation under Plan A for the plan year because they terminate employment before completing 500 hours of service. Of the 300 hourly employees, 50 do not receive an allocation under Plan B for the plan year because they terminate employment before completing 500 hours. In applying section 410(b) to Plan A, the two employees who did not receive an allocation under Plan A are excludable employees, but the 50 who did not receive an allocation under Plan B are not excludable employees, because they were not eligible to participate under Plan A.

(g) *Employees of certain governmental or tax-exempt entities precluded from maintaining a section 401(k) plan.* For purposes of testing either a section 401(k) plan or a section 401(m) plan that is provided under the same general arrangement as a section 401(k) plan, an employer may treat as excludable those employees of governmental or tax-exempt entities who are precluded from being eligible employees under a section 401(k) plan by reason of section 401(k)(4)(B), if more than 95 percent of the employees of the employer who are not precluded from being eligible employees by section 401(k)(4)(B) benefit under the plan for the plan year.

(h) *Former employees*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying section 410(b) with respect to former employees, all former employees of the employer are taken into account, except that the employer may treat a former employee described in paragraph (h)(2) or (h)(3) of this section as an excludable former employee. If either (or both) of the former employee exclusion rules under paragraphs (h)(2) and (h)(3) of this section is applied, it must be applied to all former employees for the plan year on a consistent basis.

(2) *Employees terminated before a specified date.* The employer may treat a former employee as excludable if—

(i) The former employee became a former employee either prior to January 1, 1984, or prior to the tenth calendar year preceding the calendar year in which the current plan year begins, and

(ii) The former employee became a former employee in a calendar year that precedes the earliest calendar year in which any former employee who benefits under the plan in the current plan year became a former employee.

(3) *Previously excludable employees.* The employer may treat a former employee as excludable if the former employee was an excludable employee (or would have been an excludable employee if these regulations had been in effect) under the rules of paragraphs (b) through (g) of this section during the plan year in which the former employee became a former employee. If the employer treats a former employee as excludable pursuant to this paragraph (h)(3), the former employee is not taken into account with respect to a plan even if the former employee is benefiting under the plan.

(i) *Former employees treated as employees.* An employer may treat as excludable employees all formerly nonhighly compensated employees who are treated as employees of the employer under §1.410(b)–9 solely because they have increases in accrued benefits under a defined benefit plan that are based on ongoing service or compensation credits (including imputed service or compensation) after they cease to perform services for the employer.

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§1.410(b)–7 Definition of plan and rules governing plan disaggregation and aggregation.

(a) *In general.* This section provides a definition of ''plan.'' First, this section sets forth a definition of plan within the meaning of section 401(a) or 403(a). Then certain mandatory disaggregation and permissive aggregation rules are applied. The result is the definition of plan that applies for purposes of sections 410(b) and 401(a)(4). Thus, in general, the term ''plan'' as used in this section initially refers to a plan described in section 414(l) and to an annuity plan described in section 403(a), and the term ''plan'' as used in other sections under these regulations means the plan determined after application of this section. Paragraph (b) of this section provides that each single plan under section 414(l) is treated as a single plan for purposes of section 410(b). Paragraph (c) of this section describes the rules for certain plans that must be treated as comprising two or more separate plans, each of which is a single plan subject to section 410(b). Paragraph (d) of this section provides a rule permitting an employer to aggregate certain separate plans to form a single plan for purposes of section 410(b). Paragraph (e) of this section provides rules for determining the testing group of plans taken into account in determining whether a plan satisfies the average benefit percentage test of §1.410(b)–5.

(b) *Separate asset pools are separate plans.* Each single plan within the meaning of section 414(l) is a separate plan for purposes of section 410(b). See §1.414(l)–1(b). For example, if only a portion of the assets under a defined benefit plan is available, on an ongoing basis, to provide the benefits of certain employees, and the remaining assets are available only in certain limited cases to provide such benefits (but are available in all cases for the benefit of other employees), there are two separate plans. Similarly, the defined contribution portion of a plan described in section 414(k) is a separate plan from the defined benefit portion of that same plan. A single plan under section 414(l) is a single plan for purposes of section 410(b), even though the plan comprises separate written documents and separate trusts, each of which receives a separate determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service. A defined contribution plan does not comprise separate plans merely because it includes more than one trust, or merely because it provides for separate accounts and permits employees to direct the investment of the amounts allocated to their accounts. Further, a plan does not comprise separate plans merely because assets are separately invested in individual insurance or annuity contracts for employees.

(c) *Mandatory disaggregation of certain plans*—(1) *Section 401(k) and 401(m) plans.* The portion of a plan that is a section 401(k) plan and the portion that is not a section 401(k) plan are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 410(b). Similarly, the portion of a plan that is a section 401(m) plan and the portion that is not a section 401(m) plan are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 410(b). Thus, a plan that consists of elective contributions under a section 401(k) plan, employee and matching contributions under a section 401(m) plan, and contributions other than elective, employee, or matching contributions is treated as three separate plans for purposes of section 410(b). In addition, the portion of a plan that consists of contributions described in §1.401(k)–1(b)(4)(iv) (i.e., contributions that fail to satisfy the allocation or compensation requirements applicable to elective contributions and are therefore required to be

tested separately) and the portion of the plan that does not consist of such contributions are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 410(b). Similarly, the portion of a plan that consists of contributions described in § 1.410(m)–1(b)(4)(ii) (i.e., matching contributions that fail to satisfy the allocation and other requirements applicable to matching contributions and are therefore required to be tested separately) and the portion of the plan that does not consist of such contributions are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 410(b).

(2) *ESOPs and non-ESOPs.* The portion of a plan that is an ESOP and the portion of the plan that is not an ESOP are treated as separate plans for purposes of section 410(b), except as otherwise permitted under § 54.4975–11(e) of this Chapter.

(3) *Plans benefiting otherwise excludable employees.* If an employer applies section 410(b) separately to the portion of a plan that benefits only employees who satisfy age and service conditions under the plan that are lower than the greatest minimum age and service conditions permissible under section 410(a), the plan is treated as comprising separate plans, one benefiting the employees who have satisfied the lower minimum age and service conditions but not the greatest minimum age and service conditions permitted under section 410(a) and one benefiting employees who have satisfied the greatest minimum age and service conditions permitted under section 410(a). See § 410(b)–6(b)(3)(ii) for rules about testing otherwise excludable employees.

(4) *Plans benefiting certain disaggregation populations of employees*—(i) *In general*—(A) *Single plan must be treated as separate plans.* If a plan (*i.e.*, a single plan within the meaning of section 414(l)) benefits employees of more than one disaggregation population, the plan must be disaggregated and treated as separate plans, each separate plan consisting of the portion of the plan benefiting the employees of each disaggregation population. See paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section for the definition of disaggregation population.

(B) *Benefit accruals or allocations attributable to current status.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (c)(4)(i)(C) of this section, in applying the rule of paragraph (c)(4)(i)(A) of this section, the portion of the plan benefiting employees of a disaggregation population consists of all benefits accrued by, or all allocations made to, employees while they were members of the disaggregation population.

(C) *Exceptions for certain benefit accruals*—(*1*) *Attribution of benefits to first disaggregation population.* If employees benefiting under a plan change from one disaggregation population to a second disaggregation population, benefits they accrue while members of the second disaggregation population that are attributable to years of service previously credited while the employees were members of the first disaggregation population may be treated as provided to them in their status as members of the first disaggregation population and thus included in the portion of the plan benefiting employees of the first disaggregation population. This special treatment is available only if it is applied on a consistent basis, if it does not result in significant discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees, and if the plan provision providing the additional benefits applies on the same terms to all similarly-situated employees. For example, if all formerly collectively bargained employees accrue additional benefits under a plan after becoming noncollectively bargained employees, then those benefit increases may be treated as included in the portion of the plan benefiting collectively bargained employees if they are attributable to years of service credited while the employees were collectively bargained (e.g., where the additional benefits result from compensation increases that occur while the employees are noncollectively bargained or from plan amendments affecting benefits earned while collectively bargained that are adopted while the employees are noncollectively bargained) and if such treatment does not result in significant discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees.

(*2*) *Attribution of benefits to current disaggregation population.* If employees benefiting under a plan change from

one disaggregation population to another disaggregation population, benefits they accrue while members of the first disaggregation population may be treated as provided to them in their current status and thus included in the portion of the plan benefiting employees of the disaggregation population of which they are currently members. This special treatment is available only if it is applied on a consistent basis and if it does not result in significant discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees.

(D) *Change in disaggregation populations*—(*1*) *Reasonable treatment.* If, in previous years, the configuration of a plan's disaggregation populations differed from their configuration for the current year, for purposes of the benefits accrued by, or allocations made to, an employee for those years, the employee's status as a member of a current disaggregation population for those years must be determined on a reasonable basis. A different configuration occurs, for example, if disaggregation populations exist for the first time, such as when an employer is first treated as operating qualified separate lines of business, or if the existing disaggregation populations change, such as when an employer redesignates its qualified separate lines of business.

(*2*) *Example.* The following example illustrates the application of this paragraph (c)(4)(i)(D).

Example. (a) Employer X operates Divisions M and N, which are treated as qualified separate lines of business for the first time in 1998. Thus, the disaggregation populations of employees of Division M and employees of Division N exist for the first time. Since 1981 Employer X has maintained a defined benefit plan, Plan P, for employees of Division M. Plan P provides a normal retirement benefit of one percent of average annual compensation for each year of service up to 25. Employee A has worked for Division M since 1981 and has never worked for Division N. Employee B has worked for Division N since 1989 and worked for Division M from 1981 to 1988. Employee C has worked in the headquarters of Employer X since 1981. For the period 1981 to 1988 Employee C was credited with years of service under Plan P.

(b) For purposes of the benefits accrued by Employee A under Plan P during years 1981 through 1997, Employee A is reasonably treated as having been a member of the Division M disaggregation population for those years. For purposes of the benefits accrued by Employee B under Plan P during years 1981 through 1988, Employee B is reasonably treated as having been a member of the Division M disaggregation population for 1981 through 1988 and as having changed to the Division N disaggregation population for 1989 through 1997. For purposes of the benefits accrued by Employee C under Plan P during years 1981 through 1988, Employee C is reasonably treated as having been a member of the Division M disaggregation population for those years. Moreover, any benefit accruals for Employee B and Employee C in years after 1988, that result from increases in average annual compensation after 1988 and that are attributable to years of service credited for 1981 through 1988, may be treated as provided to Employee B and Employee C in their status as members of the Division M disaggregation population if the requirements of paragraph (c)(4)(i)(C)(*1*) of this section are otherwise met.

(ii) *Definition of disaggregation population*—(A) *Plan benefiting employees of qualified separate lines of business.* If an employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b), and a plan benefits employees of more than one qualified separate line of business, the employees of each qualified separate line of business are separate disaggregation populations. In this case, the portion of the plan benefiting the employees of each qualified separate line of business is treated as a separate plan maintained by that qualified separate line of business. However, employees of different qualified separate lines of business who are benefiting under a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) for a plan year are not separate disaggregation populations merely because they are employees of different qualified separate lines of business.

(B) *Plan benefiting collectively bargained employees.* If a plan benefits both collectively bargained employees and noncollectively bargained employees, the collectively bargained employees are one disaggregation population and the noncollectively bargained employees are another disaggregation population. If the population of collectively bargained employees includes employees covered under different collective bargaining agreements, the population

of employees covered under each collective bargaining agreement is also a separate disaggregation population.

(C) *Plan maintained by more than one employer.* If a plan benefits employees of more than one employer, the employees of each employer are separate disaggregation populations. In this case, the portion of the plan benefiting the employees of each employer is treated as a separate plan maintained by that employer, which must satisfy section 410(b) by reference only to that employer's employees. However, for purposes of this paragraph (c)(4)(ii)(C), if the plan of one employer (or, in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, the plan provisions applicable to the employees of one employer) treats compensation or service with another employer as compensation or service with the first employer, then the current accruals attributable to that compensation or service are treated as provided to an employee of the first employer under the plan of the first employer (or the portion of a plan maintained by more than one employer benefiting employees of the first employer), and the provisions of paragraph (c)(4)(i)(C) of this section do not apply to those accruals. Thus, for example, if Plan A maintained by Employer X imputes service or compensation for an employee of Employer Y, then Plan A is not treated as benefiting the employees of more than one employer merely because of this imputation.

(5) *Additional rule for plans benefiting employees of more than one qualified separate line of business.* If a plan benefiting employees of more than one qualified separate line of business satisfies the reasonable classification requirement of § 1.410(b)–4(b) before the application of paragraph (c)(4) of this section, then any portion of the plan that is treated as a separate plan as a result of the application of paragraphs (c)(4)(i)(A) and (ii)(A) of this section is deemed to satisfy that requirement.

(d) *Permissive aggregation for ratio percentage and nondiscriminatory classification tests*—(1) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraphs (d)(2) and (d)(3) of this section, for purposes of applying the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) or the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4, an employer may designate two or more separate plans (determined after application of paragraph (b) of this section) as a single plan. If an employer treats two or more separate plans as a single plan under this paragraph, the plans must be treated as a single plan for all purposes under sections 401(a)(4) and 410(b).

(2) *Rules of disaggregation.* An employer may not aggregate portions of a plan that are disaggregated under the rules of paragraph (c) of this section. Similarly, an employer may not aggregate two or more separate plans that would be disaggregated under the rules of paragraph (c) of this section if they were portions of the same plan. In addition, an employer may not aggregate an ESOP with another ESOP, except as permitted under § 54.4975–11(e) of this Chapter.

(3) *Duplicative aggregation.* A plan may not be combined with two or more plans to form more than one single plan. Thus, for example, an employer that maintains plans A, B, and C may not aggregate plans A and B and plans A and C to form two single plans. However, the employer may apply the permissive aggregation rules of this paragraph (d) to form any one (and only one) of the following combinations: plan ABC, plans AB and C, plans AC and B, or plans A and BC.

(4) *Special rule for plans benefiting employees of a qualified separate line of business.* For purposes of paragraph (d)(1) of this section, an employer that is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b) is permitted to aggregate the portions of two or more plans that benefit employees of the same qualified separate line of business (regardless of whether the employer elects to aggregate the portions of the same plans that benefit employees of the other qualified separate lines of business of the employer), provided that none of the plans is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1 (c)(2)(ii). Thus, the employer is permitted to apply paragraph (d)(1) of this section with respect to two or more separate plans determined after the application of paragraphs (b) and

(c)(4) of this section, but may not aggregate a plan that is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) for a plan year with any portion of a plan that does not rely on that special rule for the plan year. In all other respects, the provisions of this paragraph (d) regarding permissive aggregation apply, including (but not limited to) the disaggregation rules under paragraph (d)(2) of this section (including the mandatory disaggregation rule of paragraph (c)(4) of this section), and the prohibition on duplicative aggregation under paragraph (d)(3) of this section. This paragraph (d)(4) applies only in the case of an employer that is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with § 1.414(r)–1(b). See §§ l.414(r)–1(c)(2) and 1.414(r)–8 (separate application of section 410(b) to the employees of a qualified separate line of business).

(5) *Same plan year requirement.* Two or more plans may not be aggregated and treated as a single plan under this paragraph (d) unless they have the same plan year.

(e) *Determination of plans in testing group for average benefit percentage test*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of applying the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 with respect to a plan, all plans in the testing group must be taken into account. For this purpose, the plans in the testing group are the plan being tested and all other plans of the employer that could be permissively aggregated with that plan under paragraph (d) of this section. Whether two or more plans could be permissively aggregated under paragraph (d) of this section is determined (i) without regard to the rule in paragraph (d)(4) of this section that portions of two or more plans benefiting employees of the same line of business may not be aggregated if any of the plans is tested under the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii), (ii) without regard to paragraph (d)(5) of this section, and (iii) by applying paragraph (d)(2) of this section without regard to paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(2) of this section.

(2) *Examples.* The following example illustrates the rules of this paragraph (e).

Example 1. Employer X is treated as operating two qualified separate lines of business for purposes of section 410(b) in accordance with section 414(r), QSLOB1 and QSLOB2. Employer X must apply the rules in § 1.414(r)–8 to determine whether its plans satisfy section 410(b) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis. Employer X maintains the following plans:

(a) Plan A, the portion of Employer X' s employer-wide section 401(k) plan that benefits all noncollectively bargained employees of QSLOB1,

(b) Plan B, the portion of Employer X' s employer-wide section 401(k) plan that benefits all noncollectively bargained employees of QSLOB2,

(c) Plan C, a defined benefit plan that benefits all hourly noncollectively bargained employees of QSLOB1,

(d) Plan D, a defined benefit plan that benefits all collectively bargained employees of QSLOB1,

(e) Plan E, an ESOP that benefits all noncollectively bargained employees of QSLOB1,

(f) Plan F, a profit-sharing plan that benefits all salaried noncollectively bargained employees of QSLOB1.

Assume that Plan F does not satisfy the ratio percentage test of § 1.410(b)–2(b)(2) on a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis, but does satisfy the nondiscriminatory classification test of § 1.410(b)–4 on both an employer-wide and a qualified-separate-line-of-business basis. Therefore, to satisfy section 410(b), Plan F must satisfy the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5 on a qualifiedseparatelineofbu5ine55 basis. The plans in the testing group used to determine whether Plan F satisfies the average benefit percentage test of § 1.4 10(b)–5 are Plans A, C, E, and F.

Example 2. The facts are the same as in *Example 1,* except that Employer X applies the special rule for employer-wide plans in § 1.414(r)–1(c)(2)(ii) to its employer-wide section 401(k) plan. To satisfy section 410(b), Plan F must satisfy the average benefit percentage test of § 1.4 10(b)–5. Since paragraph (c)(4) of this section no longer applies to Plans A and B, they are treated as a single plan (Plan AB). The plans in the testing group used to determine whether Plan F satisfies the average benefit percentage test of § 1.4 10(b)–5 are therefore Plans A, B, C, E, and F. However, the employees of QSLOB 2 continue to be excludable employees for purposes of determining whether Plan F satisfies the average benefit percentage test. See § 1.410(b)–6(e).

(f) *Section 403(b) plans.* In determining whether a plan satisfies section 410(b), a plan subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) is disregarded. However, in determining whether a plan subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) satisfied section 410(b),

plans that are not subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) may be taken into account.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47655, Sept. 19, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8376, 56 FR 63433, Dec. 4, 1991; T.D. 8363, 57 FR 10819, 10954, Mar. 31, 1992; T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46843, Sept. 3, 1993; T.D. 8548, 59 FR 32914, June 27, 1994]

§ 1.410(b)–8 Additional rules.

(a) *Testing methods*—(1) *In general.* A plan must satisfy section 410(b) for a plan year using one of the testing options in paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(4) of this section. Whichever testing option is used for the plan year must also be used for purposes of applying section 401(a)(4) to the plan for the plan year. The annual testing option in paragraph (a)(4) of this section must be used in applying section 410(b) to a section 401(k) plan or a section 401(m) plan, and in applying the average benefit percentage test of § 1.410(b)–5. For purposes of this paragraph (a), the plan provisions and other relevant facts as of the last day of the plan year regarding which employees benefit under the plan for the plan year are applied to the employees taken into account under the testing option used for the plan year. For this purpose, amendments retroactively correcting a plan in accordance with § 1.401(a)(4)–11(g) are taken into account as plan provisions in effect as of the last day of the plan year.

(2) *Daily testing option.* A plan satisfies section 410(b) for a plan year if it satisfies § 1.410(b)–2 on each day of the plan year, taking into account only those employees (or former employees) who are employees (or former employees) on that day.

(3) *Quarterly testing option.* A plan is deemed to satisfy section 410(b) for a plan year if the plan satisfies § 1.410(b)–2 on at least one day in each quarter of the plan year, taking into account for each of those days only those employees (or former employees) who are employees (or former employees) on that day. The preceding sentence does not apply if the plan's eligibility rules or benefit formula operate to cause the four quarterly testing days selected by the employer not to be reasonably representative of the coverage of the plan over the entire plan year.

(4) *Annual testing option.* A plan satisfies section 410(b) for a plan year if it satisfies § 1.410(b)–2 as of the last day of the plan year, taking into account all employees (or former employees) who were employees (or former employees) on any day during the plan year.

(5) *Example.* The following example illustrates this paragraph (a).

Example. Plan A is a defined contribution plan that is not a section 401(k) plan or a section 401(m) plan, and that conditions allocations on an employee's employment on the last day of the plan year. Plan A is being tested for the 1995 calendar plan year using the daily testing option in paragraph (a)(2) of this section. In testing the plan for compliance with section 410(b) on March 11, 1995, Employee X is taken into account because he was an employee on that day and was not an excludable employee with respect to Plan A on that day. Employee X was a participant in Plan A on March 11, 1995, was employed on December 31, 1995, and received an allocation under Plan A for the 1995 plan year. Under these facts, Employee X is treated as benefiting under Plan A on March 11, 1995, even though Employee X had not satisfied all of the conditions for receiving an allocation on that day, because Employee X satisfied all of those conditions as of the last day of the plan year.

(b) *Family member aggregation rule.* For purposes of section 410(b), and in accordance with section 414(q)(6), a highly compensated employee who is a 5-percent owner or one of the ten most highly compensated employees and any family member (or members) of such a highly compensated employee who is also an employee of the employer are to be treated as a single highly compensated employee. If any member of that group is benefiting under a plan, the deemed single employee is treated as benefiting under the plan. If no member of that group is benefiting under a plan, the deemed single employee is treated as not benefiting under the plan.

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47656, Sept. 19, 1991]

§ 1.410(b)–9 Definitions.

In applying this section and §§ 1.410(b)–2 through 1.410(b)–10, the definitions in this section govern unless otherwise provided.

Collectively bargained employee. Collectively bargained employee means a collectively bargained employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)–6(d)(2).

Defined benefit plan. Defined benefit plan means a defined benefit plan within the meaning of section 414(j). The portion of a plan described in section 414(k) that does not consist of separate accounts is treated as a defined benefit plan.

Defined contribution plan. Defined contribution plan means a defined contribution plan within the meaning of section 414(i). The portion of a plan described in section 414(k) that consists of separate accounts is treated as a defined contribution plan.

Employee. Employee means an individual who performs services for the employer who is either a common law employee of the employer, a self-employed individual who is treated as an employee pursuant to section 401(c)(1), or a leased employee (not excluded under section 414(n)(5)) who is treated as an employee of the employer-recipient under section 414(n)(2) or 414(o)(2). Individuals that an employer treats as employees under section 414(n) pursuant to the requirements of section 414(o) are considered to be leased employees for purposes of this rule. In addition, an individual must be treated as an employee with respect to allocations under a defined contribution plan taken into account under § 1.401(a)(4)–2(c)(ii) and with respect to increases in accrued benefits (within the meaning of 411(a)(7)) under a defined benefit plan that are based on ongoing service or compensation (including imputed service or compensation) credits.

Employer. Employer means the employer maintaining the plan and those employers required to be aggregated with the employer under sections 414(b), (c), (m), or (o). An individual who owns the entire interest of an unincorporated trade or business is treated as an employer. Also, a partnership is treated as the employer of each partner and each employee of the partnership.

ESOP. ESOP or *employee stock ownership plan* means an employee stock ownership plan within the meaning of section 4975(e)(7) or a tax credit employee stock ownership plan within the meaning of section 409(a).

Former employee. Former employee means an individual who was, but has ceased to be, an employee of the employer (i.e., the individual has ceased performing services as an employee for the employer). An individual is treated as a former employee beginning on the day after the day on which the individual ceases performing services as an employee for the employer. Thus, an individual who ceases performing services as an employee for an employer during a plan year is both an employee and a former employee for the plan year. Notwithstanding the foregoing, an individual is an employee (and not a former employee) to the extent that the individual is treated as an employee with respect to the plan for the plan year under the definition of employee in this section.

Highly compensated employee. Highly compensated employee means an employee who is a highly compensated employee within the meaning of section 414(q) or a former employee treated as an employee under the definition of employee in this section who is a highly compensated former employee within the meaning of section 414(q).

Highly compensated former employee. Highly compensated former employee means a former employee who is a highly compensated former employee within the meaning of section 414(q).

Multiemployer plan. Multiemployer plan means a multiemployer plan within the meaning of section 414(f).

Noncollectively bargained employee. Noncollectively bargained employee means an employee who is not a collectively bargained employee.

Nonhighly compensated employee. Nonhighly compensated employee means an employee who is not a highly compensated employee.

Nonhighly compensated former employee. Nonhighly compensated former employee means a former employee who is not a highly compensated former employee.

Plan year. Plan year means the plan year of the plan as defined in the written plan document. In the absence of a specifically designated plan year, the plan year is deemed to be the calendar year.

Plan year compensation. Plan year compensation means plan year compensation within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(4)–12.

Professional employee. Professional employee means any highly compensated employee who, on any day of the plan year, performs professional services for the employer as an actuary, architect, attorney, chiropodist, chiropractor, dentist, executive, investment banker, medical doctor, optometrist, osteopath, podiatrist, psychologist, certified or other public accountant, stockbroker, or veterinarian, or in any other professional capacity determined by the Commissioner in a notice or other document of general applicability to constitute the performance of services as a professional.

Ratio percentage. With respect to a plan for a plan year, a plan's *ratio percentage* means the percentage (rounded to the nearest hundredth of a percentage point) determined by dividing the percentage of the nonhighly compensated employees who benefit under the plan by the percentage of the highly compensated employees who benefit under the plan. The percentage of the nonhighly compensated employees who benefit under the plan is determined by dividing the number of nonhighly compensated employees benefiting under the plan by the total number of nonhighly compensated employees of the employer. The percentage of the highly compensated employees who benefit under the plan is determined by dividing the number of highly compensated employees benefiting under the plan by the total number of highly compensated employees of the employer.

Section 401(k) plan. Section 401(k) plan means a plan consisting of elective contributions described in § 1.40(k)–1(g)(3) under a qualified cash or deferred arrangement described in § 1.401(k)–1(a)(4)(i). Thus, a section 401(k) plan does not include a plan (or portion of a plan) that consists of contributions under a nonqualified cash or deferred arrangement, or qualified nonelective or qualified matching contributions treated as elective contributions under § 1.401(k)–1(b)(5).

Section 401(l) plan. Section 401(l) plan means a plan that—

(1) Provides for a disparity in employer-provided benefits or contributions that satisfies section 401(l) in form, and

(2) Relies on one of the safe harbors of § 1.401(a)(4)–2(b)(2), 1.401(a)(4)–3(b), 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3), or 1.401(a)(4)–8(c)(3)(iii)(B) to satisfy section 401(a)(4).

Section 401(m) plan. Section 401(m) plan means a plan consisting of employee contributions described in § 1.401(m)–1(f)(6) or matching contributions described in § 1.40(m)–1(f)(12), or both. Thus, a section 401(m) plan does not include a plan (or portion of a plan) that consists of elective contributions or qualified nonelective contributions treated as matching contributions under § 1.401(m)–1(b)(5).

[T.D. 8363, 56 FR 47657, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10817, 10954, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46843, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.410(b)–10 Effective dates and transition rules.

(a) *Statutory effective dates*—(1) *In general.* Except as set forth in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, the minimum coverage rules of section 410(b) as amended by section 1112 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1989.

(2) *Special statutory effective date for collective bargaining agreements*—(i) *In general.* As provided for by section 1112(e)(2) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, in the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, the minimum coverage rules of section 410(b) as amended by section 1112 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 do not apply to employees covered by any such agreement in plan years beginning before the earlier of—

(A) January 1, 1991; or

(B) The later of January 1, 1989, or the date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986). For purposes of this paragraph (a)(2), any extension or renegotiation of a collective bargaining agreement, which extension or renegotiation is ratified after February 28, 1986, is to be disregarded in determining the date on which the agreement terminates.

(ii) *Example.* The following example illustrates this paragraph (a)(2).

Example. Employer A maintains Plan 1 pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement. Plan 1 covers 100 of Employer A's noncollectively bargained employees and 900 of Employer A's collectively bargained employees. Employer A also maintains Plan 2, which covers Employer A's other 400 noncollectively bargained employees. The collective bargaining agreement under which Plan 1 is maintained was entered into on January 1, 1986, and expires December 31, 1992. Because Plan 1 is a plan maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, section 410(b) applies to the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1991. In applying section 410(b) to Plan 2, the 100 noncollectively bargained employees in Plan 1 must be taken into account. The deferred effective date for plans maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement is not applicable in determining how section 410(b) is applied to a plan that is not maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.

(iii) *Plan maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.* For purposes of this paragraph (a)(2), a plan is maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers, if one or more of the agreements were ratified before March 1, 1986. Only plans maintained pursuant to agreements that the Secretary of Labor finds to be collective bargaining agreements and that satisfy section 7701(a)(46) are eligible for the deferred effective date under this paragraph (a)(2). A plan will not be treated as a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements eligible for the deferred effective date under this paragraph (a)(2) unless the plan would be a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements under the principles applied under section 1017(c) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. See H.R. Rep. No. 1280, 93rd Cong. 2d Sess. 266 (1974).

(b) *Regulatory effective dates*—(1) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, §§ 1.410(b)–2 through 1.410(b)–9 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(2) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans), §§ 1.410(b)–2 through 1.410(b)–9 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996, to the extent such plans are subject to section 410(b).

(c) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraph (b) of this section, and on or after the statutory effective date as set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 410(b). Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 410(b) will generally be determined based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, including the extent to which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. If a plan's classification has been determined by the Commissioner to be nondiscriminatory and there have been no significant changes in or omissions of a material fact, the classification will be treated as nondiscriminatory for the relevant plan year. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 410(b) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of §§ 1.410(b)–2 through 1.410(b)–9.

(d) *Effective date for governmental plans.* In the case of governmental plans described in section 414(d), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans) § 1.410(b)–2 through § 1.410(b)–10 apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996, or 90 days after the opening of the first legislative session beginning on or after January 1, 1996, of the governing body with authority to amend the plan, if that body does not meet continuously. Such plans are deemed to satisfy section 410(b) (and in the case of such plans that are not subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i), section 401(a)(3) as in effect on September 1, 1974) for plan years before that effective date. For purposes of this section, the governing body with authority to amend the plan is the legislature, board, commission, council, or other governing body with authority to amend the plan. See § 1.410(b)–2(d) and (e).

[T.D. 8487, 58 FR 46844, Sept. 3, 1993]

§ 1.410(d)–1 Election by church to have participation, vesting, funding, etc. provisions apply.

(a) *In general.* If a church or convention or association of churches which maintains any church plan, as defined in section 414(e), makes an election under this section, certain provisions of the Code and Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (the ''Act'') shall apply to such church plan as if such plan were not a church plan. The provisions of the Code referred to are section 410 (relating to minimum participation standards), section 411 (relating to minimum vesting standards), section 412 (relating to minimum funding standards), section 4975 (relating to prohibited transactions), and paragraphs (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), and (19) of section 401(a) (relating to joint and survivor annuities, mergers and consolidations, assignment or alienation of benefits, time of benefit commencement, certain social security increases, and withdrawals of employee contributions, respectively).

(b) *Election is irrevocable.* An election under this section with respect to any church plan shall be binding with respect to such plan and, once made, shall be irrevocable.

(c) *Procedure for making election*—(1) *Time of election.* An election under this section may be made for plan years for which the provisions of section 410(d) of the Code apply to the church plan. By reason of section 1017(b) of the Act section 410(d) does not apply to a plan in existence on January 1, 1974, for plan years beginning before January 1, 1976. Section 1017(d) of the Act permits a plan administrator to elect to have certain provisions of the Code (including section 410(d)) apply to a plan before the otherwise applicable effective dates of such provisions. See § 1.410(a)–2(d). Therefore, for a plan in existence on Janurary 1, 1974, an election under section 410(d) of the Code may be made for a plan year beginning before January 1, 1976, only if an election has been made under section 1017(d) of the Act with respect to that plan year.

(2) *By whom election is to be made.* The election provided by this section may be made only by the plan administrator of the church plan.

(3) *Manner of making election.* The plan administrator may elect to have the provisions of the Code described in paragraph (a) of this section apply to the church plan as it is were not a church plan by attaching the statement described in subparagraph (5) of this paragraph to either (i) the annual return required under section 6058(a) (or an amended return) with respect to the plan which is filed for the first plan year for which the election is effective or (ii) a written request for a determination letter relating to the qualification of the plan under section 401(a), 403(a), or 405(a) of the Code and if trusteed, the exempt status under section 501(a) of the Code of a trust constituting a part of the plan.

(4) *Conditional election.* If an election is made with a written request for a determination letter, the election may be conditioned upon issuance of a favorable determination letter and will become irrevocable upon issuance of such letter.

(5) *Statement.* The statement described in subparagraph (3) of this paragraph shall indicate (i) that the election is made under section 410(d) of the Code and (ii) the first plan year for which it is effective.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47198, Sept. 20, 1977]

§ 1.411(a)–1 Minimum vesting standards; general rules.

(a) *In general.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless—

(1) The plan provides that an employee's right to his normal retirement benefit (see § 1.411(a)–7(c)) is nonforfeitable (see § 1.411(a)–4) upon and after the attainment of normal retirement age (see § 1.411(a)–7(b)),

(2) The plan provides that an employee's rights in his accrued benefit derived from his own contributions (see § 1.411(c)–1) are nonforfeitable at all times, and

(3) The plan satisfies the requirements of—

(A) Section 411(a)(2) and § 1.411(a)–3 (relating to vesting in accrued benefit derived from employer contributions), and

(B) In the case of a defined benefit plan, section 411(b)(1) and § 1.411(b)–1 (relating to accrued benefit).

(b) *Organization of regulations relating to minimum vesting standards*—(1) *General rules.* This section prescribes general rules relating to the minimum vesting standards provided by section 411.

(2) *Effective dates.* Section 1.411(a)–2 provides rules under section 1017 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 relating to effective dates under section 411.

(3) *Employer contributions.* Section 1.411(a)–3 provides rules under section 411(a)(2) relating to vesting in employer-derived accrued benefits.

(4) *Certain forfeitures.* Section 1.411(a)–4 provides rules under section 411(a)(3) relating to certain permitted forfeitures, suspensions, etc. under qualified plans.

(5) *Nonforfeitable percentage.* Section 1.411(a)–5 provides rules under section 411(a)(4) relating to service included in the determination of an employee's nonforfeitable percentage under section 411(a)(2) and § 1.411(a)–3.

(6) *Years of service; break in service.* Section 1.411(a)–6 provides rules under section 411(a) (5) and (6) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 relating to years of service and breaks in service. Rules prescribed by the Secretary of Labor, relating to years of service and breaks in service under part 2 of subtitle B of title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 are provided under 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(7) *Definitions and special rules.* Section 1.411(a)–7 provides definitions and special rules under section 411(a) (7), (8), and (9), for purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder.

(8) *Changes in vesting schedule.* Section 1.411(a)–8 provides rules under section 411(a)(10) relating to changes in the vesting schedule of a plan.

(9) *Breaks in service.* Section 1.411(a)–9 provides special rules relating to breaks in service.

(10) *Accrued benefits.* See § 1.411(b)–1 for rules under section 411(b) relating to accrued benefit requirements under defined benefit plans.

(11) *Allocation of accrued benefits.* See § 1.411(c)–1 for rules under section 411(c) relating to allocation of accrued benefits between employer and employee contributions.

(12) *Discrimination, etc.* See § 1.411(d)–1 for rules relating to the coordination of section 411 with section 401(a)(4) (relating to discrimination) and other rules under section 411(d).

(c) *Application of standards to certain plans*—(1) *General rule.* Except as provided in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, section 411 does not apply to—

(i) A governmental plan (within the meaning of section 414(d) and the regulations thereunder),

(ii) A church plan (within the meaning of section 414(e) and the regulations thereunder) which has not made the election provided by section 410(d) and the regulations thereunder,

(iii) A plan which has not provided for employer contributions at any time after September 2, 1974, and

(iv) A plan established and maintained by a society, order, or association described in section 501(c) (8) or (9), if no part of the contributions to or under such plan are made by employers of participants in such plan.

(2) *Vesting requirements.* A plan described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph shall, for purposes of section 401(a), be treated as meeting the requirements of section 411 if such plan meets the vesting requirements resulting from the application of section 401(a)(4) and section 401(a)(7) as in effect on September 1, 1974.

(d) *Supersession.* Sections 11.411(a)–1 through 11.411(d)–3, inclusive, of the Temporary Income Tax Regulations under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 are superseded by this section and §§ 1.411(a)–2 through 1.411(d)–3.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42324, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(a)–2 Effective dates.

(a) *Plan not in existence on January 1, 1974.* Under section 1017(a) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, in the case of a plan which was not in existence on January 1, 1974, section 411 and the regulations thereunder apply for plan years beginning after September 2, 1974. See paragraph

(c) of this section for time plan is considered in existence.

(b) *Plans in existence on January 1, 1974.* Under section 1017(b) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, in the case of a plan which was in existence on January 1, 1974, section 411 and the regulations thereunder apply for plan years beginning after December 31, 1975. See paragraph (c) of this section for time plan is considered to be in existence.

(c) *Time of plan existence*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of this section, a plan is considered to be in existence on a particular day if—

(i) The plan on or before that day was reduced to writing and adopted by the employer (including, in the case of a corporate employer, formal approval by the employer's board of directors and, if required, shareholders), even though no amounts had been contributed under the plan as of such day, and

(ii) The plan was not terminated on or before that day.

For example, if a plan was adopted on January 2, 1974, effective as of January 1, 1974, the plan is not considered to have been in existence on January 1, 1974, because it was not both adopted and in writing on January 1, 1974.

(2) *Collectively-bargained plan.* Notwithstanding paragraph (c) (1) of this section, a plan described in section 413 (a), relating to a plan maintained pursuant to a collective-bargaining agreement, is considered to be in existence on a particular day if—

(i) On or before that day there is a legally enforceable agreement to establish such a plan signed by the employer, and

(ii) The employer contributions to be made to the plan are set forth in the agreement.

(3) *Special rule.* If a plan is considered to be in existence under subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, any other plan with which such existing plan is merged or consolidated shall also be considered to be in existence on such date.

(d) *Existing plans under collective–bargaining agreements.* For a special effective date rule for certain plans maintained pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, see section 1017(c)(1) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 932).

(e) *Certain existing plans may elect new provisions.* The plan administrator may elect to have the provisions of the Code relating to participation, vesting, funding, and form of benefit apply to a selected plan year. See § 1.410(a)–2(d) for rules relating to such an election.

(f) *Application of rules.* The requirements of section 411 do not apply to employees who separate from service with the employer prior to the first plan year to which such requirements apply and who never return to service with the employer in a plan year to which section 411 applies.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42325, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(a)–3 Vesting in employer-derived benefits.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Alternative requirements.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless the plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2) and this section. A plan satisfies the requirements of this section if is satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b), (c), or (d) of this section.

(2) *Composite arrangements.* A plan will not be considered to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b), (c), or (d) of this section unless it satisfies all requirements of a particular one of such paragraphs with respect to all of an employee's years of service. A plan which, for example, satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) (but not (c) or (d)) for an employee's first 9 years of service and satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c) (but not (b)) for all of his remaining years of service, does not satisfy the requirements of this section. A plan is not precluded from satisfying the requirement of one such paragraph with respect to one group of employees and another such paragraph with respect to another group provided that the groups are not so structured as to evade the requirements of this paragraph. For example, if plan A provides that employees who commence participation before age 30 are subject to the ''rule of 45'' vesting schedule and employees who commence participation after age 30 are subject to the full vesting after 10 years schedule,

plan A would be so structured as to evade the requirements of this paragraph.

(3) *Plan amendments.* A plan which satisfies the requirements of a particular one of such paragraphs for each of an employee's years of service and which is amended so that, as amended, it satisfies the requirements of another such paragraph for all such years of service, satisfies the requirements of this section even though, as amended, it does not satisfy the requirements of the paragraph which were satisfied prior to the amendment. See § 1.411(a)–8 for rules relating to employee election where the vesting schedule is amended.

(b) *10-year vesting.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2) (A) and this paragraph if an employee who has completed 10 years of service has a nonforfeitable right to 100 percent of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions.

(c) *5- to 15-year vesting.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2) (B) and this paragraph if an employee who has completed at least 5 years of service has a nonforfeitable right to a percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contribution which percentage is not less than the nonforfeitable percentage determined under the following table:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
5	25
6	30
7	35
8	40
9	45
10	50
11	60
12	70
13	80
14	90
15 or more	100

(d) *Rule of 45.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2)(C) and this paragraph if an employee is entitled to the greater of the two percentages determined under paragraph (d) (1) or (2) of this section.

(1) *Age and service test.* An employee who is not separated from the service, who has completed at least 5 years of service, and with respect to whom the sum of his age and years of service equals of exceeds 45, has a nonforfeitable right to a percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions which is not less than the nonforfeitable percentage corresponding to his number of completed years of service to to the sum of his age and completed years of service (whichever percentage is the lesser) determined under the following table:

Completed years of service	Sum of age and service	Nonforfeitable percentage
5	45 or 46	50
6	47 or 48	60
7	49 or 50	70
8	51 or 52	80
9	53 or 54	90
10 or more	55 or more	100

(2) *Service test.* An employee who has completed at least 10 years of service has a nonforfeitable right to a percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions determined under the following table:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
10	50
11	60
12	70
13	80
14	90
15	100

(3) *Computation of age.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the age of an employee is his age on his last birthday.

(e) *Examples.* The rules provided by this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Plan B provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are nonforfeitable as follows:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
2 or less	0
3	30
4	35
5	40
6	45
7	50
8	55
9	60
10	65
11	70
12	75
13	80
14	85

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
15	100

Plan B does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section (relating to 5–15-year vesting) because the nonforfeitable percentage provided by the plan after completion of 14 years of service (85 percent) is less than the percentage required by paragraph (c) of this section at that time (90 percent). The fact that the nonforfeitable percentage provided by the plan for years prior to the 13th year of service is greater than the percentage required under paragraph (c) of this section is immaterial. The plan fails to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section even if it is demonstrated that the value of the vesting provided by the plan to the employee is at least equal to the value of the vesting rate required by that paragraph.

Example (2). Plan C provides for plan participation after the completion of 1 year of service. The plan provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are 100 percent nonforfeitable after 10 years of plan participation rather than service. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section because, under the plan, an employee obtains a 100 percent nonforfeitable right to his employer-derived accrued benefit only after completion of more than 10 years of service.

Example (3). Plan D provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are nonforfeitable in accordance with the following schedule:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
0–9	0
10	50
11	60
12	70
13	80
14	90
15	100

The plan does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section after the 9th year of service. It does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section for years prior to the 10th year of service. It does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (d)(1) of this section for any year of service prior to the 10th year. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of this section because it does not satisfy the requirements of a particular one of the three paragraphs for each of an employee's years of service.

Example (4). Plan G provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are 100 percent nonforfeitable upon completion of 5 years of service. The plan satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section and, because it satisfies the requirements of at least one of such paragraphs for all of an employee's years of service, it satisfies the requirements of this section.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42325, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(a)–3T Vesting in employer-derived benefits (temporary).

(a) *In general*—(1) [Reserved]

(2) *Composite arrangements.* A plan will not be considered to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b), (c), or (d) of this section unless it satisfies all requirements of a particular one of such paragraphs with respect to all of an employee's years of service. A plan which, for example, satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) (but not (c) or (d)) for an employee's first 4 years of service and satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c) (but not (b)) for all of his remaining years of service does not satisfy the requirements of this section. A plan is not precluded from satisfying the requirements of one such paragraph with respect to one group of employees and another such paragraph with respect to another group provided that the groups are not so structured as to evade the requirements of this paragraph.

(b) *5-year vesting.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2)(A) and this paragraph if an employee who has completed 5 years of service has a nonforfeitable right to 100 percent of his or her accrued benefits derived from employer contributions.

(c) *3- to 7-year vesting.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2)(B) and this paragraph if an employee who has completed at least 3 years of service has a nonforfeitable right to a percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions, which percentage is not less than the nonforfeitable percentage determined under the following table:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
3	20
4	40
5	60
6	80

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
7 or more	100

(d) *Multiemployer plans.* A plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2)(C) and this paragraph if—

(1) The plan is a multiemployer plan (within the meaning of section 414(f)), and

(2) Under the plan—

(i) An employee who is covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement described in section 414(f)(1)(B) has a nonforfeitable right to 100 percent of the employee's accrued benefit derived from employer contributions not later than upon completion of 10 years of service, and

(ii) The requirements of paragraph (b) or (c) of this section are met with respect to employees who are not covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement described in section 414(f)(1)(B).

(iii) For purposes of this provision, an employee is not covered pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement unless the employee is represented by a bona fide employee representative that is a party to the collective bargaining agreement pursuant to which the multiemployer plan is maintained. Thus, for example, an employee of either the multiemployer plan or the employee representative is not covered pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement under which the plan is maintained even if the employee is covered pursuant to an agreement entered into by the multiemployer plan or employee representative on behalf of the employee and even if all such employees covered under the plan constitute only a de minimis percentage of the total employees covered under the plan.

(e) *Effective date.* (1) The provisions of this section apply to all employees who have one hour of service in any plan year beginning after—

(i) December 31, 1988, or

(ii) In the case of a plan maintained pursuant to one or more collective bargaining agreements between employee representatives and one or more employers ratified before March 1, 1986, for employees covered by any such agreement, the earlier of—

(A) The later of—

(*1*) January 1, 1989, or

(*2*) The date on which the last of such collective bargaining agreements terminates (determined without regard to any extension thereof after February 28, 1986), or

(B) January 1, 1991.

(2) For employees not described in paragraph (e)(1), above, the regulations in effect prior to January 1, 1989, shall be applied to determine the requirements of this section.

(f) *Examples.* The rules provided by this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Plan B provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are nonforfeitable as follows:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
1	0
2	10
3	25
4	45
5	65
6	75
7	100

Plan B does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section (relating to 3- to 7-year vesting) because the nonforfeitable percentage provided by the plan after completion of 6 years of service (75 percent) is less than the percentage required by paragraph (c) of this section at that time (80 percent). The fact that the nonforfeitable percentage provided by the plan for years prior to the 6th year of service is greater than the percentage required under paragraph (c) of this section is immaterial. The plan fails to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section even if it is demonstrated that the value of the vesting provided by the plan to the employees is at least equal to the value of the vesting rate required by this paragraph.

Example (2). Plan C provides for plan participation after the completion of 1 year of service. The plan provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefits are 100 percent nonforfeitable after 5 years of plan participation rather than service. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section because, under the plan, an employee obtains a 100 percent nonforfeitable right to his or her employer-derived accrued benefit only after completion of more than 5 years of service.

Example (3). Plan D provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefits are nonforfeitable in accordance with the following schedule:

Completed years of service	Nonforfeitable percentage
0 to 4	0
5	60
6	80
7	100

The plan does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section after the 4th year of service. It does not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section for years prior to the 5th year of service. The plan does not satisfy the requirements of this section because it does not satisfy the requirements of a particular one of the two paragraphs for each of an employee's years of service.

Example (4). Plan G provides that each employee's rights to his employer-derived accrued benefit are 100 percent nonforfeitable upon completion of 3 years of service. The plan satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section and, because it satisfies the requirements of at least one of such paragraphs for all of an employee's years of service, it satisfies the requirements of this section.

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 240, Jan. 6, 1988]

§ 1.411(a)–4 Forfeitures, suspensions, etc.

(a) *Nonforfeitability.* Certain rights in an accrued benefit must be nonforfeitable to satisfy the requirements of section 411(a). This section defines the term ''nonforfeitable'' for purposes of these requirements. For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, a right to an accrued benefit is considered to be nonforfeitable at a particular time if, at that time and thereafter, it is an unconditional right. Except as provided by paragraph (b) of this section, a right which, at a particular time, is conditioned under the plan upon a subsequent event, subsequent performance, or subsequent forbearance which will cause the loss of such right is a forfeitable right at that time. Certain adjustments to plan benefits such as adjustments in excess of reasonable actuarial reductions, can result in rights being forfeitable. Rights which are conditioned upon a sufficiency of plan assets in the event of a termination or partial termination are considered to be forfeitable because of such condition. However, a plan does not violate the nonforfeitability requirements merely because in the event of a termination an employee does not have any recourse toward satisfaction of his nonforfeitable benefits from other than the plan assets or the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. Furthermore, nonforfeitable rights are not considered to be forfeitable by reason of the fact that they may be reduced to take into account benefits which are provided under the Social Security Act or under any other Federal or State law and which are taken into account in determining plan benefits. To the extent that rights are not required to be nonforfeitable to satisfy the minimum vesting standards, or the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4), they may be forfeited without regard to the limitations on forfeitability required by this section. The right of an employee to repurchase his accrued benefit for example under section 411(a)(3)(D), is an example of a right which is required to satisfy such standards. Accordingly, such a right is subject to the limitations on forfeitability. Rights which are required to be prospectively nonforfeitable under the vesting standards are nonforfeitable and may not be forfeited until it is determined that such rights are, in fact, in excess of the vesting standards. Thus, employees have a right to vest in the accrued benefits if they continue in employment of employers maintaining the plan unless a forfeitable event recognized by section 411 occurs. For example, if a plan covered employees in Division A of Corporation X under a plan utilizing a 10-year 100 percent vesting schedule, the plan could not forfeit employees' rights on account of their moving to service in Division B of Corporation X prior to completion of 10 years of service even though employees are not vested at that time.

(b) *Special rules.* For purposes of paragraph (a) of this section a right is not treated as forfeitable—

(1) *Death*—(i) *General rule.* In the case of a participant's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit, merely because such accrued benefit is forfeitable by the participant to the extent it has not been paid or distributed to him prior to his death. This subparagraph shall not apply to a benefit which must be paid to a survivor in order to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(11).

(ii) *Employee contributions.* A participant's right in his accrued benefit derived from his own contributions must be nonforfeitable at all times. Such a right is not treated as forfeitable merely because, after commencement of annuity or pension payments in a benefit form provided under the plan, the participant dies without receiving payments equal in amount to his nonforfeitable accrued benefit derived from his contributions determined at the time of commencement.

(2) *Suspension of benefits upon reemployment of retiree.* In the case of certain suspensions of benefits under section 411(a)(3)(B), see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(3) *Retroactive plan amendment.* In the case of a participant's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit, merely because such benefit is subject to reduction to the extent provided by a plan amendment described in section 412(c)(8) and the regulations thereunder, which amendment is given retroactive effect in accordance with such section.

(4) *Other forfeiture rules*—(i) *Withdrawal of mandatory contributions.* For rules allowing forfeitures on account of the withdrawal of mandatory contributions, see § 1.411(a)–7(d) (2) and (3).

(ii) *Class year plans.* For forfeiture rules pertaining to class year plans, see § 1.411(d)–3(b).

(iii) *Additional requirements.* For additional requirements relating to nonforfeitability of benefits in the event of a withdrawal by the employee, see section 401(a)(19) and § 1.401(a)–19.

(5) *Multiemployer plan.* In the case of a multiemployer plan described in section 414(f), merely because an employee's accrued benefit which results from service with an employer before such employer was required to contribute to the plan is forfeitable on account of the cessation of contributions by the employer of the employee. This subparagraph shall not apply to an employee's accrued benefit with respect to an employer which accrued under a plan maintained by that employer prior to the adoption by that employer of the multiemployer plan.

(6) *Lost beneficiary; escheat.* In the case of a benefit which is payable, merely because the benefit is forfeitable on account of the inability to find the participant or beneficiary to whom payment is due, provided that the plan provides for reinstatement of the benefit if a claim is made by the participant or beneficiary for the forfeited benefit. In addition, a benefit which is lost by reason of escheat under applicable state law is not treated as a forfeiture.

(7) *Certain matching contributions.* A matching contribution (within the meaning of section 401(m)(4)(A) and § 1.40l(m)–1(f)(12)) is not treated as forfeitable even if under the plan it may be forfeited under § 1.401(m)–1(e)(1) because the contribution to which it relates is treated as an excess contribution (within the meaning of § 1.402(k)–1(f)(2) and (g)(7)), excess deferral (within the meaning of § 1.402(g)–1(e)(1)(iii)), or excess aggregate contribution (within the meaning of § 1.401(m)–1(f)(8)).

(c) *Examples.* The rules of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Corporation A's plan provides that an employee is fully vested in his employer-derived accrued benefit after completion of 5 years of service. The plan also provides that, if an employee works for a competitor he forfeits his rights in the plan. Such provision could result in the forfeiture of an employee's rights which are required to be nonforfeitable under section 411 and therefore the plan would not satisfy the requirements of section 411. If the plan limited the forfeiture to employees who completed less than 10 years of service, the plan would not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 411 because the forfeitures under this provision are limited to rights which are in excess of the minimum required to be nonforfeitable under section 411(a)(2)(A).

Example (2). Plan B provides that if an employee does not apply for benefits within 5 years after the attainment of normal retirement age, the employee loses his plan benefits. Such a plan provision could result in forfeiture of an employee's rights which are required to be nonforfeitable under section

411 and, therefore, the plan would not satisfy the requirements of section 411.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42326, Aug. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40549, Aug. 15, 1991]

§ 1.411(a)–4T Forfeitures, suspensions, etc. (temporary).

(a) *Nonforfeitability*. Certain rights in an accrued benefit must be nonforfeitable to satisfy the requirements of section 411(a). This section defines the term ''nonforfeitable'' for purposes of these requirements. For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, a right to an accrued benefit is considered to be nonforfeitable at a particular time if, at that time and thereafter, it is an unconditional right. Except as provided by paragraph (b) of this section, a right which, at a particular time, is conditioned under the plan upon a subsequent event, subsequent performance, or subsequent forbearance which will cause the loss of such right is a forfeitable right at that time. Certain adjustments to plan benefits, such as adjustments in excess of reasonable actuarial reductions, can result in rights being forfeitable. Rights which are conditioned upon a sufficiency of plan assets in the event of a termination or partial termination are considered to be forfeitable because of such condition. However, a plan does not violate the nonforfeitability requirements merely because in the event of a termination an employee does not have any recourse toward satisfaction of his nonforfeitable benefits from other than the plan assets, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or a trust established and maintained pursuant to sections 4041(c)(3)(B) (ii) or (iii) and section 4049 of ERISA with respect to the plan. Furthermore, nonforfeitable rights are not considered to be forfeitable by reason of the fact that they may be reduced as allowed under sections 401(a)(5) and 401(l). To the extent that rights are not required to be nonforfeitable to satisfy the minimum vesting standards, or the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4), they may be forfeited without regard to the limitations on forfeitability required by this section. The right of an employee to repurchase his accrued benefit for example under section 411(a)(3)(D), is an example of a right which is required to satisfy such standards. Accordingly, such a right is subject to the limitations on forfeitability. Rights which are required to be prospectively nonforfeitable under the vesting standards are nonforfeitable and may not be forfeited until it is determined that such rights are, in fact, in excess of the vesting standards. Thus, employees have a right to vest in the accrued benefits if they continue in employment of employers maintaining the plan unless a forfeitable event recognized by section 411 occurs. For example, if a plan covered employees in Division A of Corporation X under a plan utilizing a 5-year 100 percent vesting schedule, the plan could not forfeit employees' rights on account of their moving to service in Division B of Corporation X prior to completion of 5 years of service even though employees are not vested at that time.

(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Examples.* The rules of this section ae illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Corporation A's plan provides that an employee is fully vested in his employer-derived accrued benefit after completion of 3 years of service. The plan also provides that if the employee works for a competitor he forfeits his rights in the plan. Such provision could result in the forfeiture of an employee's rights which are required to be nonforfeitable under section 411 and therefore the plan would not satisfy the requirements of section 411. If the plan limited the forfeiture to employees who completed less than 5 years of service, the plan would not fail to satisfy the requirements of section 411 because the forfeitures under this provision are limited to rights which are in excess of the minimum required to be nonforfeitable under section 411(a)(2)(A).

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 241, Jan. 6, 1988]

§ 1.411(a)–5 Service included in determination of nonforfeitable percentage.

(a) *In general.* Under section 411(a)(4), for purposes of determining the nonforfeitable percentage of an employee's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit under section 411(a)(2) and § 1.411(a)–3, all of an employee's years of service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan shall be taken

into account except that years of service described in paragraph (b) of this section may be disregarded.

(b) *Certain service.* For purposes of paragraph (a) of this section, the following years of service may be disregarded:

(1) *Service before age 22.* (i) In the case of a plan which satisfies the requirements of section 411(a)(2) (A) or (B) (relating to 10-year vesting and 5–15-year vesting, respectively), a year of service completed by an employee before he attains age 22.

(ii) In the case of a plan which does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(a)(2) (A) or (B), a year of service completed by an employee before he attains age 22 if the employee is not a participant (for purposes of section 410) in the plan at any time during such year.

(iii) For purposes of this subparagraph in the case of a plan utilizing computation periods, service during a computation period described in section 411(a)(5)(A) within which the employee attains age 22 may not be disregarded. In the case of a plan utilizing the elapsed time method described in § 1.410(a)–7, service on or after the date on which the employee attains age 22 may not be disregarded.

(2) *Contributory plans.* In the case of a plan utilizing computation periods, a year of service completed by an employee under a plan which requires mandatory contributions (within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C) and § 1.411(c)–1(c)(4)) to be made by the employee for such year, if the employee does not participate for such year solely because of his failure to make all mandatory contributions to the plan for such year. If the employee contributes any part of the mandatory contributions for the year, such year may not be excluded by reason of this subparagraph. In the case of a plan utilizing the elapsed time method described in § 1.410(a)–7, the service which may be disregarded is the period with respect to which the mandatory contribution is not made.

(3) *Plan not maintained*—(i) *In general.* An employee's years of service with an employer during any period for which the employer did not maintain the plan or a predecessor plan may be disregarded for purposes of section 411(a)(2). Paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section provides rules regarding the period prior to the adoption of a plan. Paragraph (b)(3)(iii) of this section provides rules regarding the period after the termination of a plan. Paragraph (b)(3)(iv) of this section provides rules regarding employers who have certain relationships with other employers maintaining the plan.

(ii) *Period prior to adoption.* The period for which a plan is not maintained by an employer includes the period before the plan was established. For purposes of this subdivision, a plan is established on the first day of the plan year in which the plan is adopted even though the plan is adopted after such first day. Except as provided in paragraph (b)(3)(iv) of this section if an employer adopts a plan which has previously been established by another employer or group of employers, the plan is not maintained by the adopting employer prior to the first day of the plan year in which the plan is adopted by the adopting employer. In the case of a transfer of assets or liabilities (including a merger or consolidation) involving two plans maintained by a single employer, the successor (or transferee) plan is treated as if it was established at the same time as the date of the establishment of the earliest component plan. In the case of a plan merger, consolidation, or transfer of plan assets or liabilities involving plans of two or more employers, the successor plan is treated as if it were established on each of the separate dates on which such component plan was established for the employees of each employer. Thus, for example, if employer A establishes a plan January 1, 1970, and employer B establishes a plan January 1, 1980, and the plans were subsequently merged, then the merged plan would be treated as if it were in existence on January 1, 1970, with respect to A's employees and as if it were in existence on January 1, 1980, with respect to B's employees.

(iii) *Period after termination or withdrawal.* The period for which a plan is not maintained by an employer includes the period after the plan is terminated. For purposes of this section, a plan is terminated at the date there is

a termination of the plan within the meaning of section 411(d)(3)(A) and the regulations thereunder. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, if contributions to or under a plan are made after termination, the plan is treated as being maintained until such contributions cease, whether or not accruals are made after such termination. If, after termination of a plan in circumstances under which the employer may be liable to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation under section 4062 of the Act, employer contributions are made to or under the plan to fund benefits accrued at the time of termination, such contributions shall, for purposes of this paragraph, be deemed to be payments in satisfaction of employer liability to such Corporation rather than contributions to or under the plan. In the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, the period for which the plan is not maintained by the withdrawing employer includes the period after the withdrawal from the plan.

(iv) *Certain employers.* For purposes of this subparagraph—

(A) *Predecessor employers.* Service with a predecessor employer who maintained the plan of the current employer is treated as service with such current employer (see section 414(a)(1) and the regulations thereunder), and certain service with a predecessor employer who did not maintain the plan of the current employer is treated as service with the current employer (see section 414(a)(2) and the regulations thereunder).

(B) *Related employers.* Service with an employer is treated as service for certain related employers for the period during which the employers are related. These related employers include members of a controlled group of corporations (within the meaning of section 1563(a), determined without regard to subsections (a)(4) and (e)(3) (C) thereof) and trades or businesses (whether or not incorporated) which are under common control (see section 414 (b) and (c) and 29 CFR Part 2530, Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefits plans).

(C) *Plan maintained by more than one employer.* Service with an employer who maintains a plan is treated as service for each other employer who maintains that plan for the period during which the employers are maintaining the plan (see section 413 (b)(4) and (c)(3) and 29 CFR Part 2530, Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(v) *Predecessor plan*—(A) *General rule.* In the case of an employee who was covered by a predecessor plan, the time the successor of such plan is maintained for such employee includes the time the predecessor plan was maintained if, as of the later of the time the predecessor plan is terminated or the successor plan is established, the employee's years of service under the predecessor plan are not equalled or exceeded by the aggregate number of consecutive 1-year breaks in service occuring after such years of service. Years of service and breaks in service, without regard to whether the employee has nonforfeitable rights under the predecessor plan, are determined under section 411(a) (5) and (6) except that years between the termination date of the predecessor plan and the date of establishment of the successor plan do not count as years of service.

(B) *Definition of predecessor plan.* For purposes of this section, if—

(1) An employer establishes a retirement plan (within the meaning of section 7476(d)) qualified under subchapter D of chapter 1 of the Code within the 5-year period immediately preceding or following the date another such plan terminates, and

(*2*) The other plan is terminated during a plan year to which this section applies.

The terminated plan is a predecessor plan with respect to such other plan.

(C) *Example.* The rules provided by this subparagraph are illustrated by the following example:

Example. (1) Employer X's qualified plan A terminated on January 1, 1977, Employer X established qualified plan B on January 1, 1981. Under paragraph (b)(3)(v)(B) of this section, plan A is a predecessor plan with respect to plan B because plan B is established within the 5-year period immediately following the date plan A terminated.

(2) Employee C was not covered by the A plan. Under the general rule in subdivision

(v)(A) of this subparagraph, plan B is not maintained until January 1, 1981, with respect to Employee C.

(3) Employee D was covered by the A plan. On December 31, 1976, D had 4 years of service. D had 4 consecutive 1-year breaks in service because, during the years between the termination of plan A and the establishment of plan B, he did not have more than 500 hours of service in any applicable computation period. Because D's consecutive 1-year breaks (4) equal his years of service prior to his breaks (4), plan B is not maintained until January 1, 1981, with respect to employee D.

(4) Employee E was covered by the A plan. On December 31, 1975, E had 6 years of service. E had a 1-year break in service in 1976. E also had 4 consecutive 1-year breaks in service for the period between plan A's termination and plan B's establishment. Because E's years of service (6) are not less than his consecutive 1-year breaks (5), plan B is maintained for E as of the establishment date of plan A.

(4) *Break in service.* A year of service which is not required to be taken into account by reason of a break in service (within the meaning of section 411(a)(6) and § 1.411(a)–6)).

(5) *Service before January 1, 1971.* A year of service completed by an employee prior to January 1, 1971, unless the employee completes at least 3 years of service at any time after December 31, 1970. For purposes of determining if an employee completes 3 years of service, whether or not consecutive, the exceptions of section 411(a)(4) are not applicable. For the meaning of the term ''year of service'', see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(6) *Service before effective date.* A year of service completed before the first plan year for which this section applies to the plan, if such service would have been disregarded under the plan rules relating to breaks in service (whether or not such rules are so designated in the plan) as such rules were in effect from time to time under the plan. For this purpose, plan rules which result in the loss of prior vesting or benefit accruals of an employee, or which deny an employee eligibility to participate, by reason of separation or failure to complete a required period of service within a specified priod of time (*e.g.*, 300 hours in one year) will be considered break in service rules See § 1.411(a)–9 for requirements relating to certain amendments to the break in service rules of a plan.

(i) [Reserved]

(ii) *Examples.* The rules of this subparagraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. The A plan in 1971 provides for immediate participation and vesting at normal retirement age. Employees accrue a unit benefit based on their compensation in each year. The plan provides that if an employee is not employed on the last day of the calendar year, he loses all accrued benefits. The requirement of employment on the last day of the year is a break in service rule because employees can lose benefits by reason of their separation. Accordingly, in the case of employees who separate and do not return by the close of the year, service which is completed prior to separation may be disregarded.

Example 2. The B plan in 1971 excludes from plan participation employees who work less than 1,200 hours per year. Because years of less than 1,200 hours are not taken into account under the B plan for eligibility to participate, such years are excluded under rules relating to breaks in service. Therefore, the years can be disregarded under this subparagraph.

Example 3. The C plan in 1971 provides for immediate participation and provides accruals and vesting credit for 1,200 hours or more in a given year. The plan provides that if a participant works less than 300 hours in a given year, he loses all prior vesting and benefit credits. The 300 hour rule is a break in service rule because the failure to complete 300 hours results in the loss of vesting and prior service credit. The 1,200 hour requirement is not a break in service rule because even though employees do not increase vesting or accrue benefits for service between 300 and 1,200 hours, they cannot lose prior vesting or benefits for such service. Accordingly, the C plan can disregard completed years only on account of less than 300 hours of service by an employee.

(c) *Special continuity rule for certain plans.* For special rules for computing years of service in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, see 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901, 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42327, Aug. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40985, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.411(a)–6 Year of service; hours of service; breaks in service.

(a) *Year of service.* Under section 411 (a)(5)(A), for purposes of the regulations thereunder, the term ''year of service'' is defined in regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under section 203(b)(2)(A) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. For special rules applicable to seasonal industries and maritime industries, see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under subparagraphs (C) and (D) of section 203(b)(2) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

(b) *Hours of service.* Under section 411(a)(5)(B), for purposes of the regulations thereunder, the term ''hours of service'' has the meaning provided by section 410(a)(3)(C). See regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(c) *Breaks in service.* Under section 411(a)(6), for purposes of § 1.411(a)–5(b)(4) and of this paragraph—

(1) *In general*—(i) *Year of service after 1-year break in service.* In the case of any employee who has incurred a 1-year break in service, years of service completed before such break are not required to be taken into account until the employee has completed one year of service after his return to service.

(ii) *Defined contribution plan.* In the case of a participant in a defined contribution plan or in an insured defined benefit plan (which plan satisfies the requirements of section 411 (b)(1)(F) and § 1.411(b)–1) who has incurred a 1-year break in service, years of service completed after such break are not required to be taken into account for purposes of determining the nonforfeitable percentage of the participant's right to employer-derived benefits which accrued before such break. This subdivision does not permit years of service completed before a 1-year break in service to be disregarded in determining the nonforfeitable percentage of a participant's right to employer-derived benefits which accrue after such break.

(iii) *Nonvested participants.* In the case of an employee who is a nonvested participant in employer-derived benefits at the time he incurs a 1-year break in service, years of service completed by such participant before such break are not required to be taken into account for purposes of determining the nonforfeitable percentage of his right to employer-derived benefits if at such time the number of consecutive 1-year breaks in service included in his most recent break in service equals or exceeds the aggregate number of his years of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such break. In the case of a plan utilizing the elapsed time method described in § 1.410(a)–7, the condition in the preceding sentence shall be satisfied if the period of severance is at least one year and the consecutive period of severance equals or exceeds his prior period of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. In computing the aggregate number of years of service prior to such break, years of service which could have been disregarded under this subdivision by reason of any prior break in service may be disregarded.

(2) *One-year break in service defined.* The term ''1-year break in service'' means a calendar year, plan year, or other 12-consecutive month period designated by a plan (and not prohibited under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor) during which the participant has not completed more than 500 hours of service. In the case of a plan utilizing the elapsed time method, the term ''1-year break in service'' means a 12-consecutive month period beginning on the severance from service date or any anniversary thereof and ending on the next succeeding anniversary of such date; provided, however, that the employee during such 12-consecutive-month period does not complete any hours of service within the meaning of 29 CFR Part 2530.200b–2(a) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan. See regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(d) *Examples.* The rules provided by this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). (i) X Corporation maintains a defined contribution plan to which section

411 applies. The plan uses the calendar year as the vesting computation period. In 1980, Employee A, who was hired at age 35, separates from the service of X Corporation after completing 4 years of service. At the time of his separation, Employee A had a nonforfeitable right to 25 percent of his employer-derived accrued benefit which was not distributed. In 1985, after incurring 5 consecutive one-year breaks in service. Employee A is reemployed by X Corporation and becomes an active participant in the plan. The plan provides that, for 1985 and all subsequent years, Employee A's previous years of service will not be taken into account for purposes of computing the nonforfeitable percentage of his employer-derived accrued benefit, solely because of his break in service.

(ii) The plan fails to satisfy section 411. Section 411(a)(6)(B) would permit the plan to disregard Employee A's prior service for purposes of computing his nonforfeitable percentage in 1985 only, but such service must be taken into account in subsequent years unless there is another break in service. Under section 411(a)(6)(C), the plan is not required to take Employee A's post-break service into account for purposes of computing his nonforfeitable right to his prebreak employer-derived accrued benefits. This provision, however, would not permit the plan to disregard pre-break service in determining his nonforfeitable right to his benefit accrued after the break. The exception provided by section 411(a)(6)(D) does not apply in the case of a participant who has any nonforfeitable right to his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions.

Example (2). (i) X Corporation maintains a qualified plan to which sections 410 and 411 (relating to minimum participation standards and minimum vesting standards, respectively) apply. The plan permits participation upon completion of a year of service and provides that 100% of an employee's employer-derived accrued benefit vests after 10 years of service. The plan uses the calendar year as the vesting computation period. The plan provides that an employee who completes at least 1,000 hours of service in a 12-month period is credited with a year of service for participation and vesting purposes. The plan also provides that an employee who does not complete more than 500 hours of service in that 12-month period incurs a one-year break in service. The plan includes the rule described in section 411 (a)(6)(D) for participation and vesting purposes. Under this rule, an employee's years of service prior to a break in service may be disregarded under certain circumstances if he has no vested right to any employer-derived benefit under the plan. The plan does not contain the rule described in section 411(a)(6)(B) (relating to the requirement of one year of service after a one-year break in service).

(ii) Employee A commences employment with the X Corporation on January 1, 1977. Employee A's employment history for 1977 through 1989 is as follows:

Year ending December 31	Hours of service completed
1977	1,000
1978	800
1979	1,000
1980	400
1981	1,000
1982	0
1983	400
1984	1,000
1985	0
1986	0
1987	500
1988	200
1989	1,000

Employee A's status as a participant during this period is determined as follows:

1978: Employee A was a plan participant on January 1, 1978, because he completed a year of service (1,000 hours) in 1977. He did not complete a year of service in 1978 because he completed fewer than 1,000 hours in that year. Because he completed more than 500 hours of service in 1978, however, Employee A did not incur a one-year break in service that year.

1979: Employee A completes a year of service in 1979. Because he did not incur a one-year break in service in 1978, the plan may not disregard his 1977 service for purposes of determining his years of service as of January 1, 1979.

1980: Employee A incurs a one-year break in service in 1980.

1981: Because Employee A had completed 2 years of service prior to 1981 and had incurred one 1-year break in service prior to 1981, under section 411(a)(6)(D), the plan may not disregard his pre-1980 service in 1981. Employee A completes a year of service in 1981.

1982: Employee A incurs a one-year break in service in 1982.

1983: Employee A incurs a one-year break in service in 1983. As of the end of 1983, he has completed 3 years of service and has incurred 2 consecutive one-year breaks in service.

1984: Employee A completes a year of service in 1984. Under section 411(a)(6)(D), his pre-1982 service may not be disregarded in 1984 because, as of the beginning of 1984, his pre-1984 years of service (3) exceed his consecutive one-year breaks in service (2).

1984–1988: Employee A incurs 4 consecutive one-year breaks in service during the years 1985 through 1988.

1989: Employee A's pre-1989 service is disregarded in 1989 and all subsequent plan years because his years of service as of January 1, 1989, equal the number of consecutive one-year breaks he has incurred as of that

date. Therefore, as of the beginning of 1989, Employee A is not a plan participant. Employee A completes a year of service in 1989. (Although section 411(a)(6)(D) does not prohibit the plan provision under which Employee A's pre-1989 service is disregarded, that section does not require such a provision in a qualified plan.)

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42329, Aug. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40985, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.411(a)–7 Definitions and special rules.

(a) *Accrued benefit.* For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, the term ''accrued benefit'' means—

(1) *Defined benefit plan.* In the case of a defined benefit plan—

(i) If the plan provides an accrued benefit in the form of an annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age, such accrued benefit, or

(ii) If the plan does not provide an accured benefit in the form described in subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, an annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age which is the actuarial equivalent (determined under section 411(c)(3) and § 1.411(c)–(5) of the accrued benefit determined under the plan. In general, the term ''accrued benefits'' refers only to pension or retirement benefits. Consequently, accrued benefits do not include ancillary benefits not directly related to retirement benefits such as payment of medical expenses (or insurance premiums for such expenses), disability benefits not in excess of the qualified disability benefit (see section 411(a)(9) and paragraph (c)(3) of this section), life insurance benefits payable as a lump sum, incidental death benefits, current life insurance protection, or medical benefits described in section 401(h). For purposes of this paragraph a subsidized early retirement benefit which is provided by a plan is not taken into account, except to the extent of determining the normal retirement benefit under the plan (see section 411(a)(9) and paragraph (c) of this section). The accrued benefit includes any optional settlement at normal retirement age under actuarial assumptions no less favorable than those which would be applied if the employee were terminating his employment at normal retirement age. The accrued benefit does not include any subsidized value in a joint and survivor annuity to the extent that the annual benefit of the joint and survivor annuity does not exceed the annual benefit of a single life annuity.

(2) *Defined contribution plan.* In the case of a defined contribution plan, the balance of the employee's account held under the plan.

(b) *Normal retirement age*—(1) *General rule.* For the purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, the term ''normal retirement age'' means the earlier of—

(i) The time specified by a plan at which a plan participant attains normal retirement age, or

(ii) The later of—

(A) The time the plan participant attains age 65, or

(B) The 10th anniversary of the date the plan participant commences participation in the plan.

If a plan, or the employer sponsoring the plan, imposes a requirement that an employee retire upon reaching a certain age, the normal retirement age may not exceed that mandatory retirement age. The preceding sentence will apply if the employer consistently enforces a mandatory retirement age rule, whether or not set forth in the plan or any related document. For purposes of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, if an age is not specified by a plan as the normal retirement age then the normal retirement age under the plan is the earliest age beyond which the participant's benefits under the plan are not greater solely on account of his age or service. For purposes of paragraph (b)(1)(ii)(B) of this section, participation commences on the first day of the first year in which the participant commenced his participation in the plan, except that years which may be disregarded under section 410(a)(5)(D) may be disregarded in determining when participation commenced.

(2) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Plan A defines normal retirement age as age 65. Under the plan, benefits payable to participants who retire at or after

age 60 are not reduced on account of early retirement. For purposes of section 411 and the vesting regulations, normal retirement age under Plan A is age 65 (determined under subparagraph (1)(i) of this paragraph). This is true even if in operation all participants retire at age 60.

Example (2). Plan B does not specify any age as the normal retirement age. Under the plan, participants who have attained age 55 are entitled to benefits commencing upon retirement but the benefits of participants who retire before attaining age 70 are subject to reduction on account of early retirement. For purposes of section 411 and the vesting regulations the normal retirement age under Plan B is the later of (i) age 65, or (ii) the 10th anniversary of the date a plan participant commences participation in the plan (assuming such date is prior to age 70).

Example (3). The facts are the same as in example (2). Employee X first became a participant in Plan B on January 1, 1980 at age 53. His participation continued until December 31, 1980, when he separated from the service with no vested benefits. After incurring 5 consecutive 1-year breaks in service, Employee X again becomes an employee and a plan participant on January 1, 1986, at age 59. For purposes of section 411, Employee X's normal retirement age under Plan B is age 69, the 10th anniversary of the date on which his year of plan participation commenced. His participation in 1980 may be disregarded under the last sentence of paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(c) *Normal retirement benefit*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, the term ''normal retirement benefit'' means the periodic benefit under the plan commencing upon early retirement (if any) or at normal retirement age, whichever benefit is greater.

(2) *Periodic benefit.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph—

(i) In the case of a plan under which a benefit is payable as an annuity in the same form upon early retirement and at normal retirement age, the greater benefit is determined by comparing the amount of such annuity payments.

(ii) In the case of a plan under which an annuity benefit payable upon early retirement is not in the same form as an annuity benefit payable at normal retirement age, the greater benefit is determined by converting the annuity benefit payable upon early retirement age into the same form of annuity benefit as is payable at normal retirement age and by comparing the amount of the converted early retirement benefit payment with the amount of the normal retirement benefit payment.

(iii) In the case of a plan which is integrated with the Social Security Act or any other Federal or State law, the periodic benefit payable upon and after early retirement age is adjusted for any increases in such benefits occurring on or after early retirement age which are taken into account under the plan. See however, section 401(a)(15) and the regulations thereunder.

(3) *Benefits included.* For purposes of this paragraph, the normal retirement benefit under a plan shall be determined without regard to ancillary benefits not directly related to retirement benefits such as medical benefits or disability benefits not in excess of the qualified disability benefit; see section 411(a)(7) and paragraph (a)(1) of this section. For this purpose, a qualified disability benefit is a disability benefit which is not in excess of the amount of the benefit which would be payable to the participant if he separated from service at normal retirement age.

(4) *Early retirement benefit; social security supplement.* (i) For purposes of this paragraph, the early retirement benefit under a plan shall be determined without regard to any social security supplement.

(ii) For purposes of this subparagraph, a social security supplement is a benefit for plan participants which—

(A) Commences before the age and terminates before the age when participants are entitled to old-age insurance benefits, unreduced on account of age, under title II of the Social Security Act, as amended (see section 202 (a) and (g) of such Act), and

(B) Does not exceed such old-age insurance benefit.

(5) *Special limitation.* If a defined benefit plan bases its normal retirement benefits on employee compensation, the compensation must reflect the compensation which would have been paid for a full year of participation within the meaning of section 411(b)(3). If an employee works less than a full year of participation, the compensation used to determine benefits under the plan for such year of participation must be multiplied by the ratio of the number of hours for a complete year of

participation to the number of hours worked in such year. A plan whose benefit formula is computed on a computation base which cannot decrease is not required to adjust employee compensation in the manner described in the previous sentence. Thus, for example, if a plan provided a benefit based on an employee's compensation for his highest five consecutive years or a separate benefit for each year of participation based on the employee's compensation for such year the plan would not have to so adjust compensation. However, if a plan provided a benefit based on an employee's compensation for the employee's last five years or the five highest consecutive years out of the last 10 years, the compensation, would have to be so adjusted. For special rules for applying the limitations on proration of a year of participation for benefit accrual, see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(6) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (*1*). Plan A provides for a benefit equal to 1% of high 5 years compensation for each year of service and a normal retirement age of 65. The plan also provides for a full unreduced accrued benefit without any actuarial reduction for any employee at age 55 with 30 years of service. Even though the actuarial value of the early retirement benefit could exceed the value of the benefit at the normal retirement age, the normal retirement benefit would not include the greater value of the early retirement benefit because actuarial subsidies are ignored.

Example (*2*). Plan B provides the following benefits: (1) at normal retirement age 65, $300/mo. for life and (2) at early retirement age 60, $400/mo. for life. The normal retirement benefit is $400/mo., the greater of the benefit payable at normal retirement age ($300) or early retirement ($400).

Example (*3*). Assume the same facts as example (2) except that the early retirement benefit of $400 is reduced to $300 upon attainment of age 65. If each employee's social security benefit at age 65 is not less than $100, the $100 would be considered to be a social security supplement and would therefore be ignored. Consequently, the normal retirement benefit would be $300.

Example (*4*). Plan C provides a benefit at normal retirement age equal to 1% per year of service, multiplied by the participant's compensation averaged over the 5 years immediately prior to retirement. An early retirement benefit is provided upon attainment of age 60 equal to the benefit accrued to date of early retirement reduced by 4 percent for each year by which the early retirement date precedes the normal retirement age of 65. Employee A was hired at age 30, participated immediately, and retired at age 65. Employee A's annual compensation was $50,000 between ages 55–60 and was reduced to $33,000 after age 60. The following table indicates the amount of annual benefit that would have been provided by the plan formula if the employee retired at or after age 60:

Age	Final average computated (1)—	Percent accrued benefit (2)—	Reduction (3)—	Annual benefit (4)—
60	$50,000	30	0.80	*$12,000
61	46,600	31	.84	12,135
62	43,200	32	.88	12,165
63	39,800	33	.92	12,083
64	36,400	34	.96	11,881
65	33,000	35	1.00	11,550

NOTE.—Col. (1) times col. (2) times col. (3) equals col. (4).

The normal retirement benefit is the greater of the benefit payable at normal retirement age or the early retirment benefit. Employee A's normal retirement benefit is $12,165, the greatest annual benefit Employee A would be entitled to.

(d) *Rules relating to certain distributions and cash-outs of accrued benefits*—(1) *In general.* This paragraph sets forth vesting rules applicable to certain distributions from qualified plans and their related trusts (other than class year plans). Subparagraphs (2) and (3) set forth the exceptions to nonforfeitability on account of withdrawal of mandatory contributions provided by section 411(a)(3)(D). When a plan utilizes these exceptions with respect to a given participant's accrued benefit, such accrued benefit is not subject to the cash-out rules or vesting rules of subparagraphs (4) or (5), respectively. Section 411 prescribes certain requirements with respect to accrued benefits under a qualified plan. These requirements would generally not be satisfied if the plan disregarded service in computing accrued benefits even though amounts were distributed on account of such service. Subparagraph (4) of this paragraph sets forth rules under section 411(a)(7)(B) which allow a plan

to make distributions and compute accrued benefits without regard to the accrued benefit attributable to the distribution. When a defined contribution plan utilizes this exception with respect to an accrued benefit, the plan is not required to satisfy the rules of subparagraph (5) of this paragraph. Subparagraph (5) of this paragraph sets forth a vesting requirement applicable to certain distributions from defined contribution plans. Subparagraph (6) sets forth other rules which pertain to the distribution rules of this paragraph.

(2) *Withdrawal of mandatory contribution*—(i) *General rule.* In the case of a participant's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit, a right is not treated as forfeitable merely because all or a portion of such benefit may be forfeited on account of the withdrawal by the participant of any amount attributable to his accrued benefit derived from his mandatory contributions (within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C) and § 1.411(c)–1) before he has become a 50 percent vested participant (within the meaning of § 1.401(a)–19(b)(2)). For purposes of determining the vested percentage, the plan may disregard service after the withdrawal. For example, assume that a plan utilizes 1000 hours for computing years of service and that for the computation period employee A had 1000 hours of service. If A was 40 percent vested at the beginning of the period but only had 800 hours at the time of the withdrawal, the plan could treat A as only 40 percent vested because service after the withdrawal can be disregarded. On the other hand, if A had 1000 hours at the time of the withdrawal, he must receive a year of service for the computation period, even though service is not taken into account until the end of such period.

(ii) *Plan repayment provision.* (A) Subdivision (i) of this subparagraph shall not apply unless, at the time the amount described in such subdivision is withdrawn by the participant, the plan provides the employee with a right to restoration of his employer-derived accrued benefit to the extent forfeited in accordance with such subdivision upon repayment to the plan of the full amount of the withdrawal.

(B) In the case of a defined benefit plan (as defined in section 414(j)) the restoration of the employee's employer-derived accrued benefit may be conditioned upon repayment of interest on the full amount of the distribution. Such interest shall be computed on the amount of the distribution from the date of such distribution to the date of repayment, compounded annually from the date of distribution, at the rate determined under section 411(c)(2)(C) in effect on the date of repayment. A plan may provide for repayment of interest which is less than the amount determined under the preceding sentence.

(C) In the case of both defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans, the plan repayment provision described in this subparagraph may provide that the employee must repay the full amount of the distribution in order to have the forfeited benefit restored. The plan provision may not require that such repayment be made sooner than the time described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(D) of this section.

(D)(*1*) If a distribution is on account of separation from service, the time for repayment may not end before the earlier of—

(*i*) 5 years after the first day the employee is subsequently employed, or

(*ii*) The close of the first period of consecutive 1-year breaks in service commencing after the distribution.

If the distribution occurs for any other reason, the time for repayment may not end earlier than 5 years after the date of distribution. Nevertheless, a plan provision may provide for a longer period in which the employee may repay. For example, a plan could allow repayments to be made at any time before normal retirement age.

(*2*) In the case of a plan utilizing the elapsed time method, described in § 1.410(a)–7, the minimum time for repayment shall be determined as in paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(D)(*1*) of this section except as provided in this subdivision. The 5 consecutive 1-year break periods shall be determined by substituting the term ''1-year period of severance'' for the term ''1-year break in service''. Also, the repayment period both commences and closes in a manner determined by the Commissioner that is consistent with the rules in § 1.410(a)–7

and the substitution in section 411(a)(6)(C) and (D) of a 5-year break–in–service rule for the former 1-year break–in–service rule.

(E) A defined benefit plan using the break–in–service rule described in section 410(a)(5)(D) or a defined contribution plan using the break–in–service rule described in section 411(a)(6)(C) for determining employees' accrued benefits is not required to provide for repayment by an employee whose accrued benefit is disregarded by reason of a plan provision using these rules.

(iii) *Computation of benefit.* In the case of a defined contribution plan, the employer-derived accrued benefit required to be restored by this subparagraph shall not be less than the amount in the account balance of the employee which was forfeited, unadjusted by any subsequent gains or losses.

(iv) *Delayed forfeiture.* A defined contribution plan may, in lieu of the forfeiture and restoration described in this subparagraph, provide that the forfeiture does not occur until the expiration of the time for repayment described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph provided that the conditions of this subparagraph are satisfied.

(3) *Withdrawal of mandatory contributions; accruals before September 2, 1974*—(i) *General rule.* In the case of a participant's right to the portion of the employer-derived benefit which accrued prior to September 2, 1974, a right is not treated as forfeitable merely because all or part of such portion may be forfeited on account of the withdrawal by the participant of an amount attributable to his benefit derived from mandatory contributions (within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C) and § 1.411(c)–1(c)(4)) made by the participant before September 2, 1974, if the amount so subject to forfeiture is no more than proportional to such amounts withdrawn. This subparagraph shall not apply to any plan to which any mandatory contribution (within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C) and § 1.411(c)–1(c)(4)) is made after September 2, 1974.

(ii) *Defined contribution plan.* In the case of a defined contribution plan, the portion of a participant's employer-derived benefit which accrued prior to September 2, 1974, shall be determined on the basis of a separate accounting between benefits accruing before and after such date. Gains, losses, withdrawals, forfeitures, and other credits or charges must be separately allocated to such benefits. Any allocation made on a reasonable and consistent basis prior to September 1, 1977, shall satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.

(iii) *Defined benefit plan.* In the case of a defined benefit plan, the portion of a participant's employer-derived benefit which accrued prior to September 2, 1974, shall be determined in a manner consistent with the determination of an accrued benefit under section 411(b)(1)(D) (see § 1.411(b)–1(c)). Any method of determining such accrued benefit which the Commissioner finds to be reasonable shall satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.

(4) *Certain cash-outs of accrued benefits*—(i) *Involuntary cash-outs.* For purposes of determining an employee's right to an accrued benefit derived from employer contributions under a plan, the plan may disregard service performed by the employee with respect to which—

(A) The employee receives a distribution of the present value of his entire nonforfeitable benefit at the time of the distribution,

(B) The requirements of section 411(a)(11) are satisfied at the time of the distribution. See § 1.411(a)(11)–1.

(C) The distribution is made due to the termination of the employee's participation in the plan, and

(D) The plan has a repayment provision which satisfies the requirements of subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph in effect at the time of the distribution.

A distribution shall be deemed to be made due to the termination of an employe's participation in the plan if it is made no later than the close of the second plan year following the plan year in which such termination occurs. For purposes of determining the entire nonforfeitable benefit, the plan may disregard service after the distribution, as illustrated in subparagraph (2)(i) of this paragraph.

(ii) *Voluntary cash-outs.* For purposes of determining an employee's accrued

benefit derived from employer contributions under a plan, the plan may disregard service performed by the employee with respect to which—

(A) The employee receives a distribution of the present value of his nonforfeitable benefit attributable to such service at the time of such distribution,

(B) The employee voluntarily elects to receive such distribution,

(C) The distribution is made on termination of the employee's participation in the plan, and

(D) The plan has a repayment provision in effect at the time of the distribution which satisfies the requirements of subdivision (iv) of this subparagraph.

A distribution shall be deemed to be made on termination of participation in the plan if it is made not later than the close of the second plan year following the plan year in which such termination occurs. For purposes of determining the nonforfeitable benefit, the plan may disregard service after the distribution as illustrated in subparagraph (2)(i) of this subparagraph.

(iii) *Disregard of service.* Service of an employee permitted to be disregarded under subdivision (i) or (ii) of the subparagraph is not required to be taken into account in computing the employee's accrued benefit under the plan. In the case of a voluntary distribution described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph which is less than the present value of the employee's total nonforfeitable benefit immediately prior to the distribution, the accrued benefit not required to be taken into account is such total accrued benefit multiplied by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of the distribution and the denominator of which is the present value of his total nonforfeitable benefit immediately prior to such distribution. For example, A who is 50 percent vested in an account balance of $1,000 receives a voluntary distribution of $250. The accrued benefit which can be disregarded equals $1,000 times $250/$500, or $500. However, such service may not by reason of this paragraph be disregarded for purposes of determining an employee's years of service under sections 410(a)(3) and 411(a)(4).

(iv) *Plan repayment provision.* (A) A plan repayment provision satisfies the requirements of this subdivision if, under the provision, the accrued benefit of an employee that is disregarded by a plan under this subparagraph is restored upon repayment to the plan by the employee of the full amount of the distribution. An accrued benefit is not restored unless all of the optional forms of benefit and subsidies relating to such benefit are also restored. A plan is not required to provide for repayment of an accrued benefit unless the employee—

(*1*) Received a distribution that is in a plan year to which section 411 applies (see § 1.411(a)–2), which distribution is less than the amount of his accrued benefit determined under the same optional form of benefit as the distribution was made, and

(*2*) Resumes employment covered under the plan.

(B) *Example.* Plan A provides a single sum distribution equal to the present value of the normal form of the accrued benefit payable at normal retirement age which is a single life annuity. Plan A also provides a subsidized joint and survivor annuity and a subsidized early retirement annuity benefit. A participant who is fully vested and receives a single sum distribution equal to the present value of the single life annuity normal retirement benefit is not required to be provided the right under the plan to repay the distribution upon subsequent reemployment even though the participant received a distribution that did not reflect the value of the subsidy in the joint and survivor annuity or the value of the early retirement annuity subsidy. This is true whether or not the participant had satisfied at the time of the distribution all of the conditions necessary to receive the subsidies. However, if a participant does not receive his total accrued benefit in the optional form of benefit under which his benefit was distributed, the plan must provide for repayment. If the employee repays the distribution in accordance with section 411(a)(7), the plan must restore the employee's accrued benefit which would include the right to receive the subsidized joint and survivor annuity and the subsidized early retirement annuity benefit.

(C) A plan may impose the same conditions on repayments for the restoration of employer-derived accrued benefits that are allowed as conditions for restoration of employer-derived accrued benefits upon repayment of mandatory contributions under paragraphs

(d)(2)(ii) (B), (C), (D) and (E) of this section.

(v) In the case of a defined contribution plan, the employer-derived accrued benefit required to be restored by this subparagraph shall not be less than the amount in the account balance of the employee, both the amount distributed and the amount forfeited, unadjusted by any subsequent gains or losses. Thus, for example, if an employee received a distribution of $250 when he was 25 percent vested in an account balance of $1,000, upon repayment of $250 the account balance may not be less than $1,000 even if, because of plan losses, the account balance, if not distributed, would have been reduced to $500.

(5) *Vesting requirement for defined contribution plans*—(i) *Application.* The requirements of this subparagraph apply to a defined contribution plan which makes distributions to employees from their accounts attributable to employer contributions at a time when—

(A) Employees are less than 100 percent vested in such accounts, and

(B) Under the plan, employees can increase their percentage of vesting in such accounts after the distributions.

(ii) *Requirements.* In order for a plan, to which this subparagraph applies, to satisfy the vesting requirements of section 411, account balances under the plan (with respect to which percentage vesting can increase) must be computed in a manner which satisfies either subdivision (iii) (A) or (B) of this subparagraph.

(iii) *Permissible methods.* A plan many provide for either of the following methods, but not both, for computing account balances with respect to which percentage vesting can increase and from which distributions are made:

(A)*(1)* A separate account is established for the employee's interest in the plan as of the time of the distribution, and

(*2*) At any relevant time the employee's vested portion of the separate account is not less than an amount (''X'') determined by the formula: $X=P(AB+(R\times D))-(R\times D)$. For purposes of applying the formula: P is the vested percentage at the relevant time; AB is the account balance at the relevant time; D is the amount of the distribution; R is the ratio of the account balance at the relevant time to the account balance after distribution; and the relevant time is the time at which, under the plan, the vested percentage in the account cannot increase.

A plan is not required to provide for separate accounts provided that account balances are maintained under a method that has the same effect as under this subdivision.

(B) At any relevant time the employee's vested portion is not less than an amount (''X'') determined by the formula: $X=P(AB+D)-D$. For purposes of applying the formula, the terms have the same meaning as under subdivision (iii)(A)(*2*) of this subparagraph.

(C) An application of the methods described in subdivisions (iii) (A) and (B) of this subparagraph is illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). The X defined contribution plan uses the method described in subdivision (iii)(A) of this subparagraph for computing account balances and the break in service rule described in section 411(a)(6)(C) (service after a 1-year break does not increase the vesting percentage in account balances accrued prior to the break). The plan distributes $250 to A when A's account balance prior to the distribution equals $1,000 and he is 25 percent vested. At the time of the distribution, A has not incurred a 1-year break so that his vesting percentage can increase. Six years later, when A is 60 percent vested, he incurs a 1-year break so that his vesting percentage cannot increase. At this time his separate account balance equals $1,500. R=$1,500/$750 or 2. A's separate account must equal 60 percent ($1,500+(2×$250))−(2×$250) or 60 percent ($1,500+$500)−$500, or $1,200−$500 equals $700.

Example (2). The Y defined contribution plan uses the method descirbed in subdivision (iii)(B) of this subparagraph for computing account balances and the break in service rule described in section 411(a)(6)(C). The plan distributes $250 to B when B's account balance prior to the distribution equals $1,000 and he is 25 percent vested. At the time of the distribution, B has not incurred a 1-year break so that his vesting percentage can increase. Six years later, when A is 60 percent vested, he incurs a 1-year break so that his vesting percentage cannot increase. At this time his account balance equals $1,500. B's separate account must equal 60 percent ($1,500+$250)−$250, 60% of $1,750−$250 equals $800.

(6) *Other rules*—(i) *Distributions on separation or other event.* None of the rules

of this paragraph preclude distributions to employees upon separation from service or any other event recognized by the plan for commencing distributions. Such a distribution must, of course, satisfy the applicable qualification requirements pertaining to such distributions. For example, a profitsharing plan could pay the vested portion of an account balance to an employee when he separated from service, but in order to satisfy section 411 the plan might not be able to forfeit the nonvested account balance until the employee has a 1-year break in service. Similarly, the fact that a plan cannot disregard an accrued benefit attributable to service for which an employee has received a distribution because the plan does not satisfy the cash-out requirements of subparagraph (4) of this paragraph does not mean that the employee's accrued benefit (computed by taking into account such service) cannot be offset by the accrued benefit attributable to the distribution.

(ii) *Joint and survivor requirements.* See §1.401(a)–11(a)(2) (relating to joint and survivor annuities) for special rules applicable to certain distributions described in this paragraph.

(iii) *Plan repayments.* (A) Under subparagraphs (2) and (4) of this paragraph, a plan may be required to restore accrued benefits in the event of repayment by an employee.

(B) For purposes of applying the limitations of section 415 (c) and (e), in the case of a defined contribution plan, the repayment by the employee and the restoration by the employer shall not be treated as annual additions.

(C) In the case of a defined contribution plan, the permissible sources for restoration of the accrued benefit are: income or gain to the plan, forfeitures, or employer contributions. Notwithstanding the provisions of §1.401–1(b)(1)(ii), contributions may be made for such an accrued benefit by a profit-sharing plan even though there are no profits. In order for such a plan to be qualified, account balances (accrued benefits) generally must correspond to assets in the plan. Accordingly, there cannot be an unfunded account balance. However, an account balance will not be deemed to be unfunded in the case of a restoration if assets for the restored benefit are provided by the end of the plan year following the plan year in which the repayment occurs.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42329, Aug. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 8038, 50 FR 29374, July 19, 1985; T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31852, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§1.411(a)–8 Changes in vesting schedule.

(a) *Requirement of prior schedule.* Under section 411(a)(10)(A), for plan years for which section 411 applies, a plan will be treated as not meeting the minimum vesting standards of section 411(a)(2) if the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this paragraph. If the vesting schedule of a plan is amended, then as of the date such amendment is adopted, the plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph if, under the plan as amended, in the case of an employee who is a participant on—

(1) The date the amendment is adopted, or

(2) The date the amendment is effective, if later.

The nonforfeitable percentage (determined as of such date) of such employee's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit is not less than his percentage computed under the plan without regard to such amendment.

(b) *Election of former schedule*—(1) *In general.* Under section 411 (a)(10)(B), for plan years for which section 411 applies, if the vesting schedule of a plan is amended, the plan will not be treated as meeting the minimum vesting standards of section 411 (a)(2) unless the plan as amended, provides that each participant whose nonforfeitable percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions is determined under such schedule, and who has completed at least 5 years of service with the employer, may elect, during the election period, to have the nonforfeitable percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions determined without regard to such amendment. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, no election need be provided for any participant whose nonforfeitable percentage under the plan, as amended, at any

time cannot be less than such percentage determined without regard to such amendment.

(2) *Election period.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the election period under the plan must begin no later than the date the plan amendment is adopted and end no earlier than the latest of the following dates:

(i) The date which is 60 days after the day the plan amendment is adopted,

(ii) The date which is 60 days after the day the plan amendment becomes effective, or

(iii) The date which is 60 days after the day the participant is issued written notice of the plan amendment by the employer or plan administrator.

(3) *Service requirement.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, a participant shall be considered to have completed 5 years of service if such participant has completed 5 years of service, whether or not consecutive, without regard to the exceptions of section 411(a)(4) prior to the expiration of the election period described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph. For the meaning of the term ''year of service'', see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(4) *Election only by participant.* The election described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph is available only to an individual who is a participant in the plan at the time such election is made.

(5) *Election may be irrevocable.* A plan, as amended, shall not fail to meet the minimum vesting standards of section 411(a)(2) by reason of section 411(a)(10)(B) merely because such plan provides that the election described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph is irrevocable.

(6) *Relationship with section 411(a)(2).* The election described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph is available for a vesting schedule which does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(a)(2) only if under such schedule all participants have a 50 percent nonforfeitable right after 10 years of service, and a 100 percent nonforfeitable right after 15 years of service, in their employer-derived accrued benefit. If the vesting schedule provides less vesting than the percentages required by the preceding sentence, the plan can be amended to provide for such vesting.

(c) *Special rules*—(1) *Amendment of vesting schedule.* For purposes of this section, an amendment of a vesting schedule is each plan amendment which directly or indirectly affects the computation of the nonforfeitable percentage of employees' rights to employer-derived accrued benefits. Consequently, such an amendment, for example, includes each change in the plan which affects either the plan's computation of years of service or of vesting percentages for years of service.

(2) *Aggregation of amendments.* All plan amendments which are: (i) amendments of a vesting schedule within the meaning of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph and (ii) adopted and effective at the same time, shall be deemed to be a single amendment for purposes of applying the rules in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42333, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(a)–8T Changes in vesting schedule (temporary).

(a) [Reserved]

(b) *Election of former schedule*—(1) *In general.* Under section 411(a)(10)(B), for plan years for which section 411 applies, if the vesting schedule of a plan is amended, the plan will not be treated as meeting the minimum vesting standards of section 411(a)(2) unless the plan as amended provides that each participant whose nonforfeitable percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions is determined under such schedule, and who has completed at least 3 years of service with the employer, may elect, during the election period, to have the nonforfeitable percentage of his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions determined without regard to such amendment. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, no election need be provided for any participant whose nonforfeitable percentage under the plan, as amended, at any time cannot be less than such percentage determined without regard to such

amendment. For employees not described in §1.411(a)–3T(e)(1), this section shall be applied by substituting ''5 years of service'' for ''3 years of service'' where such language appears.

(2) *Election period.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the election period under the plan must begin no later than the date the plan amendment is adopted and end no earlier than the latest of the following dates:

(i) The date which is 60 days after the day the plan amendment is adopted,

(ii) The date which is 60 days after the day the plan amendment becomes effective, or

(iii) The date which is 60 days after the day the participant is issued written notice of the plan amendment by the employer or plan administrator.

(3) *Service requirement.* For purposes of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, a participant shall be considered to have completed 3 years of service if such participant has completed 3 years of service, whether or not consecutive, without regard to the exceptions of section 411(a)(4) prior to the expiration of the election period described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph. For the meaning of the term ''year of service'', see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

[T.D. 8170, 53 FR 241, Jan. 6, 1988]

§1.411(a)–9 Amendment of break in service rules; transitional period.

(a) *In general.* Under section 1017(f)(2) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, a plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if the rules of the plan relating to breaks in service are amended, and—

(1) Such amendment is effective after January 1, 1974, and before the effective date of section 411, and

(2) Under such amendment, the nonforfeitable percentage of any employee's right to his employer-derived accrued benefit is less than the lesser of the nonforfeitable percentage of such employee's right to such benefit—

(i) Under the break in service rules provided by section 411(a)(6) and §1.411(a)–6(c), or

(ii) The greatest such percentage under the plan as in effect on or after January 1, 1974 (provided the break in service rules of the plan were not in violation of any law or rule of law on January 1, 1974).

(b) *Break in service rules.* For purposes of paragraph (a), the term ''break in service rules'' means the rules provided by a plan relating to circumstances under which a period of an employee's service or plan participation is disregarded, for purposes of determining the extent to which his rights to his accrued benefit under the plan are unconditional, if under such rules such service is disregarded by reason of the employee's failure to complete a required period of service within a specified period of time. For this purpose, plan rules which result in the loss of prior vesting or benefit accruals of an employee, or which deny an employee eligibility to participate, by reason of separation or failure to complete a required period of service within a specified period of time (e.g., 300 hours in one year) will be considered break in service rules. For purposes of section 411(b)(3), service described under the plan's break in service rules, as in effect before the effective date of section 411, need not be counted.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42333, Aug. 23, 1977]

§1.411(a)–11 Restriction and valuation of distributions.

(a) *Scope*—(1) *In general.* Section 411(a)(11) restricts the ability of a plan to distribute any portion of a participant's accrued benefit without the participant's consent. Section 411(a)(11) also restricts the ability of defined benefit plans to distribute any portion of a participant's accrued benefit in optional forms of benefit without complying with specified valuation rules for determining the amount of the distribution. If the consent requirements or the valuation rules of this section are not satisfied, the plan fails to satisfy the requirements of section 411(a).

(2) *Accrued benefit.* For purposes of this section, an accrued benefit is valued taking into consideration the particular optional form in which the benefit is to be distributed. The value of an accrued benefit is the present value

of the benefit in the distribution form determined under the plan. For example, a plan that provides a subsidized early retirement annuity benefit may specify that the optional single sum distribution form of benefit available at early retirement age is the present value of the subsidized early retirement annuity benefit. In this case, the subsidized early retirement annuity benefit must be used to apply the valuation requirements of this section and the resulting amount of the single sum distribution. However, if a plan that provides a subsidized early retirement annuity benefit specifies that the single sum distribution benefit available at early retirement age is the present value of the normal retirement annuity benefit, then the normal retirement annuity benefit is used to apply the valuation requirements of this section and the resulting amount of the single sum distribution available at early retirement age.

(b) *General consent rules.* A plan must satisfy the participant consent requirement with respect to the distribution of a participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefit with a present value in excess of $3,500. See paragraphs (c) (3) and (4) for situations where no consent is required.

(c) *Consent, etc. requirements*—(1) *General rule.* If an accrued benefit is immediately distributable, section 411(a)(11) permits plans to provide for the distribution of any portion of a participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefits only if the applicable consent requirements are satisfied.

(2) *Consent.* (i) No consent is valid unless the participant has received a general description of the material features, and an explanation of the relative values of, the optional forms of benefit available under the plan in a manner that would satisfy the notice requirements of section 417(a)(3). *See* § 1.401(a)–20 Q&A–36. In addition, so long as a benefit is immediately distributable, a participant must be informed of his right, if any, to defer receipt of the distribution. Furthermore, consent is not valid if a significant detriment is imposed under the plan on any participant who does not consent to a distribution. Whether or not a significant detriment is imposed shall be determined by the Commissioner by examining the particular facts and circumstances.

(ii) For additional rules concerning the consent requirement of section 411(a)(11), see § 1.411(a)–11T(c)(2)(ii) through (v) and (c)(8).

(3) *$3,500.* Written consent of the participant is required before the commencement of the distribution of any portion of an accrued benefit if the present value of the nonforfeitable total accrued benefit is greater than $3,500. The consent requirements are deemed satisfied if such value does not exceed $3,500 and the plan may distribute such portion to the participant as a single sum. Present value for this purpose must be determined in the same manner as under section 417(e); see § 1.417(e)–1(d). If the present value determined at the time of a distribution to the participant exceeds $3,500, then the present value at any subsequent time shall be deemed to exceed $3,500.

(4) *Immediately distributable.* Participant consent is required for any distribution while it is immediately distributable, *i.e.*, prior to the later of the time a participant has attained normal retirement age (as defined in section 411(a)(8)) or age 62. Once a distribution is no longer immediately distributable, a plan may distribute the benefit in the form of a QJSA in the case of a benefit subject to section 417 or in the normal form in other cases without consent.

(5) *Death of participant.* The consent requirements of section 411(a)(11) do not apply after the death of the participant.

(6) *QDROs.* The consent requirements of section 411(a)(11) do not apply to payments to an alternate payee, defined in section 414(p)(8), except as provided in a qualified domestic relations order pursuant to section 414(p).

(7) *Section 401(a)(9), etc.* The consent requirements of section 411(a)(11) do not apply to the extent that a distribution is required to satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(9) or 415. See section 401(a)(9) and the regulations thereunder and § 1.401(a)–20 Q&A 23 for guidance on these requirements. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in section 401(a)(14) or § 1.401(a)–14, a plan may not distribute a participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefit

with a present value in excess of $3,500 while the benefit is immediately distributable unless the participant consents to such distribution. The failure of a participant to consent is deemed to be an election to defer commencement of payment of the benefit for purposes of section 401(a)(14) and §1.401(a)–14.

(d) *Distribution valuation requirements.* In determining the present value of any distribution of any accrued benefit from a defined benefit plan, the plan must take into account specified valuation rules. For this purpose, the valuation rules are the same valuation rules for valuing distributions as set forth in section 417(e); see §1.417(e)–1(d). This paragraph (d) applies both before and after the participant's death regardless of whether the accrued benefit is immediately distributable. This paragraph also applies whether or not the participant's consent is required under paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section.

(e) *Special rules*—(1) *Plan termination.* The requirements of this section apply before, on and after a plan termination. If a defined contribution plan terminates and the plan does not offer an annuity option (purchased from a commercial provider), then the plan may distribute a participant's accrued benefit without the participant's consent. The preceding sentence does not apply if the employer, or any entity within the same controlled group as the employer, maintains another defined contribution plan, other than an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)). In such a case, the participant's accrued benefit may be transferred without the participant's consent to the other plan if the participant does not consent to an immediate distribution from the terminating plan. See section 411(d)(6) and the regulations thereunder for other rules applicable to transferee plans and plan terminations.

(2) *ESOP dividends.* The requirements of this section do not apply to any distribution of dividends to which section 404(k) applies.

(3) *Other rules.* See §1.401(a)–20 Q&As 14, 17 and 24 for other rules that apply to the section 411(a)(11) requirements.

[T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31853, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988, as amended by T.D. 8620, 60 FR 49221, Sept. 22, 1995]

§1.411(a)–11T Restriction and valuation of distributions (temporary).

(a)–(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Consent, etc. requirements*—(1) *General rule.* [Reserved]

(2) *Consent*—(i) [Reserved]

(ii) Written consent of the participant to the distribution must not be made before the participant receives the notice of his or her rights specified in this paragraph (c)(2) and must not be made more than 90 days before the date the distribution commences.

(iii) A plan must provide participants with notice of their rights specified in this paragraph (c)(2) no less than 30 days and no more than 90 days before the date the distribution commences. However, if the participant, after having received this notice, affirmatively elects a distribution, a plan will not fail to satisfy the consent requirement of section 411(a)(11) merely because the distribution commences less than 30 days after the notice was provided to the participant, provided that the following requirement is met. The plan administrator must provide information to the participant clearly indicating that (in accordance with the first sentence of this paragraph (c)(2)(iii)) the participant has a right to at least 30 days to consider whether to consent to the distribution.

(iv) For purposes of satisfying the requirements of this paragraph (c)(2), the plan administrator may substitute the annuity starting date, within the meaning of §1.401(a)–20, Q&A–10, for the date the distribution commences.

(v) See §1.401(a)–20, Q&A–24 for a special rule applicable to consents to plan loans.

(3)–(7) [Reserved]

(8) *Delegation to Commissioner.* The Commissioner, in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance published in the Internal Revenue Bulletin, may modify, or provide additional guidance with respect to, the notice and consent

requirements of this section. See § 601.601(d)(2)(ii)(*b*) of this chapter.

[T.D. 8620, 60 FR 49221, Sept. 22, 1995]

§ 1.411(b)–1 Accrued benefit requirements.

(a) *Accrued benefit requirements*—(1) *In general.* Under section 411(b), for plan years beginning after the applicable effective date of section 411, rules are provided for the determination of the accrued benefit to which a participant is entitled under a plan. Under a defined contribution plan, a participant's accrued benefit is the balance to the credit of the participant's account. Under a defined benefit plan, a participant's accrued benefit is his accrued benefit determined under the plan. A defined benefit plan is not a qualified plan unless the method provided by the plan for determining accrued benefits satisfies at least one of the alternative methods (described in paragraph (b) of this section) for determining accrued benefits with respect to all active participants under the plan. A defined benefit plan may provide that accrued benefits for participants are determined under more than one plan formula. In such a case, the accrued benefits under all such formulas must be aggregated in order to determine whether or not the accrued benefits under the plan for participants satisfy one of the alternative methods. A plan may satisfy different methods with respect to different classifications of employees, or separately satisfy one method with respect to the accrued benefits for each such classification, provided that such classifications are not so structured as to evade the accrued benefit requirements of section 411(b) and this section. (For example, if a plan provides that employees who commence participation at or before age 40 accrue benefits in a manner which satisfies the 133⅓ percent method of determining accrued benefits and employees who commence participation after age 40 accrue benefits in a manner which satisfies the 3 percent method of determining accrued benefits, the plan would be so structured as to evade the requirements of section 411(b).) A defined benefit plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(b) and this section merely because the accrued benefit is defined as the ''reserve under the plan''. Special rules are provided for the first two years of service by a participant, certain insured defined benefit plans, and certain reductions in accrued benefits due to increasing age or service. In addition, a special rule is provided with respect to accruals for service before the effective date of section 411.

(2) *Cross references*—(i) *3 percent method.* For rules relating to the 3 percent method of determining accrued benefits, see paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(ii) *133⅓ percent method.* For rules relating to the 133⅓ percent method of determining accrued benefits, see paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(iii) *Fractional method.* For rules relating to the fractional method of determining accrued benefits, see paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(iv) *Accruals before effective date.* For rules relating to accruals for service before the effective date of section 411, see paragraph (c) of this section.

(v) *First 2 years of service.* For special rules relating to determination of accrued benefit for first 2 continuous years of service, see paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(vi) *Certain insured plans.* For special rules relating to determination of accrued benefit under a defined benefit plan funded exclusively by insurance contracts, see paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(vii) *Accruals decreased by increasing age or service.* For special rules relating to prohibition of decrease in accrued benefit on account of increasing age or service, see paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(viii) *Separate accounting.* For rules relating to requirements for separate accounting, see paragraph (e) of this section.

(ix) *Year of participation.* For definition of ''year of participation'', see paragraph (f) of this section.

(b) *Defined benefit plans.* A defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of section 411(b)(1) and this paragrah for a plan year to which section 411 and this section apply if it satisfies the requirements of subparagraph (1), (2), or (3) of this paragraph for such year.

(1) *3 percent method*—(i) *General rule.* A defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph for a plan year if, as of the close of the plan year, the accrued benefit to which each participant is entitled, computed as if the participant separated from the service as of the close of such plan year, is not less than 3 percent of the 3 percent method benefit, multiplied by the number of years (not in excess of 33⅓) of his participation in the plan including years after his normal retirement age. For purposes of this subparagraph, the ''3 percent method benefit'' is the normal retirement benefit to which the participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age for any individual who is or could be a participant under the plan and if he served continuously until the earlier of age 65 or the normal retirement age under the plan.

(ii) *Special rules*—(A) *Compensation.* In the case of a plan providing a retirement benefit based upon compensation during any period, the normal retirement benefit to which a participant would be entitled is determined as if he continued to earn annually the average rate of compensation which he earned during consecutive years of service, not in excess of 10, for which his compensation was the highest. For purposes of this subdivision (A), the number of consecutive years of service used in computing average compensation shall be the number of years of service specified under the plan (not in excess of 10) for computing normal retirement benefits.

(B) *Social security, etc.* For purposes of this subparagraph, for any plan year, social security benefits and all relevant factors used to compute benefits, *e.g.*, consumer price index, are treated as remaining constant as of the beginning of the current plan year for all subsequent plan years.

(C) *Computation in certain cases.* In the case of any plan to which the provisions of section 411(b)(1)(D) and paragraph (c) of this section are applicable, for any plan year the accrued benefit of any participant shall not be less than the accrued benefit otherwise determined under this subparagraph, reduced by the excess of the accrued benefit determined under this subparagraph as of the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 applies over the accrued benefit determined under section 411(b)(1)(D) and paragraph (c) of this section and increased by the amount determined under paragraph (c)(2)(v) of this section.

(iii) *Examples.* The application of this subparagraph is illustrated by the following examples.

Example (1). The M Corporation's defined benefit benefit plan provides an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 or $4 per month for each year of participation. As a condition of participation, the plan requires that an employee have attained age 25. The normal retirement age specified under the plan is age 65. The plan provides for no limit on the number of years of credited service. A, age 40, is a participant in the M Corporation's plan.

A has completed 12 years of participation in the plan of the M Corporation as of the close of the plan year. Under subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (25) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $1,920 [40×(12×$4)]. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless A has accrued an annual benefit of at least $691 [0.03×($1,920×12)] as of the close of the plan year. Under the M Corporation plan, A is entitled to an accrued benefit of $576 [(12×12)×$4] as of the close of the plan year. Thus, with respect to A, the accrued benefit provided under the M Corporation plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph.

Example (2). Assume the same facts as in example (1) except that the M Corporation's plan provides that only the first 30 years of participation are taken into account. Under subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age under the plan (25) and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $1.440 [30×$48]. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless A has accrued an annual benefit of at least $518 [0.03×($1,440×12)] as of the close of the plan year. Under the M Corporation plan, A is entitled to an accrued benefit of $576 [(12×$48]. Thus, with respect to A, the accrued benefit provided under the M Corporation plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph.

Example (3). The N Corporation's defined benefit plan provides an annual retirement

benefit commencing at age 65 of 50 percent of average compensation for the highest 3 consecutive years of compensation for an employee with 25 years of participation. A participant who separates from service before age 65 is entitled to 2 percent of average compensation for the highest 3 consecutive years of compensation for each year of participation not in excess of 25. The plan has no minimum age or service requirement for participation. The normal retirement age specified under the plan is age 65. On December 31, 1990, B, age 40, is a participant in the N Corporation's plan. B began employment with the N Corporation and became a participant in the N Corporation's plan on January 1, 1980. Under this subparagraph, the normal retirement benefit to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (0) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is 50 percent of average compensation for the highest 3 consecutive years of compensation per year commencing at age 65. Under this subparagraph, B must have accrued an annual benefit of at least 16.5 percent of his highest 3 consecutive years of compensation per year commencing at age 65 [0.03×50 percent of average compensation for the highest 3 consecutive years of compensation×11] as of the close of the plan year. Under the N Corporation plan, B has accrued an annual benefit of 22 percent of average compensation for his highest 3 consecutive years of compensation per year commencing at age 65. Thus, with respect to B, the accrued benefit under the N Corporation plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph.

Example (4). The P Corporation's defined benefit plan provides an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of 50 percent of average compensation for the 3 consecutive years of compensation from the P Corporation next preceding normal retirement age. The plan has no minimum age or service requirement for participation. The normal retirement age under the plan is age 65. On December 31, 1990, C, age 55, separates from service with the P Corporation. C began employment with the P Corporation and became a participant in the P Corporation's plan on January 1, 1980. As of December 31, 1990. C's average compensation for the 3 consecutive years preceding his separation from service is $15,000. Under this subparagraph, the normal retirement benefit to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (0) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of 50 percent of average compensation for the 3 consecutive years of compensation from the P Corporation next preceding normal retirement age commencing at age 65. C must have accrued an annual benefit of at least $2,475 commencing at age 65 [0.03×(0.050×$15,000)×11] as of his separation from the service with the P Corporation in order for the P Corporation's plan to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph with respect to C.

Example (5). On December 31, 1985, the R Corporation's defined benefit plan provided an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of $100 for each year of participation, not to exceed 30. As a condition of participation, the plan requires that an employee have attained age 25. The normal retirement age specified under the plan is age 65. The appropriate computation period is the calendar year. On January 1, 1986, the plan is amended to provide an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of $200 for each year of participation (before and after the amendment), not to exceed 30. B, age 40, is a participant in the R Corporation's plan. B has completed 15 years of participation in the plan of the R Corporation as of December 31, 1990. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (25) under the plan an served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $6,000 [30×200]. Under subdivision (i) of this subparagraph, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless B has accrued an annual benefit of at least $2,700 [0.03×$6,000×15] as of December 31, 1990. Under the R Corporation plan, B is entitled to an accrued benefit of $3,000 [$200×15] as of December 31, 1990. Thus, with respect to B, the accrued benefit provided under the R Corporation plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph.

Example (6). On December 31, 1995, the J Corporation's defined benefit plan provided an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of $4,800 after 30 years of participation. The normal retirement age specified under the plan is age 65. The appropriate computation period is the calendar year. On January 1, 1996, the plan is amended to provide an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of $6,000. A, age 40, is a participant in the J Corporation's plan since its adoption on January 1, 1986. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, on December 31, 1995, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 5 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (0) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $4,800. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, on January 1, 1996, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (0) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $6,000. Under subdivision (i) of this

subparagraph, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless A has an accrued benefit on December 31, 1995 of at least $1,440 [$4,800×0.02×10] and an accrued benefit on January 1, 1996 of at least $1,800 [$6,000×0.03×10].

Example (7). The X Company's defined benefit plan provides an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of $4 per month for each year of participation (not to exceed 30). As a condition of participation, the plan requires that an employee have attained age 25. The normal retirement age specified under the plan is age 65. D, age 68, is a participant in the X Company's plan. D has completed 20 years of participation in the X Company plan as of the close of the plan year. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (25) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit, commencing at age 65, of $1,440 [30×$48]. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless D has accrued an annual benefit, commencing at age 65, of $864 [0.03×$1,440×20] as of the close of the plan year. Under the X Company plan, D has accrued an annual benefit, commencing at age 65, of $960 [20×$48]. Thus, with respect to D the accrued benefit provided under the X Company plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph.

Example (8). Assume the same facts as in example (7) except that for purposes of determining accrued benefits under the plan the X Company's plan disregards all years of participation after normal retirement age. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section, the normal retirement benefit commencing at age 65 to which a participant would be entitled if he commenced participation at the earliest possible entry age (25) under the plan and served continuously until normal retirement age (65) is an annual benefit of $1,440 [30×$48]. Under paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section the plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph unless D has accrued an annual benefit, commencing at age 65, of $864 [0.03×$1,440×20] as of the close of the plan year. Under the X Company's plan D has accrued an annual benefit commencing at age 65, of $816 [17×$48]. Thus, with respect to D, the accrued benefit provided under the X Company plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph.

(2) *133⅓ percent rule*—(i) *General rule.* A defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph for a particular plan year if—

(A) Under the plan the accrued benefit payable at the normal retirement age (determined under the plan) is equal to the normal retirement benefit (determined under the plan), and

(B) The annual rate at which any individual who is or could be a participant can accrue the retirement benefits payable at normal retirement age under the plan for any later plan year cannot be more than 133⅓ percent of the annual rate at which he can accrue benefits for any plan year beginning on or after such particular plan year and before such later plan year.

(ii) *Special rules.* For purposes of this subparagraph—

(A) *Plan amendments.* Any amendment to the plan which is in effect for the current plan year shall be treated as if it were in effect for all other plan years.

(B) *Change in accrual rate.* Any change in an accrual rate which change does not apply to any individual who is of could be a participant in the plan year is disregarded. Thus, for example, if for its plan year beginning January 1, 1980, a defined benefit plan provides an accrued benefit in plan year 1980 of 2 percent of a participant's average compensation for his highest 3 years of compensation for each year of service and provides that in plan year 1981 the accrued benefit will be 3 percent of such average compensation, the plan will not be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph for plan year 1980 because in plan year 1980 the change in the accrual rate does not apply to any individual who is or could be a participant in plan year 1980. However, if, for example, a defined benefit plan provided for an accrued benefit of 1 percent of a participant's average compensation for his highest 3 years of compensation for each of the first 10 years of service and 1.5 percent of such average compensations for each year of service thereafter, the plan will be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph for the plan year even though no participant is actually accruing at the 1.5 percent rate because an individual who could be a participant and who had over 10 years of service would accrue at the 1.5 percent rate, which rate exceeds 133⅓ percent of the 1 percent rate.

(C) *Early retirement benefits.* The fact that certain benefits under the plan may be payable to certain participants before normal retirement age is disregarded. Thus, the requirements of subdivision (i) of this subparagraph must be satisfied without regard to any benefit payable prior to the normal retirement benefit (such as an early retirement benefit which is not the normal retirement benefit (see §1.411(a)–7(c).

(D) *Social security, etc.* For purposes of this paragraph, for any plan year, social security benefits and all relevant factors used to compute benefits, *e.g.*, consumer price index, are treated as remaining constant as of the beginning of the current plan year for all subsequent plan years.

(E) *Postponed retirement.* A plan shall not be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph for a plan year merely because no benefits under the plan accrue to a participant who continues service with the employer after such participant has attained normal retirement age.

(F) *Computation of benefit.* A plan shall not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph if the base for the computation of retirement benefits changes solely by reason of an increase in the number of years of participation. Thus, for example, a plan will not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph if it provides a benefit, commencing at normal retirement age, of the sum of (*1*) 1 percent of average compensation for a participant's first 3 years of participation multiplied by his first 10 years of participation (or, if less than 10 his total years of participation) and (*2*) 1 percent of average compensation for a participant's 3 highest years of participation multiplied by each year of participation subsequent to the 10th year.

(iii) *Examples.* The application of this subparagraph is illustrated by the following examples:

Example (*1*). On January 1, 1980, the R Corporation's defined benefit plan provides for an annual benefit (commencing at age 65) of a percentage of a participant's average compensation for the period of 5 consecutive years of participation for which his compensation is the highest. The percentage is 2 percent for each of the first 20 years of participation and 1 percent per year thereafter. The appropriate computation period is the calendar year. The R Corporation's plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph because the 133⅓ percent rule does not restrict subsequent accrual rate decreases.

Example (*2*). On January 1, 1980, the J Corporation's defined benefit plan provides for an annual benefit (commencing at age 65) of a percentage of a participant's average compensation for the period of his final 5 consecutive years of participation. The percentage is 1 percent for each of the first 5 years of participation; 1⅓ percent for each of the next 5 years of participation; and 1⅞ percent for each year thereafter. The appropriate computation period is the calendar year. Even though no single accrual rate under the J Corporation's plan exceeds 133⅓ percent of the immediately preceding accrual rate, the J Corporation's plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph because the rate of accrual for all years of participation in excess of 10 (1⅞ percent) exceeds 133⅓ percent of the rate of accrual for any of the first 5 years of participation (1 percent).

Example (*3*). On January 1, 1980, the C Corporation's defined benefit plan provides for an annual benefit (commencing at age 65) of a percentage of a participant's average compensation for the period of 3 consecutive years of participation for which his compensation is the highest. The percentage is 2 percent for each of the first 5 years of participation; 1 percent for each of the next 5 years of participation; and 1½ percent for each year thereafter. The appropriate computation period is the calendar year. Even though the average rate of accrual under the C Corporation's plan is not less rapidly than ratably, the C Corporation's plan does not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph because the rate of accrual for all years of participation in excess of 10 (1½ percent) for any employee who is actually accruing benefits or who could accrue benefits exceeds 133⅓ percent of the rate of accrual for the sixth through tenth years of participation, respectively (1 percent).

(3) *Fractional rule*—(i) *In general.* A defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph if the accrued benefit to which any participant is entitled is not less than the fractional rule benefit multiplied by a fraction (not exceeding 1)—

(A) The numerator of which is his total number of years of participation in the plan, and

(B) The denominator of which is the total number of years he would have participated in the plan if he separated from the service at the normal retirement age under the plan.

(ii) *Special rules.* For purposes of this subparagraph—

(A) *Fractional rule benefit.* The ''fractional rule benefit'' is the annual benefit commencing at the normal retirement age under the plan to which a participant would be entitled if he continued to earn annually until such normal retirement age the same rate of compensation upon which his normal retirement benefit would be computed. Such rate of compensation shall be computed on the basis of compensation taken into account under the plan (but taking into account average compensation for no more than the 10 years of service immediately preceding the determination). For purposes of this subdivision (A), the normal retirement benefit shall be determined as if the participant had attained normal retirement age on the date any such determination is made.

(B) *Social security, etc.* For purposes of this subparagraph, for any plan year, social security benefits and all relevant factors used to compute benefits, *e.g.,* consumer price index, are treated as remaining constant as of the beginning of the current plan year for all subsequent plan years.

(C) *Postponed retirement.* A plan shall not be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph merely because no benefits under the plan accrue to a participant who continues service with the employer after such participant has attained normal retirement age under the plan.

(D) *Computation in certain cases.* In the case of any plan to which the provisions of section 411(b)(1)(D) and paragraph (c) of this section are applicable, for any plan year the accrued benefit of any participant shall not be less than the accrued benefit otherwise determined under this subparagraph, reduced by the excess of the accrued benefit determined under this subparagraph as of the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 applies over the accrued benefit determined under section 411(b)(1)(D) and paragraph (c) of this section and increased by the amount determined under paragraph (c)(2)(v) of this section.

(iii) *Examples.* The application of this subparagraph is illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). The R Corporation's defined benefit plan provides an annual retirement benefit commencing at age 65 of 30 percent of a participant's average compensation for his highest 3 consecutive years of participation. If a participant separates from service prior to normal retirement age, the R Corporation's plan provides a benefit equal to an amount which bears the same ratio to 30 percent of such average compensation as the participant's actual number of years of participation in the plan bears to the number of years the participant would have participated in the plan had he separated from service at age 65. The plan further provides that normal retirement age is age 65. A, age 55, is a participant in the R Corporation's plan for the current year, and A has 15 years of participation in the R Corporation's plan. As of the current year, A's average compensation for his highest 3 years of compensation is $20,000. The R Corporation's plan satisfies the requirements of this subparagraph because if A separates from the service in the current year he will be entitled to an annual benefit of $3,600 commencing at age 65 [0.3×$20,000×15/25].

Example (2). The J Corporation's defined benefit plan provides a normal retirement benefit of 1 percent per year of a participant's average compensation from the employer. In the case of a participant who separates from service prior to normal retirement age (65), the plan provides that the annual benefit is an amount which is equal to 1 percent of such compensation multiplied by the number of years of plan participation actually completed by the participant. The plan year of the J Corporation's plan is the calendar year. B, age 55, is a participant in the J Corporation's plan for the current year. B became a participant in the J Corporation's plan on January 1, 1980. As of December 31, 1990, B's compensation history is as follows:

Year	Compensation
1980	$17,000
1981	18,000
1982	20,000
1983	20,000
1984	21,000
1985	22,000
1986	23,000
1987	25,000
1988	26,000
1989	29,000
1990	32,000

If B separates from service on December 31, 1990, he would be entitled to an annual benefit of $2,530 commencing at age 65. Because the J Corporation's plan does not limit the number of years of compensation to be taken into account in determining the normal retirement benefit, B's rate of compensation for purposes of determining his normal retirement benefit is $23,600 [$18,000 + $20,000 + $20,000 + $21,000 + $22,000 + $23,000 + $25,000 + $26,000 + $29,000 + $32,000]/10.

Under this subparagraph, B's accrued benefit under the J Corporation's plan as of December 31, 1990 must be not less than $2,561 per year commencing at age 65 [0.01 × ($17,000 + $18,000 + $20,000 + $20,000 + $21,000 + $22,000 + $23,000 + $25,000 + $26,000 + $29,000 + $32,000 + ($23,600 × 10)) × 11/21]. Thus, the J Corporation's plan would not satisfy the requirements of this subparagraph.

(c) *Accruals for service before effective date*—(1) *General rule.* For a plan year to which section 411 applies, a defined benefit plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1) and this section unless, under the plan, the accrued benefit of each participant for plan years beginning before section 411 applies is not less than the greater of—

(i) Such participant's accrued benefit (as of the day before section 411 applies) determined under the plan as in effect from time to time prior to September 2, 1974 (without regard to any amendment adopted after such date), or

(ii) One-half of the accrued benefit that would be determined with respect to the participant as of the day before section 411 applies if the participant's accrued benefit were computed for such prior plan years under a method which satisfies the requirements of section 411(b)(1) (A), (B), or (C) and paragraph (b) (1), (2), or (3) of this section. See 29 CFR Part 2530, Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans, for time participation deemed to begin.

(2) *Special rules*—(i) A plan shall not be deemed to fail to satisfy the requirements of section 411(b) and this section merely because the method for computing the accrued benefit of a participant for years of participation prior to the first plan year for which section 411 is effective with respect to the plan is not the same method for computing the accrued benefit of a participant for years of participation subsequent to such plan year.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, section 411(b)(1)(A) and paragraph (b)(1) of this section shall be applied as if the participant separated from service with the employer on the day before the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 applies.

(iii) For purposes of paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section shall be applied in the following manner:

(A) Except as provided in (c)(2)(iii)(B) of this section, section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section shall be applied as if the participant separated from service with the employer on the day before the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 applies.

(B) In the case that the plan does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section at any time prior to the day specified in (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, the plan shall be deemed revised to the extent necessary to satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section for all plan years beginning before the applicable effective date of section 411 and this section. For purposes of the preceding sentence, a plan shall not be deemed revised to the extent necessary to satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section for a plan year if the benefit a participant would receive if he were employed until normal retirement age is reduced by such revision or if the revised rate of accrual with respect to such accrued benefit does not otherwise satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(iv) For purposes of paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, section 411(b)(1)(C) and paragraph (b)(3) of this section shall be applied as if the participant separated from service on the day before the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 applies.

(v) The excess of the accrued benefit payable at normal retirement age of any participant determined under section 411(b)(1) (A), (B), or (C) (without regard to section 411(b)(1)(D)), and

paragraph (b)(1), (2), or (3) of this section (without regard to this paragraph) as of the day before the first day of the first plan year to which section 411 and this section applies over the accrued benefit determined under paragraph (c)(1) of this section shall be accrued in accordance with the provisions of the plan as in effect after the applicable effective date of section 411, as if the plan had been initially adopted on such effective date.

(d) *Special rules*—(1) *First 2 years of service.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of paragraph (b) of this section, under section 411(b)(1)(E) and this subparagraph, a plan shall not be treated as failing to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section solely because the accrual of benefits under the plan does not become effective until the employee has completed 2 continuous years of service. For purposes of this subparagraph, continuous years of service are years of service (within the meaning of section 410(a)(3)((A)) which are not separated by a break in service (within the meaning of section 410(a)(5)). For years of service beginning after such 2 years of service, the accrued benefit of an employee shall not be less than that to which the employee would be entitled if section 411(b)(1)(E) and this subparagraph did not apply. Thus, for example, a plan which otherwise satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(2) of this section provides for a rate of accrual of 1 percent of average compensation for the highest 3 years of compensation beginning with the third year of service of a participant shall not be treated as satisfying paragraph (b)(2) of this section because as of the time the employee completes 3 continuous years of service there is no accrual during the first 2 years of service. In addition, a plan which otherwise satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) of this section and which requires that an employee must attain age 25 and complete 1 year of service prior to becoming a participant will not satisfy the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) of this section if an employee who completes 2 years of service prior to attaining age 25 does not begin accruals immediately upon commencement of participation in the plan. For rules relating to years of service, see 29 CFR part 2530, Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(2) *Certain insured defined benefit plans.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (b) (1), (2), and (3) of this section, a defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section if such plan is funded exclusively by the purchase of contracts from a life insurance company and such contracts satisfy the requirements of sections 412(i) (2) and (3) and the regulations thereunder. The preceding sentence is applicable only if an employee's accrued benefit as of any applicable date is not less than the cash surrender value such employee's insurance contracts would have on such applicable date if the requirements of section 412(i) (4), (5), and (6) and the regulations thereunder were satisfied.

(3) *Accrued benefit may not decrease on account of increasing age or service.* Notwithstanding paragraphs (b) (1), (2), and (3) of this section and paragraphs (d) (1) and (2) of this section, a defined benefit plan shall be treated as not satisfying the requirements of paragraphs (b) and (d) of this section if the participant's accrued benefit is reduced on account of any increase in his age or years of service. The preceding sentence shall not apply to social security supplements described in § 1.411(a)–7(c)(4).

(e) *Separate accounting.* A plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph if the requirements of paragraph (e) (1) or (2) of this paragraph are met.

(1) *Defined benefit plan.* In the case of a defined benefit plan, the requirements of this paragraph are satisfied if the plan requires separate accounting for the portion of each employee's accrued benefit derived from any voluntary employee contributions permitted under the plan. For purposes of this subparagraph the term ''voluntary employee contributions'' means all employee contributions which are not mandatory contributions within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C) and the regulations thereunder. See § 1.411(c)–1(b)(1) for rules requiring the determination of such an accrued benefit by the use of a separate account.

(2) *Defined contribution plan.* In the case of a defined contribution plan, the requirements of this paragraph are not satisfied unless the plan requires separate accounting for each employee's accrued benefit. If a plan utilizes the break in service rule of section 411(a)(6)(C), an employee could have different percentages of vesting between pre-break and post-break accrued benefits. In such a case, the requirements of this paragraph are not satisfied unless the plan computes accrued benefits in a manner which takes into account different percentages. A plan which provides separate accounts for pre-break and post-break accrued benefits will be deemed to compute benefits in a reasonable manner.

(f) *Year of participation*—(1) *In general.* This paragraph is inapplicable to a defined contribution plan. For purposes of determining an employee's accrued benefit, a ''year of participation'' is a period of service determined under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor in 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(2) *Additional rule relating to year of participation.* A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust if the plan of which such trust is a part provides for the crediting of a year of participation, or part thereof, and such credit results in the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4).

(g) *Additional illustrations.* The application of this section may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. (i) The S Corporation established a defined benefit plan on January 1, 1980. The plan provides a minimum age for participation of age 25. The normal retirement age under the plan is age 65. The appropriate computation periods are the calendar year. The plan provides an annual benefit, commencing at age 65, equal to $96 per year of service for the first 25 years of service, and $48 per year of service for each additional year of service.

(ii) The plan of the S Corporation does not satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(A) and paragraph (b)(1) of this section because the accrued benefit under the plan at some point will be less than the accrued benefit required under section 411(b)(1)(A) and paragraph (b)(1) of this section (i.e., 3 percent × normal retirement benefit × years of participation).

(iii) The plan of the S Corporation does satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (b)(2) of this section because the rate of benefit accrual is equal in each of the first 25 years of service and the rate decreases thereafter.

(iv) The plan of the S Corporation does satisfy the requirements of section 411(b)(1)(C) and paragraph (b)(3) of this section because the accrued benefit under the plan will equal or exceed the normal retirement benefit multiplied by the fraction described in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42334, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(c)–1 Allocation of accrued benefits between employer and employee contributions.

(a) *Accrued benefit derived from employer contributions.* For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, under section 411(c)(1), an employee's accrued benefit derived from employer contributions under a plan as of any applicable date is the excess, if any, of—

(1) The total accrued benefit under the plan provided for the employee as of such date, over

(2) The accrued benefit provided for the employee, derived from contributions made by the employee under the plan as of such date.

For computation of accrued benefit derived from employee contributions to a defined contribution plan or from voluntary employee contributions to a defined benefit plan, see paragraph (b) of this section. For computation of accrued benefit derived from mandatory employee contributions to a defined benefit plan, see paragraph (c) of this section.

(b) *Accrued benefit derived from employee contribution to defined contribution plan, etc.* For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, under section 411(c)(2)(A) the accrued benefit derived from employee contributions to a defined contribution plan is determined under paragraph (b)(1) or (2) of this section, whichever applies. Under section 411(d)(5), the accrued benefit derived from voluntary employee contributions to a defined benefit plan is determined under paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(1) *Separate accounts maintained.* If a separate account is maintained with

respect to an employee's contributions and all income, expenses, gains, and losses attributable thereto, the accrued benefit determined under this subparagraph as of any applicable date is the balance of such account as of such date.

(2) *Separate accounts not maintained.* If a separate account is not maintained with respect to an employee's contributions and the income, expenses, gains, and losses attributable thereto, the accrued benefit determined under this subparagraph is the employee's total accrued benefit determined under the plan multiplied by a fraction—

(i) The numerator of which is the total amount of the employee's contributions under the plan less withdrawals, and

(ii) The denominator of which is the sum of (A) the amount described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, and (B) the total contributions made under the plan by the employer on behalf of the employee less withdrawals.

For purposes of this subparagraph, contributions include all amounts which are contributed to the plan even if such amounts are used to provide ancillary benefits, such as incidental life insurance, health insurance, or death benefits, and withdrawals include only amounts distributed to the employee and do not reflect the cost of any death benefits under the plan.

(c) *Accrued benefit derived from mandatory employee contributions to a defined benefit plan*—(1) *General rule.* In the case of a defined benefit plan (as defined in section 414(j)) the accrued benefit derived from contributions made by an employee under the plan as of any applicable date is an annual benefit, in the form of a single life annuity (without ancillary benefits) commencing at normal retirement age, equal to the amount of the employee's accumulated contributions (determined under paragraph (c)(3) of this section) multiplied by the appropriate conversion factor (determined under paragraph (c)(2) of this section). Paragraph (e) of this section provides rules for actuarial adjustments where the benefit is to be determined in a form other than the form described in this paragraph.

(2) *Appropriate conversion factor.* For purposes of this paragraph, the term ''appropriate conversion factor'' means the factor necessary to convert an amount equal to the accumulated contributions to a single life annuity (without ancillary benefits) commencing at normal retirement age and shall be 10 percent for a normal retirement age of 65 years. For other normal retirement ages the appropriate conversion factor shall be the factor as determined by the Commissioner.

(3) *Accumulated contributions.* For purposes of section 411(c) and this section, the term ''accumulated contributions'' means the total of—

(i) All mandatory contributions made by the employee (determined under paragraph (c)(4) of this section),

(ii) Interest (if any) on such contributions, computed at the rate provided by the plan to the end of the last plan year to which section 411(a)(2) does not apply (by reason of the applicable effective date), and

(iii) Interest on the sum of the amounts determined under paragraphs (c)(3)(i) and (ii) of this section compounded annually at the rate of 5 percent per annum from the beginning of the first plan year to which section 411(a)(2) applies (by reason of the applicable effective date) to the date on which the employee would attain normal retirement age.

For example, if under section 1017 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, section 411(a)(2) of the Code applies for plan years beginning after December 31, 1975, and for plan years beginning before 1975, the plan provided for 3 percent interest on employee contributions, an employee's accumulated contributions would be computed by crediting interest at the rate provided by the plan (3 percent) for plan years beginning before 1976 and by crediting interest at the rate of 5 percent (or another rate prescribed under section 411(c)(2)(D)) thereafter. Section 1017 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and § 1.411(a)–2 provide the effective dates for the application of section 411(a)(2).

(4) *Mandatory contributions.* For purposes of section 411(c) and this section the term ''mandatory contributions'' means amounts contributed to the plan by the employee which are required as a condition of his employment, as a

condition of his participation in the plan, or as a condition of obtaining benefits (or additional benefits) under the plan attributable to employer contributions. For example, if the benefit derived from employer contributions depends upon a specified level of employee contributions, employee contributions up to that level would be treated as mandatory contributions. Mandatory contributions, otherwise satisfying the requirements of this subparagraph, include amounts contributed to the plan which are used to provide ancillary benefits such as incidental life insurance, health insurance, or death benefits.

(d) *Limitation on accrued benefit.* The accrued benefit derived from mandatory employee contributions under a defined benefit plan (determined under paragraph (c) of this section) shall not exceed the greater of—

(1) The accrued benefit of the employee under the plan, or

(2) The accrued benefit derived from employee contributions determined without regard to any interest under section 411(c)(2)(C) (ii) and (iii) and under paragraphs (c)(3) (ii) and (iii) of this section.

(e) *Actuarial adjustments for defined benefit plans*—(1) *Accrued benefit.* In the case of a defined benefit plan (as defined in section 414(j)) if an employee's accrued benefit is to be determined as an amount other than an annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age, such benefit (determined under section 411(c)(1) and paragraph (a) of this section) shall be the actuarial equivalent of such benefit, as determined by the Commissioner.

(2) *Accrued benefit derived from employee contributions.* In the case of a defined benefit plan (as defined in section 414(j) if the accrued benefit derived from mandatory contributions made by an employee is to be determined with respect to a benefit other than an annual benefit in the form of a single life annuity (without ancillary benefits) commencing at normal retirement age, such benefit shall be the actuarial equivalent of such benefit (determined under section 411(c)(2)(B) and paragraph (c) of this section) as determined by the Commissioner.

(f) *Suspension of benefits, etc.*—(1) *Suspensions.* No adjustment to an accrued benefit is required on account of any suspension of benefits if such suspension is permitted under section 203(a)(3)(B) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 855) (Code section 411(a)(3)(B)).

(2) *Employment after retirement.* No actuarial adjustment to an accrued benefit is required on account of employment after normal retirement age. For example, if a plan with a normal retirement age of 65 provides a benefit of $400 a month payable at age 65 the same $400 benefit (with no upward adjustment) could be paid to an employee who retires at age 68.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42338, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(d)–1 Coordination of vesting and discrimination requirements. [Reserved]

§ 1.411(d)–2 Termination or partial termination; discontinuance of contributions.

(a) *General rule*—(1) *Required nonforfeitability.* A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless the plan provides that—

(i) Upon the termination or partial termination of the plan, or

(ii) In addition, in the case of a plan to which section 412 (relating to minimum funding standards) does not apply, upon the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan,

the rights of each affected employee to benefits accrued to the date of such termination or partial termination (or, in the case of a plan to which section 412 does not apply, discontinuance), to the extent funded, or the rights of each employee to the amounts credited to his account at such time, are nonforfeitable (within the meaning of § 1.411(a)–4.

(2) *Required allocation.* (i) A plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) unless the plan provides for the allocation of any previously unallocated funds to the employes covered by the plan upon the termination or partial termination of the plan (or, in the case of a plan to which section

412 does not apply, upon the complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan). Such provision may be incorporated in the plan at its inception or by an amendment made prior to the termination or partial termination of the plan for the discontinuance of contributions thereunder. In the case of a defined contribution plan under which unallocated forfeitures are held in a suspense account in order to satisfy the requirements of section 415, this subdivision shall not require such plan to provide for allocations from the suspense account to the extent that such allocations would result in annual additions to participants' accounts in excess of amounts permitted under section 415 for the year for which such allocations would be made.

(ii) Any provision for the allocation of unallocated funds which is found by the Secretary of Labor or the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (whichever is appropriate) to satisfy the requirements of section 4044 or section 403(d)(1) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is acceptable if it specifies the method to be used and does not conflict with the provisions of section 401(a)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and the regulations thereunder. Any allocation of funds required by paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4)(A) of section 4044(a) of such Act shall be deemed not to result in discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4) of the Code (see, however, paragraph (e) of this section). Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, in the case of a plan which establishes subclasses or categories pursuant to section 4044(b)(6) of such Act, the allocation of funds by the use of such subclasses or categories shall not be deemed not to result in discrimination prohibited by the Code. The allocation of unallocated funds may be in cash or in the form of other benefits provided under the plan. However, the allocation of the funds contributed by the employer among the employees need not necessarily benefit all the employees covered by the plan.

(iii) Paragraphs (a)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section do not require the allocation of amounts to the account of any employee if such amounts are not required to be used to satisfy the liabilities with respect to employees and their beneficiaries under the plan (see section 401(a)(2)).

(b) *Partial termination*—(1) *General rule.* Whether or not a partial termination of a qualified plan occurs (and the time of such event) shall be determined by the Commissioner with regard to all the facts and circumstances in a particular case. Such facts and circumstances include: the exclusion, by reason of a plan amendment or severance by the employer, of a group of employees who have previously been covered by the plan; and plan amendments which adversely affect the rights of employees to vest in benefits under the plan.

(2) *Special rule.* If a defined benefit plan ceases or decreases future benefit accruals under the plan, a partial termination shall be deemed to occur if, as a result of such cessation or decrease, a potential reversion to the employer, or employers, maintaining the plan (determined as of the date such cessation or decrease is adopted) is created or increased. If no such reversion is created or increased, a partial termination shall be deemed not to occur by reason of such cessation or decrease. However, the Commissioner may determine that a partial termination of such a plan occurs pursuant to subparagraph (1) of this paragraph for reasons other than such cessation or decrease.

(3) *Effect of partial termination.* If a termination of a qualified plan occurs, the provisions of section 411(d)(3) apply only to the part of the plan that is terminated.

(c) *Termination*—(1) *Application.* This paragraph applies to a plan other than a plan described in section 411(e)(1) (relating to governmental, certain church plans, etc.).

(2) *Plans subject to termination insurance.* For purposes of this section, a plan to which title IV of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 applies is considered terminated on a particular date if, as of that date—

(i) The plan is voluntarily terminated by the plan administrator under section 4041 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, or

(ii) The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation terminates the plan under

section 4042 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

For purposes of this subparagraph, the particular date of termination shall be the date of termination determined under section 4048 of such Act.

(3) *Other plans.* In the case of a plan not described in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, a plan is considered terminated on a particular date if, as of that date, the plan is voluntarily terminated by the employer, or employers, maintaining the plan.

(d) *Complete discontinuance*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of this section, a complete discontiuance of contributions under the plan is contrasted with a suspension of contributions under the plan which is merely a temporary cessation of contributions by the employer. A complete discontinuance of contributions may occur although some amounts are contributed by the employer under the plan if such amounts are not substantial enough to reflect the intent on the part of the employer to continue to maintain the plan. The determination of whether a complete discontinuance of contributions under the plan has occurred will be made with regard to all the facts and circumstances in the particular case, and without regard to the amount of any contributions made under the plan by employees. Among the factors to be considered in determining whether a suspension constitutes a discontinuance are:

(i) Whether the employer may merely be calling an actual discontinuance of contributions a suspension of such contributions in order to avoid the requirement of full vesting as in the case of a discontinuance, or for any other reason;

(ii) Whether contributions are recurring and substantial; and

(iii) Whether there is any reasonable probability that the lack of contributions will continue indefinitely.

(2) *Time of discontinuance.* In any case in which a suspension of a profit-sharing plan maintained by a single employer is considered a discontinuance, the discontinuance becomes effective not later than the last day of the taxable year of the employer following the last taxable year of such employer for which a substantial contribution was made under the profit-sharing plan. In the case of a profit-sharing plan maintained by more than one employer, the discontinuance becomes effective not later than the last day of the plan year following the plan year within which any employer made a substantial contribution under the plan.

(e) *Contributions or benefits which remain forfeitable.* Under section 411 (d) (2) and (3), section 411(a) and this section do not apply to plan benefits which may not be provided for designated employees in the event of early termination of the plan under provisions of the plan adopted pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary or his delegate to preclude the discrimination prohibited by section 401(a)(4). Accordingly, in such a case, plan benefits may be required to be reallocated without regard to this section. See § 1.401–4(c).

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42339, Aug. 23, 1977]

§ 1.411(d)–3 Other special rules.

(a) *Class year plans*—(1) *General rule.* Under section 411(d)(4), the requirements of section 411(a)(2) for a class year plan shall be deemed to be satisfied if such plan provides that each employee's rights to or derived from employer contributions on his behalf for any plan year are nonforfeitable no later than the end of the 5th plan year following the plan year for which such contributions were made. For purposes of section 411 and the regulations thereunder, the term ''class year plan'' means a profit-sharing, stock bonus, or money purchase plan which provides that the nonforfeitable rights of employees to or derived from employer contributions are determined separately for each plan year. ''See § 1.411(d)–5 for rules that apply to class year plans for contributions made for plan years beginning after October 22, 1986.''

(2) *Other rules*—(i) *Prohibited forfeiture on withdrawals.* In the case of a class year plan, section 401(a)(19) and the regulations thereunder shall be applied separately to each plan year.

(ii) *Distribution rules.* The rules of § 1.411(a)–7(d) apply to a class year plan. For example, under the rule in § 1.411(a)–7(d)(2)(ii)(D), a class year plan would be permitted to limit the time of

repayment to a 5-year period beginning on the date of withdrawal, or under the rule in §1.411(a)–7(d)(2)(iii), a class year plan would restore the amount of the forfeited account balance in the event of repayment. For purposes of applying subparagraphs (2) and (3) of §1.411(a)–7(d), relating to withdrawal of mandatory contributions, a withdrawal of employee contributions shall be treated as a withdrawal of such contributions on a plan year by plan year basis in succeeding order of time. Any repayments shall be treated as being on account of plan years in succeeding order of time. For purposes of applying any rule of such paragraph (e.g., paragraph (d)(2)(ii)(C)) the term ''one-year break in service'' means any plan year in which under subparagraph (1) of this paragraph a class year plan may forfeit an employee's rights.

(iii) *Computation of years for withdrawals.* In applying the requirement of paragraph (a)(1) of this section that rights must be nonforfeitable no later than the end of the fifth plan year following the plan year for which contributions are made, any plan year for which there has been a withdrawal of contributions and no repayment of such contributions (determined as of the last day of the plan year) is not required to count toward the five years. For example, assume that contributions are made for A in 1981 to a calendar year plan. Under the general rule of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, the contributions must be nonforfeitable on December 31, 1986. If in 1982, A withdraws the contributions for 1981, and repays these contributions in 1984, 1982 and 1983 are not required to be counted toward the five years because at the end of each year there is a withdrawal and no repayment of such withdrawal. Accordingly, the plan must provide that A's interest in the contribution for 1981 will be vested on December 31, 1988.

(b) *Prohibition against accrued benefit decrease.* Under section 411(d)(6) a plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if a plan amendment decreases the accrued benefit of any plan participant, unless the plan amendment satisfies the requirements of section 412(c)(8) (relating to certain retroactive amendments) and the regulations thereunder. For purposes of determining whether or not any participant's accrued benefit is decreased, all the provisions of a plan affecting directly or indirectly the computation of accrued benefits which are amended with the same adoption and effective dates shall be treated as one plan amendment. Plan provisions indirectly affecting accrued benefits include, for example, provisions relating to years of service and breaks in service for determining benefit accrual, and to actuarial factors for determining optional or early retirement benefits.

(c) *Rules applicable to section 414(k) plan.* For special rules applicable to defined benefit plans which provide a benefit derived from employer contributions which is based partly on a participant's separate account, see section 414(k) and the regulations thereunder.

(Sec. 411 (88 Stat. 901; 26 U.S.C. 411))

[T.D. 7501, 42 FR 42340, Aug. 23, 1977, as amended by T.D. 8038, 50 FR 29375, July 19,1985; T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31854, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§1.411(d)–4 Section 411(d)(6) protected benefits.

Q–1: What are ''section 411(d)(6) protected benefits''?

A–1: (a) *In general.* The term ''section 411(d)(6) protected benefit'' includes any benefit that is described in one or more of the following categories—

(1) Benefits described in section 411(d)(6)(A),

(2) Early retirement benefits and retirement-type subsidies described in section 411(d)(6)(B)(i), including qualified social security supplements as defined in §1.401(a)(4)–12, and

(3) Optional forms of benefit described in section 411(d)(6)(B)(ii).

Such benefits, to the extent they have accrued, are subject to the protection of section 411(d)(6) and, where applicable, the definitely determinable requirement of section 401(a) (including section 401(a)(25)) and cannot, therefore, be reduced, eliminated, or made subject to employer discretion except to the extent permitted by regulations.

(b) *Optional forms of benefit*—(1) *In general.* An ''optional form of benefit'' is a distribution form with respect to

an employee's benefit (described in paragraph (a)(1) and/or (a)(2) of this Q&A–1) that is available under the plan and is identical with respect to all features relating to the distribution form, including the payment schedule, timing, commencement, medium of distribution (e.g., in cash or in-kind), the portion of the benefit to which such distribution features apply and the election rights with respect to such optional forms. To the extent there are any differences in such features, the plan provides separate optional forms of benefit. Differences in amounts of benefits, methods of calculation, or values of distribution forms do not result in optional forms of benefit for purposes of this rule. However, such amounts, methods of calculation, or values may be protected benefits within section 411(d)(6)(A) and/or section 411(d)(6)(B)(i). See § 1.401(a)–4 for further discussion and examples relating to optional forms of benefits. See § 1.401(a)(4)–4(d) for the definition of an optional form of benefit for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1994 (or January 1, 1996, in the case of plans maintained by organizations exempt from income taxation under section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans)).

(2) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the meaning of the term ''optional form of benefit.'' Other issues, such as the requirement that the optional forms satisfy section 401(a)(4), are not addressed in these examples and no inferences are intended with respect to such requirements. Assume that the distribution forms, including those not described in these examples, provided under the plan in each of the following examples are identical in all respects not described.

Example 1. A plan permits each participant to receive his benefit under the plan as a single sum distribution; a level monthly distribution schedule over 15 years; a single life annuity; a joint and 50 percent survivor annuity; a joint and 75 percent survivor annuity; a joint and 50 percent survivor annuity with a benefit increase for the participant if the beneficiary dies before a specified date; and joint and 50 percent survivor annuity with a 10 year certain feature. Each of these benefit distribution options is an optional form of benefit (without regard to whether the values of these options are actuarially equivalent).

Example 2. A plan permits each participant to receive his benefit under the plan as a single life annuity commencing at termination from employment; a joint and 50 percent survivor annuity commencing at termination from employment; a single sum distribution that is actuarially equivalent to the single life annuity determined by using a specified interest rate (X percent) for the employees of division A; and a single sum distributions that is actuarially equivalent to the single life annuity determined by using an interst rate that is 80 percent of X percent for employees of Division B. This plan provides three optional forms of benefit. While the interest rates used to determine the single sum distributions available to the employees of Divisions A and the employees of Division B respectively differ, this difference does not result in two single sum optional forms of benefit.

Example 3. A plan permits each participant who is employed by division A to receive his benefit in a single sum distribution payable upon termination from employment and each participant who is employed by division B in a single sum distribution payable upon termination from employment on or after the attainment of age 50. This plan provides two single sum optional forms of benefit.

Example 4. A plan permits each participant to receive his benefit in a single life annuity that commences in the month after the participant's termination from employment or in a single life annuity that commences upon the completion of five consecutive one year breaks in service. These are two optional forms of benefit.

Example 5. A profit-sharing plan permits each participant who is employed by division A to receive an in-service distribution upon the satisfaction of objective criteria set forth in the plan designed to determine whether the participant has a heavy and immediate financial need, and each participant who is employed by division B to receive an in-service distribution upon the satisfaction of objective criteria set forth in the plan designed to determine whether the participant has a heavy and immediate financial need attributable to extraordinary medical expenses. These in-service distribution options are two optional forms of benefits.

Example 6. A profit-sharing plan permits each participant who is employed by division A to receive an in-service distribution up to $5,000 and each participant who is employed by division B to receive an in-service distribution of up to his total benefit. These in-service distribution options differ as to the portion of the accrued benefit that may be distributed in a particular form and are, therefore, two optional forms of benefit.

Example 7. A profit-sharing plan provides for a single sum distribution on termination

of employment. The plan is amended in 1991 to eliminate the single sum optional form of benefit with respect to benefits accrued after the date of amendment. This single sum optional form of benefit continues to be a single optional form of benefit although, over time, the percentage of various employees' accrued benefits that are potentially payable under this single sum may vary because the form is only available with respect to benefits accrued up to and including the date of the amendment.

Example 8. A profit-sharing plan permits each participant to receive a single sum distribution of his benefit in cash or in the form of a specified class of employer stock. This plan provides two single sum distribution optinal forms of benefit.

Example 9. A stock bonus plan permits each participant to receive a single sum distribution of his benefit in cash or in the form of the property in which such participant's benefit was invested prior to the distribution. This plan's single sum distribution option provides two optional forms of benefit.

Example 10. A defined benefit plan provides for an early retirement benefit payable upon termination of employment after attainment of age 55 and either after ten years of service or, if earlier, upon plan termination to employees of Division A and provides for an identical early retirement benefit payable on the same terms with the exception of payment on plan termination to employees of Division B. The plan provides for two optional forms of benefit.

Example 11. A profit-sharing plan provides for loans secured by an employee's account balance. In the event of default on such a loan, there is an execution on such account balances. Such execution is a distribution of the employee's accrued benefits under the plan. A distribution of an accrued benefit contingent on default under a plan loan secured by such accrued benefits is an optional form of benefit under the plan.

(c) *Plan terms*—(1) *General rule.* Generally, benefits described in section 411(d)(6)(A), early retirement benefits, retirement-type subsidies, and optional forms of benefit are section 411(d)(6) protected benefits only if they are provided under the terms of a plan. However, if an employer establishes a pattern of repeated plan amendments providing for similar benefits in similar situations for substantially consecutive, limited periods of time, such benefits will be treated as provided under the terms of the plan, without regard to the limited periods of time, to the extent necessary to carry out the purposes of section 411(d)(6) and, where applicable, the definitely determinable requirement of section 401(a), including section 401(a)(25). A pattern of repeated plan amendments providing that a particular optional form of benefit is available to certain named employees for a limited period of time is within the scope of this rule and may result in such optional form of benefit being treated as provided under the terms of the plan to all employees covered under the plan without regard to the limited period of time and the limited group of named employees.

(2) *Effective date.* The provisions of paragraph (c)(1)of this Q&A-1 are effective as of July 11, 1988. Thus, patterns or repeated plan amendments adopted and effective before July 11, 1988 will be disregarded in determining whether such amendments have created an ongoing optional form of benefit under the plan.

(d) *Benefits that are not section 411(d)(6) protected benefits.* The following benefits are examples of items that are not section 411(d)(6) protected benefits:

(1) Ancillary life insurance protection;

(2) Accident or health insurance benefits;

(3) Social security supplements described in section 411(a)(9), except qualified social security supplements as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–12;

(4) The availability of loans (other than the distribution of an employee's accrued benefit upon default under a loan);

(5) The right to make after-tax employee contributions or elective deferrals described in section 402(g)(3);

(6) The right to direct investments;

(7) The right to a particular form of investment (e.g., investment in employer stock or securities or investment in certain types of securities, commercial paper, or other investment media);

(8) The allocation dates for contributions, forfeitures, and earnings, the time for making contributions (but not the conditions for receiving an allocation of contributions or forfeitures for a plan year after such conditions have been satisfied), and the valuation dates for account balances;

(9) Administrative procedures for distributing benefits, such as provisions

relating to the particular dates on which notices are given and by which elections must be made; and

(10) Rights that derive from administrative and operational provisions, such as mechanical procedures for allocating investment experience among accounts in defined contribution plans.

Q–2: To what extent may section 411(d)(6) protected benefits under a plan be reduced or eliminated?

A–2: (a) *Reduction or elimination of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits*—(1) *In general.* A plan may not be amended to eliminate or reduce a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit that has already accrued, except as provided in sections 412(c)(8) and 4281, and in paragraph (b) of this Q&A–2. This is generally the case even if such elimination or reduction is contingent upon the employee's consent. However, a plan may be amended to eliminate or reduce section 411(d)(6) protected benefits with respect to benefits not yet accrued as of the later of the amendment's adoption date or effective date without violating section 411(d)(6).

(2) *Selection of optional forms of benefit*—(i) *General rule.* A plan may treat a participant as receiving his entire nonforfeitable accrued benefit under the plan if the participant receives his benefit in an optional form of benefit in an amount determined under the plan that is at least the actuarial equivalent of the employee's nonforfeitable accrued benefit payable at normal retirement age under the plan. This is true even though the participant could have elected to receive an optional form of benefit with a greater actuarial value than the value of the optional form received, such as an optional form including retirement-type subsidies, and without regard to whether such other, more valuable optional form could have commenced immediately or could have become available only upon the employee's future satisfaction of specified eligibility conditions.

(ii) *Election of an optional form.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this Q&A–2, a plan does not violate section 411(d)(6) merely because an employee's election to receive a portion of his nonforfeitable accrued benefit in one optional form of benefit precludes the employee from receiving that portion of his benefit in another optional form of benefit. Such employee retains all 411(d)(6) protected rights with respect to the entire portion of such employee's nonforfeitable accrued benefit for which no distribution election was made. For purposes of this rule, an elective transfer of an otherwise distributable benefit is treated as the selection of an optional form of benefit. See Q&A–3 of this section.

(iii) *Buy-back rule.* Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this Q&A–2, an employee who received a distribution of his nonforfeitable benefit from a plan that is required to provide a repayment opportunity to such employee if he returns to service within the applicable period pursuant to the requirements of section 411(a)(7) and who, upon subsequent reemployment, repays the full amount of such distribution in accordance with section 411(a)(7)(C) must be reinstated in the full array of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that existed with respect to such benefit prior to distribution.

(iv) *Examples.* The rules in this paragraph (a)(2) can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Defined benefit plan X provides, among its optional forms of benefit, for a subsidized early retirement benefit payable in the form of an annuity and available to employees who terminate from employment on or after their 55th birthdays. In addition plan X provides for a single sum distribution available on termination from employment or termination of the plan. The single sum distribution is determined on the basis of the present value of the accrued normal retirement benefit and does not take the early retirement subsidy into account. Plan X is terminated December 31, 1991. Employees U, age 47, V, age 55, and W, age 47, all continue in the service of the employer. Employees X, age 47, Y, age 55 and Z, age 47, terminate from employment with the employer during 1991. Employees U and V elect to take the single sum optional form of distribution at the time of plan termination. Employees X and Y elect to take the single sum distribution on termination from employment with the employer. The elimination of the subsidized early retirement benefit with respect to employees U, V, X and Y does not result in a violation of section 411(d)(6). This is the result even though employees U and X had not yet satisfied the conditions for the subsidized early retirement benefit. Because employees W and Z have not selected an optional form of benefit, they continue to have

a 411(d)(6) protected right to the full array of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits provided under the plan, including the single sum distribution form and the subsidized early retirement benefit.

Example 2. A partially vested employee receives a single sum distribution of the present value of his entire nonforfeitable benefit on account of separation from service under a defined benefit plan providing for a repayment provision. Upon reemployment with the employer such employee makes repayment in the required amount in accordance with section 411(a)(7). Such employee may, upon subsequent termination of employment, elect to take such repaid benefits in any optional form provided under the plan as of the time of the employee's initial separation from service. If the plan was amended prior to such repayment, to eliminate the single sum optional form of benefit with respect to benefits accrued after the date of the amendment, such participant has a 411(d)(6) protected right to take distribution of the repaid benefit in the form of a single sum distribution.

(3) *Certain transactions*—(i) *Plan mergers and benefit transfers.* The prohibition against the reduction or elimination of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits already accrued applies to plan mergers, spinoffs, transfers, and transactions amending or having the effect of amending a plan or plans to transfer plan benefits. Thus, for example, if plan A, a profit-sharing plan that provides for distribution of plan benefits in annual installments over ten or twenty years, is merged with plan B, a profit-sharing plan that provides for distribution of plan benefits in annual installments over life expectancy at time of retirement, the merged plan must retain the ten or twenty year installment option for participants with respect to benefits already accrued under plan A as of the merger and the installments over life expectancy for participants with benefits already accrued under plan B. Similarly, for example, if an employee's benefit under a defined contribution plan is transferred to another defined contribution plan (whether or not of the same employer), the optional forms of benefit available with respect to the employee's benefit accrued under the transferor plan may not be eliminated or reduced except as otherwise permitted under this regulation. See Q&A–3 of this section with respect to the transfer of benefits between and among defined benefit and defined contribution plans.

(ii) *Annuity contracts*—(A) *General rule.* The protection provided by section 411(d)(6) may not be avoided by the use of annuity contracts. Thus, section 411(d)(6) protected benefits already accrued may not be eliminated or reduced merely because a plan uses annuity contracts to provide such benefits, without regard to whether the plan, a participant, or a beneficiary of a participant holds the contract or whether such annuity contracts are purchased as a result of the termination of the plan. However, to the extent that an annuity contract constitutes payment of benefits in a particular optional form elected by the participant, the plan does not violate section 411(d)(6) merely because it provides that other optional forms are no longer available with respect to such participant. See paragraph (a)(2) of this Q&A–2.

(B) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (a)(3)(ii) can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. A profit-sharing plan that is being terminated satisfies section 411(d)(6) only if the plan makes available to participants annuity contracts that provide for all section 411(d)(6) protected benefits under the plan that may not otherwise be reduced or eliminated pursuant to this Q&A–2. Thus, if such a plan provided for a single sum distribution upon attainment of early retirement age, and a provision for payment in the form of 10 equal annual installments, the plan would satisfy section 411(d)(6) only if the participants had the opportunity to elect to have their benefits provided under an annuity contract that provided for the same single sum distribution upon the attainment of the participant's early retirement age and the same 10 year installment optional form of benefit.

Example 2. A defined benefit plan permits each participant who separates from service on or after age 62 to receive a qualified joint and survivor annuity or a single life annuity commencing 45 days after termination from employment. For a participant who separates from service before age 62, payments under these optional forms of benefit commence 45 days after the participant's 62nd birthday. Under the plan, a participant is to elect among these optional forms of benefit during the 90-day period preceding the annuity starting date. However, during such period, a participant may defer both benefit commencement and the election of a particular benefit form to any later date, subject to section 401(a)(9). In January 1990, the

employer decides to terminate the plan as of July 1, 1990. The plan will fail to satisfy section 411(d)(6) unless the optional forms of benefit provided under the plan are preserved under the annuity contract purchased on plan termination. Thus, such annuity contract must provide a participant the same optional benefit commencement rights that the plan provided. In addition, such contract must provide the same election rights with respect to such benefit options. This is the case even if, for example, in conjunction with the termination, the employer amended the plan to permit participants to elect a qualified joint and survivor annuity, single life annuity, or single sum distribution commencing on July 1, 1990.

(4) *Benefits payable to a spouse or beneficiary.* Section 411(d)(6) protected benefits may not be eliminated merely because they are payable with respect to a spouse or other beneficiary.

(b) *Section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that may be eliminated or reduced only as permitted by the Commissioner*—(1) *In general.* The Commissioner may, consistent with the provisions of this section, provide for the elimination or reduction of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that have already accrued only to the extent that such elimination or reduction does not result in the loss to plan participants of either a valuable right or an employer-subsidized optional form of benefit where a similar optional form of benefit with a comparable subsidy is not provided or to the extent such elimination or reduction is necessary to permit compliance with other requirements of section 401(a) (e.g., sections 401(a)(4), 401(a)(9) and 415). The Commissioner may exercise this authority only through the publication of revenue rulings, notices, and other documents of general applicability.

(2) *Section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that may be eliminated or reduced.* The elimination or reduction of certain section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that have already accrued in the following situations does not violate section 411(d)(6). The rules with respect to permissible eliminations and reductions provided in this paragraph (b)(2) are effective January 30, 1986. These exceptions create no inference with respect to whether any other applicable requirements are satisfied (for example, requirements imposed by section 401(a)(9) and section 401(a)(14)).

(i) *Change in statutory requirement.* A plan may be amended to eliminate or reduce a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit if the following three requirements are met: the amendment constitutes timely compliance with a change in law affecting plan qualification; there is an exercise of section 7805(b) relief by the Commissioner; and the elimination or reduction is made only to the extent necessary to enable the plan to continue to satisfy the requirements for qualified plans. In general, the elimination or reduction of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit will not be treated as necessary if it is possible through other modifications to the plan (e.g., by expanding the availability of an optional form of benefit to additional employees) to satisfy the applicable qualification requirement.

(ii) *Joint and survivor annuity.* A plan that provides a range of three or more actuarially equivalent joint and survivor annuity options may be amended to eliminate any of such options, other than the options with the largest and smallest optional survivor payment percentages, even if the effect of such amendment is to change which of the options is the qualified joint and survivor annuity under section 417. Thus, for example, if a money purchase pension plan provides three joint and survivor annuity options with survivor payments of 50%, 75% and 100%, respectively, that are uniform with respect to age and are actuarially equivalent, then the employer may eliminate the option with the 75% survivor payment, even if this option had been the qualified joint and survivor annuity under the plan.

(iii) *In-kind distributions after plan termination*—(A) *In general.* If a plan includes an optional form of benefit under which benefits are distributed in specified property (other than cash), such optional form of benefit may be modified for distributions after plan termination by substituting cash for the specified property to the extent that, on plan termination, an employee has the opportunity to receive the optional form of benefit in the specified property. This exception is not available, however, if the employer that maintains the terminating plan also maintains another plan that provides

an optional form of benefit in the specified property.

(B) *Example.* This paragraph (b)(2)(iii) can be illustrated by the following example:

Example. An employer maintains a stock bonus plan under which a participant, upon termination from employment, may elect to receive his benefits in a single sum distribution in employer stock. This is the only plan maintained by the employer under which distributions in employer stock are available. The employer decides to terminate the stock bonus plan. If such plan is amended to make available a single sum distribution in employer stock on plan termination, the plan will not fail section 411(d)(6) solely because the optional form of benefit providing a single sum distribution in employer stock on termination from employment is modified to provide that such distribution is available only in cash.

(iv) *Coordination with diversification requirement.* A tax credit employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 409(a)) or an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)) may be amended to provide that a distribution is not available in employer securities to the extent that an employee elects to diversify benefits pursuant to section 401(a)(28).

(v) *Involuntary distributions.* A plan may be amended to provide for the involuntary distribution of an employee's benefit to the extent such involuntary distribution is permitted under sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e). Thus, for example, an involuntary distribution provision may be amended to require that an employee who terminates from employment with the employer receive a single sum distribution in the event that the present value of the employee's benefit is not more than $1,750, by substituting $3,500 for $1,750, without violating section 411(d)(6). In addition, for example, the employer may amend the plan to reduce the involuntary distribution threshold from $3,500 to any lower amount and to eliminate the involuntary single sum option for employees with benefits between $3,500 and such lower amount without violating section 411(d)(6). This rule does not permit a plan provision permitting employer discretion with respect to optional forms of benefit for employees the present value of whose benefit is less than $3,500.

(vi) *Distribution exception for certain profit-sharing plans*—(A) *In general.* If a defined contribution plan that is not subject to section 412 and does not provide for an annuity option is terminated, the plan may be amended to provide for the distribution of a participant's accrued benefit upon termination in a single sum optional form without the participant's consent. The preceding sentence does not apply if the employer maintains any other defined contribution plan (other than an employee stock ownership plan as defined in section 4975(e)(7)).

(B) *Examples.* The provisions of this paragraph (b)(2)(vi) can be illustrated by the following examples:

Example 1. Employer X maintains a defined contribution plan that is not subject to section 412. The plan provides for distribution in the form of equal installments over five years or equal installments over twenty years. X maintains no other defined contribution plans. X terminates its defined contribution plan after amending the plan to provide for the distribution of all participants' accrued benefits in the form of single sum distributions, without obtaining participant consent. Pursuant to the rule in this paragraph (b)(2)(iv), this amendment does not violate the requirements of section 411(d)(6).

Example 2. Corporations X and Y are members of controlled group employer XY. Both X and Y maintain defined contribution plans. X's plan, which is not subject to section 412, covers only employees working for X. Y's plan, which is subject to section 412, covers only employees working for Y. X terminates its defined contribution plan. Because employer XY maintains another defined contribution plan, plan X may not provide for the distribution of participants' accrued benefits upon termination without a participants' consent.

(vii) *Distribution of benefits on default of loans.* Notwithstanding that the distribution of benefits arising from an execution on an account balance used to secure a loan on which there has been a default is an optional form of benefit, a plan may be amended to eliminate or change a provision for loans, even if such loans would be secured by an employee's account balance.

(viii) *Provisions for transfer of benefits between and among defined contribution plans and defined benefit plans of the employer.* A plan may be amended to

eliminate provisions permitting the transfer of benefits between and among defined contribution plans and defined benefit plans of the employer.

(ix) *De minimis change in the timing of an optional form of benefit.* A plan may be amended to modify an optional form of benefit by changing the timing of the availability of such optional form if, after the change, the optional form is available at a time that is within two months of the time such optional form was available before the amendment. To the extent the optional form of benefit is available prior to termination of employment, six months may be substituted for two months in the prior sentence. Thus, for example, a plan that makes in-service distributions available to employees once every month may be amended to make such in-service distributions available only once every six months. This exception to section 411(d)(6) relates only to the timing of the availability of the optional form of benefit. Other aspects of an optional form of benefit may not be modified and the value of such optional form may not be reduced merely because of an amendment permitted by this exception.

(x) *Amendment of hardship distribution standards.* A qualified cash or deferred arrangement that permits hardship distributions under § 1.401(k)–1(d)(2) may be amended to specify or modify nondiscriminatory and objective standards for determining the existence of an immediate and heavy financial need, the amount necessary to meet the need, or other conditions relating to eligibility to receive a hardship distribution. For example, a plan will not be treated as violating section 411(d)(6) merely because it is amended to specify or modify the resources an employee must exhaust to qualify for a hardship distribution or to require employees to provide additional statements or representations to establish the existence of a hardship. A qualified cash or deferred arrangement may also be amended to eliminate hardship distributions. The provisions of this paragraph also apply to profit-sharing or stock bonus plans that permit hardship distributions, whether or not the hardship distributions are limited to those described in § 1.401(k)–1(d)(2).

(xi) *Section 415 benefit limitations.* Accrued benefits under a plan as of the first day of the first limitation year beginning after December 31, 1986, that exceed the benefit limitations under section 415 (b) or (e), effective on the first day of the plan's first limitation year beginning after December 31, 1986, because of a change in the terms and conditions of the plan made after May 5, 1986, or the establishment of a plan after that date, may be reduced to the level permitted under section 415 (b) or (e).

(c) *Serial amendments.* A plan amendment that modifies an optional form of benefit with respect to benefits already accrued will be evaluated in light of previous amendments. Thus, for example, amendments made at different times that, when taken together, constitute the elimination or reduction of a valuable right, will be treated as the impermissible elimination or reduction of an optional form of benefit even though each amendment, considered alone, may otherwise be permissible.

(d) *ESOP and stock bonus plan exception*—(1) *In general.* Subject to the limitations in paragraph (d)(2) of this Q&A–5, a tax credit employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 409(a)) or an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)) will not be treated as violating the requirements of section 411(d)(6) merely because of any of the circumstances described in paragraphs (d)(1)(i) through (d)(1)(iv) of this Q&A–2. In addition, a stock bonus plan that is not an employee stock ownership plan will not be treated as violating the requirements of section 411(d)(6) merely because of any of the circumstances described in paragraphs (d)(1)(ii) and (d)(1)(iv) of this Q&A–2.

(i) *Single sum or installment optional forms of benefit.* The employer eliminates, or retains the discretion to eliminate, with respect to all participants, a single sum optional form or installment optional form with respect to benefits that are subject to section 409(h)(1)(B), provided such elimination or retention of discretion is consistent with the distribution and payment requirements otherwise applicable to such plans (e.g., those required by section 409).

(ii) *Employer becomes substantially employee-owned.* The employer eliminates, or retains the discretion to eliminate, with respect to all participants, in cases in which the employer becomes substantially employee-owned, optional forms of benefit by substituting cash distributions for distributions in the form of employer stock with respect to benefits subject to section 409(h). This exception is available only if the employer otherwise meets the requirements of section 409(h)(2) with respect to restrictions on the ownership of outstanding employer stock.

(iii) *Employer securities become readily tradable.* The employer eliminates, or retains the discretion to eliminate, with respect to all participants, in cases in which the employer securities become readily tradable, optional forms of benefit by substituting distributions in the form of employer securities for distributions in cash with respect to benefits that are subject to section 409(h).

(iv) *Employer securities cease to be readily tradable or certain sales.* The employer eliminates, or retains the discretion to eliminate, with respect to all participants, optional forms of benefit by substituting cash distributions for distributions in the form of employer stock with respect to benefits that are subject to section 409(h) in the following circumstances:

(A) The employer stock ceases to be readily tradable;

(B) The employer stock continues to be readily tradable but there is a sale of substantially all of the stock of the employer or a sale of substantially all of the assets of a trade or business of the employer and, in either situation, the purchasing employer continues to maintain the plan.

In the situation described in paragraph (d)(1)(iv)(B) of this Q&A–2, the employer may also substitute distributions in the purchasing employer's stock for distributions in the form of employer stock of the predecessor employer.

(2) *Limitations on ESOP and stock bonus plan exceptions*—(i) *Nondiscrimination requirement.* Plan amendments and the retention and exercise of discretion permitted under the exceptions in paragraph (d)(1) must meet the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4).

(ii) *ESOP investment requirement.* Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2)(iii) of this Q&A–2, benefits provided by employee stock ownership plans will not be eligible for the exceptions in paragraph (d)(1) of this Q&A–2 unless the benefits have been held in a tax credit employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 409(a)) or an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)) subject to section 409(h) for the five-year period prior to the exercise of employer discretion or any amendment affecting such benefits and permitted under paragraph (d)(1) of this Q&A–2. For purposes of the preceding sentence, if benefits held under an employee stock ownership plan are transferred to a plan that is an employee stock ownership plan at the time of the transfer, then the consecutive periods under the transferor and transferee employee stock ownership plans may be aggregated for purposes of meeting the five-year requirement. If the benefits are held in an employer stock ownership plan throughout the entire period of their existence, and such total period of existence is less than five years, then such lesser period may be substituted for the five year requirement.

(3) *Effective date.* The provisions of this paragraph (d) are effective beginning with the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989. Prior to this effective date the reduction or elimination of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit by a tax credit employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 409(a)) or an employee stock ownership plan (as defined in section 4975(e)(7)) will not be treated as violating the requirements of section 411(d)(6) if such reduction or elimination reflects a reasonable interpretation of the statutory language of section 411(d)(6)(C).

(4) *Additional exceptions and requirements.* The Commissioner may, in revenue rulings, notices or other documents of general applicability, prescribe such additional rules and exceptions, consistent with the purposes of this section, as may be necessary or appropriate.

Q–3 Does the transfer of benefits between and among defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans (or similar transactions) violate the requirements of section 411(d)(6)?

A–3 (a) *Transfers and similar transactions*—(1) *General rule.* Section 411(d)(6) protected benefits may not be eliminated by reason of transfer or any transaction amending or having the effect of amending a plan or plans to transfer benefits. Thus, for example, except as otherwise provided in this section, an employer who maintains a money purchase pension plan that provides for a single sum optional form of benefit may not establish another plan that does not provide for this optional form of benefit and transfer participants' account balances to such new plan.

(2) *Defined benefit feature and separate account feature.* The defined benefit feature of an employee's benefit under a defined benefit plan and the separate account feature of an employee's benefit under a defined contribution plan are section 411(d)(6) protected benefits. Thus, for example, the elimination of the defined benefit feature of an employee's benefit under a defined benefit plan, through transfer of benefits from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan or plans, will violate section 411(d)(6).

(3) *Waiver prohibition.* In general, an employee may not elect to waive section 411(d)(6) protected benefits. Thus, for example, the elimination of the defined benefit feature of an employee's benefit under a defined plan by reason of a transfer of such benefits to a defined contribution plan pursuant to an employee election, at a time when the benefit is not distributable to the employee, violates section 411(d)(6).

(b) *Elective transfers of benefits between plans*—(1) *Elective transfer.* A transfer of a participant's benefits between qualified plans that results in the elimination or reduction of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits does not violate section 411(d)(6) if the transfer meets the requirements of section 411(l) and the following requirements are met:

(i) *Voluntary election*—(A) *Participant election.* The plan from which the benefits are transferred must provide that the transfer is conditioned upon a voluntary, fully informed election by the participant to transfer such participant's benefit to another plan maintained by the employer.

(B) *Benefit retention alternative.* In making the voluntary election provided for in paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) of this Q&A–3, the participant must have an alternative that retains such employee's section 411(d)(6) protected benefits (including all optional forms of benefit) under the plan. Thus, either of the following two requirements must be met:

(*1*) If the plan from which the benefits are transferred is terminating, the terminating plan must satisfy the requirements of section 401(a)(2) and section 411(d)(6), or

(*2*) If the plan from which the benefits are transferred is not terminating, the participant must be given the option of leaving his benefit in the ongoing plan to the extent required by section 411(a)(11) and section 417(e);

(C) *Spousal election.* If sections 401(a)(11) and 417 apply to the plan from which the benefits are transferred, the spousal consent requirements of such section must be met with respect to the transfer of benefits.

(D) *Notice requirement.* The notice requirements under section 417, requiring a written explanation with respect to an election not to receive benefits in the form of a qualified joint and survivor annuity, must be met with respect to the participant and spousal transfer election.

(ii) *Distributability of benefits.* The participant whose benefits are transferred must be eligible, under the terms of the plan from which the benefits are transferred, to receive an immediate distribution from such plan under provisions in the plan not inconsistent with section 401(a).

(iii) *Amount of benefit transferred.* The amount of the benefit transferred must equal the entire nonforfeitable accrued benefit under the plan of the participant whose benefit is being transferred, calculated to be at least the greater of the single sum distribution provided for under the plan for which the participant is eligible (if any) or the present

value of the participant's accrued payable at normal retirement age and calculated by using an interest rate subject to the restrictions of section 417(e) and subject to the overall limitations imposed by section 415.

(iv) *Benefit under the transferee plan.* The participant must be fully vested in the transferred benefit in the transferee plan. In a transfer from a defined contribution plan to a defined benefit plan, the defined benefit plan must provide a minimum benefit, for each participant whose benefits are transferred, equal to the benefit, expressed as an annuity payable at normal retirement age, that is derived solely on the basis of the amount transferred with respect to such participant.

(2) *Status of elective transfer as distribution.* The transfer of benefits pursuant to the elective transfer rules of this paragraph (b) generally is to be treated as a distribution of a participant's accrued benefit under a plan for purposes of section 401(a). For example, a transfer option is an optional form of benefit under section 411(d)(6); the availability of such optional form of benefit is subject to the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4); and the transfer is treated as a distribution subject to the cash-out rules in section 411(a)(7), the early termination requirements of section 411(d)(2) and the requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417. However, the transfer is not treated as a distribution for purposes of the minimum distribution requirements of section 401(a)(9).

(3) *Effective date.* The rules with respect to transfers are generally effective January 30, 1986. However, with respect to transfers from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans and from defined contribution plans to defined benefit plans, the rules of this paragraph (b) are effective beginning August 10, 1988. On or after January 30, 1986, and prior to August 10, 1988 the transitional rules provided in paragraph (c) of this Q&A–3 are effective with respect to such transfers.

(c) *Transitional rule.* Prior to the effective date in paragraph (b)(3) of this Q&A–3, the transfer of benefits from a defined contribution plan to a defined benefit plan, or a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan, does not violate section 411(d)(6) solely by reason of the elimination of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits, if the benefits transferred were distributable under the plan or could have been distributable under section 401(a) and either of the following requirements are met:

(1) *Transfer exception.* The transfer satisfies the rules in paragraph (b) of this Q&A–3, or

(2) *Direct transfer.* The plan to which the benefits are to be transferred provides, or is amended to provide, for all section 411(d)(6) protected benefits provided under the transferor plan with respect to the benefits transferred (with the sole exception of the defined benefit feature of the benefit under a defined benefit plan and the defined contribution feature under a defined contribution plan); the transferred benefits are treated as held under a transferee plan for purposes of the requirements of sections 401(a)(11) and 417; the transferred amounts meet the requirements of section 414(l) with respect to the transfer of assets and liabilities, and the benefits transferred do not exceed the limitations imposed by section 415. Amendments required for purposes of satisfying this rule must be made by the date for making any amendments required for purposes of conforming the plan to the requirements of section 410(b) as amended by TRA '86. However, plans covered by this rule must comply with these requirements in operation and any required amendments must be retroactive to the date on which the benefits were transferred.

(d) *Examples.* If a transfer complying with the elective transfer rules of paragraph (b) of this Q&A–3 is made from a defined benefit plan to a profit-sharing plan that does not provide for a life annuity distribution form, the profit-sharing plan to which the benefits are transferred would not be required to provide for a qualified joint and survivor annuity with respect to the transferred benefits. If the same transfer is made under the direct transfer transitional rule of paragraph (c)(2) of this Q&A–3, the defined contribution plan is treated as a transferee plan with respect to the transferred benefits for purposes of the requirements of section

401(a)(11) and section 417. Thus, for example, if such benefits are transferred without spousal consent to a profit-sharing plan that did not previously provide for a life annuity distribution form, such plan would be required to provide for a qualified joint and survivor annuity for the participants whose benefits were transferred with respect to the transferred benefits.

Q–4: May a plan provide that the employer may, through the exercise of discretion, deny a participant a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit for which the participant is otherwise eligible?

A–4: (a) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (d) of Q&A–2 of this section with respect to certain employee stock ownership plans, a plan that permits the employer, either directly or indirectly, through the exercise of discretion, to deny a participant a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit provided under the plan for which the participant is otherwise eligible (but for the employer's exercise of discretion) violates the requirements of section 411(d)(6). A plan provision that makes a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit available only to those employees as the employer may designate is within the scope of this prohibition. Thus, for example, a plan provision under which only employees who are designated by the employer are eligible to receive a subsidized early retirement benefit constitutes an impermissible provision under section 411(d)(6). In addition, a pension plan that permits employer discretion to deny the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit violates the definitely determinable requirement of section 401(a), including section 401(a)(25). See § 1.401–1(b)(1)(i). This is the result even if the plan specifically limits the employer's discretion to choosing among section 411(d)(6) protected benefits, including optional forms of benefit, that are actuarially equivalent. In addition, the provisions of sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e) that allow a plan to make involuntary distributions of certain amounts are not excepted from this limitation on employer discretion. Thus, for example, a plan may not permit employer discretion with respect to whether benefits will be distributed involuntarily in the event that the present value of the employee's benefit is not more than $3,500 within the meaning of sections 411(a)(11) and 417(e). (An exception is provided for such provisions with respect to the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)–4 Q&A–4.)

(b) *Exception for administrative discretion.* A plan may permit limited discretion with respect to the ministerial or mechanical administration of the plan, including the application of objective plan criteria specifically set forth in the plan. Such plan provisions do not violate the requirements of section 411(d)(6) or the definitely determinable requirement of section 401(a), including section 401(a)(25). For example, these requirements are not violated by the following provisions that permit limited administrative discretion:

(1) Commencement of benefit payments as soon as administratively feasible after a stated date or event;

(2) Employer authority to determine whether objective criteria specified in the plan (e.g., objective criteria designed to identify those employees with a heavy and immediate financial need or objective criteria designed to determine whether an employee has a permanent and total disability) have been satisfied; and

(3) Employer authority to determine, pursuant to specific guidelines set forth in the plan, whether the participant or spouse is dead or cannot be located.

Q–5: When will the exercise of discretion by some person or persons, other than the employer, be treated as employer discretion?

A–5: For purposes of applying the rules of this section and § 1.401(a)–4, the term ''employer'' includes plan administrator, fiduciary, trustee, actuary, independent third party, and other persons. Thus, if a plan permits any person, other than the participant (and other than the participant's spouse), the discretion to deny or limit the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit for which the employee is otherwise eligible under the plan (but for the exercise of such discretion), such plan violates the requirements of sections 401(a), including section 411(d)(6) and, where applicable, the definitely determinable requirement of

section 401(a), including section 401(a)(25).

Q–6: May a plan condition the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit on the satisfaction of objective conditions that are specifically set forth in the plan?

A–6: (a) *Certain objective conditions permissible*—(1) *In general.* The availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit may be limited to employees who satisfy certain objective conditions provided the conditions are ascertainable, clearly set forth in the plan and not subject to the employer's discretion except to the extent reasonably necessary to determine whether the objective conditions have been met. Also, the availability of the section 411(d)(6) protected benefit must meet the nondiscrimination requirements of section 401(a)(4). See § 1.401(a)–4.

(2) *Examples of permissible conditions.* The following examples illustrate of permissible objective conditions: a plan may deny a single sum distribution form to employees for whom life insurance is not available at standard rates as defined under the terms of the plan at the time the single sum distribution would otherwise be payable; a plan may provide that a single sum distribution is available only if the employee is in extreme financial need as defined under the terms of the plan at the time the single sum distribution would otherwise be payable; a plan my condition the availability of a single sum distribution on the execution of a covenant not to compete, provided that objective conditions with respect to the terms of such covenant and the employees and circumstances requiring execution of such covenant are set forth in the plan.

(b) *Conditions based on factors within employer's discretion generally impermissible.* A plan may not limit the availability of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits permitted under the plan on objective conditions that are within the employer's discretion. For example, the availability of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits in a plan may not be conditioned on a determination with respect to the level of the plan's funded status, because the amount of plan funding is within the employer's discretion. However, for example, although conditions based on the plan's funded status are impermissible, a plan may limit the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit (e.g., a single sum distribution) in an objective manner, such as the following:

(1) Single sum distributions of $25,000 and less are available without limit; and

(2) Single sum distributions in excess of $25,000 are available for a year only to the extent that the total amount of such single sum distributions for the year is not greater than $5,000,000; and

(3) An objective and nondiscriminatory method for determining which particular single sum distributions will not be available during a year in order for the $5,000,000 limit to be satisfied is set forth in the plan.

Q–7: May a plan be amended to add employer discretion or conditions restricting the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit?

A–7: No. The addition of employer discretion or objective conditions with respect to a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit that has already accrued violates section 411(d)(6). Also, the addition of conditions (whether or not objective) or any change to existing conditions with respect to section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that results in any further restriction violates section 411(d)(6). However, the addition of objective conditions to a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit may be made with respect to benefits accrued after the later of the adoption or effective date of the amendment. In addition, objective conditions may be imposed on section 411(d)(6) protected benefits accrued as of the date of an amendment where permitted under the transitional rules of § 1.401(a)–4 Q&A–5 and Q&A–8 of this section. Finally, objective conditions may be imposed on section 411(d)(6) protected benefits to the extent permitted by the permissible benefit cutback provisions of Q&A–2 of this section.

Q–8: If a plan contains an impermissible employer discretion provision with respect to a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit, what acceptable alternative exist for amending the plan without violating the requirements of section 411(d)(6)?

A–8: (a) *In general.* The following rules apply for purposes of making necessary amendments to existing plans (as defined in Q&A–9 of this section) that contain discretion provisions with respect to the availability of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits that violate the requirements of section 401(a), including sections 401(a)(25) and 411(d)(6), and this section. These transitional rules are provided under the authority of section 411(d)(6) and section 7805(b).

(b) *Transitional alternatives.* If the availability of an optional forms of benefit, early or late retirement benefit, or retirement-type subsidy under an existing plan is conditioned on the exercise of employer discretion, the plan must be amended either to eliminate the optional form of benefit, early or late retirement benefit, or retirement-type subsidy to make such benefit available to all participants without limitation, or to apply objective and nondiscriminatory conditions to the availability of the optional form of benefit, early or later retirement benefit, or retirement-type subsidy. See paragraph (d) of this Q&A–8 for rules limiting the period during which section 411(d)(6) protected benefits may be eliminated or reduced under this paragraph.

(c) *Compliance and amendment date provisions*—(1) *Operational compliance requirement.* On or before the applicable effective date for the plan (as determined under Q&A–9 of this section), the plan sponsor must select one of the alternatives permitted under paragraph (b) of the Q&A–8 with respect to each affected section 411(d)(6) protected benefit and the plan must be operated in accordance with this selection. This is an operational requirement and does not require a plan amendment prior to the period set forth in paragraph (c)(2) of this Q&A–8. There are no special reporting requirements under the Code or this section with respect to this selection.

(2) *Deferred amendment date.* If paragraph (c)(1) of this Q&A–8 is satisfied, a plan amendment conforming the plan to the particular alternative selected under paragraph (b) of this Q&A–8 must be adopted within the time period permitted for amending plans in order to meet the requirements of section 410(b) as amended by TRA '86. The plan amendment to conform the plan to these regulations may be made at an earlier date. Such conforming amendment must be consistent with the sponsor's selection as reflected by plan practice during the period from the effective date to the date the amendment is adopted. Thus, for example, if any existing calendar year noncollectively bargained defined benefit plan has a single sum distribution option that is subject to employer discretion as of August 1, 1986, and such employer makes one or more single sum distributions available on or after January 1, 1989 and before the effective date by which plan amendment is required pursuant to this section, then such employer may not adopt a plan amendment eliminating the single sum distribution, but rather must adopt an amendment eliminating the discretion provision. Any objective conditions that are adopted as part of such amendment must not be inconsistent with the plan practice for the applicable period prior to the amendment. A conforming amendment under this paragraph (c)(2) must be made with respect to each section 411(d)(6) protected benefit for which such amendment is required and must be retroactive to the applicable effective date.

(d) *Limitation on transitional alternatives.* The transitional alternatives permitting the elimination or reduction of section 411(d)(6) protected benefits are only permissible until the applicable effective date for the plan (see Q&A–9 of this section). After the applicable effective date, any amendment (other than one permitted under paragraph (c)(2) of this Q&A–8) that eliminates or reduces a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit or imposes new objective conditions on the availability of such benefit will fail to qualify for the exception to section 411(d)(6) provided in this Q&A–8. This is the case without regard to whether the section 411(d)(6) protected benefit is subject to employer discretion.

Q–9: What are the applicable effective date rules for purposes of this section?

A–9: (a) *General effective date.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, the provisions of this section are effective January 30, 1986.

(b) *New plans*—(1) *In general.* Unless otherwise provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this Q&A–9, plans that are either adopted or made effective on or after August 1, 1986, are ''new plans''. With respect to such new plans, this section is effective August 1, 1986. This effective date is applicable to such plans whether or not they are collectively bargained.

(2) *Exception with respect to certain new plans.* Plans that are new plans as defined in paragraph (b)(1) of this Q&A–9; under which the availability of a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit is subject to employer discretion; and that receive a favorable determination letter that covered such plan provisions with respect to an application submitted prior to July 11, 1988, will be treated as existing plans with respect to such section 411(d)(6) protected benefit for purposes of the transitional rules of this section. Thus, such plans are eligible for the compliance and amendment alternatives set forth in the transitional rule in Q&A–8 of this section.

(c) *Existing plans*—(1) *In general.* Plans, including plans that are adoptions of master or prototype plans, that are both adopted and in effect prior to August 1, 1986, are ''existing plans'' for purposes of this section. In addition, a plan that is established after July 31, 1986, but before January 1, 1989, as an initial adoption of a master or prototype plan for which a favorable opinion letter was issued by the Service after July 18, 1985 and before January 1, 1989, will be deemed to be an existing plan for purposes of this section. See sections 4.01 and 4.02 of Rev. Proc. 84–23, 1984–1 C.B. 457, 459, for the definitions of master prototype plans. However, if such plan ceases to be covered under an opinion letter of the type described above, as a result of amendment of the plan or adoption of a new plan, prior to the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 1989, then the effective date for such plan will be determined as though the plan were a new plan initially adopted as of the date of such amendment or adoption of a new plan. Finally, new plans described in paragraph (b)(2) of this Q&A–9 are treated as existing plans with respect to certain section 411(d)(6) protected benefits. Subject to the limitations in paragraph (c) of this Q&A–9, the effective dates set forth in paragraphs (c)(2), (c)(3), and (c)(4) of this Q&A–9 apply to these existing plans for purposes of this section:

(2) *Existing noncollectively bargained plans.* With respect to existing plans other than collectively bargained plans this section is effective for the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989.

(3) *Existing collectively bargained plans.* With respect to existing collectively bargained plans this section is effective for the later of the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989, or the first day of the first plan year that the requirements of section 410(b) as amended by TRA '86 apply to such plan.

(4) *Existing master and prototype plans.* With respect to existing plans that are adoptions of master or prototype plans the effective date will be the first day of the first plan year commencing on or after January 1, 1989.

(d) *Delayed effective date not applicable to new alternatives or conditions*—(1) *In general.* The delayed effective dates in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this Q&A–9 for existing plans are only applicable with respect to a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit if both the section 411(d)(6) protected benefit and the condition providing employer discretion as to the availability of such benefit are both adopted and in effect prior to August 1, 1986. If the preceding sentence is not satisfied with respect to a particular section 411(d)(6) protected benefit, this section is effective with respect to such section 411(d)(6) protected benefit as if the plan were a new plan.

(2) *Addition of discretion on or after January 30, 1986.* The delayed effective dates in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this Q&A–9 are not available with respect to any section 411(d)(6) protected benefit if the section 411(d)(6) protected benefit was provided for in the plan prior to January 30, 1986, and the availability of such benefit was made subject to the exercise of employer discretion on or after January 30, 1986. If the conditions set forth in this paragraph

are not satisfied with respect to a particular section 411(d)(6) protected benefit, this section is effective with respect to such section 411(d)(6) protected benefit as if the plan were a new plan. A limited exception is provided with respect to existing plans that provided a particular section 411(d)(6) protected benefit prior to January 30, 1986, and then amended the plan after January 30, 1986, and before August 1, 1986, to add a provision for employer discretion with respect to the availability of such benefit. Such plans are required to have been amended retroactively by December 31, 1987, to remove such provision for employer discretion, and, if the benefit made subject to such discretion was subsequently eliminated, the plan is required to have been further amended, by the same date, to retroactively reinstate the benefit.

(3) *Exception for certain amendments covered by a favorable determination letter.* If an amendment adding a section 411(d)(6) protected benefit subject to employer discretion was adopted or made effective after August 1, 1986, and the plan receives a favorable determination letter covering such provision with respect to an application for such letter made prior to July 11, 1988, then the effective date for purposes of amending such provision under the transitional rules is the applicable effective date determined under the rules with respect to existing plans.

(e) *Transitional rule effective date.* The transitional rule provided in Q&A–8 of this section is effective January 30, 1986.

[53 FR 26058, July 11, 1988, as amended by T.D. 8360, 56 FR 47602, Sept. 19, 1991; T.D. 8357, 56 FR 40549, Aug. 15, 1991; T.D. 8360, 57 FR 4721, Feb. 7, 1992; T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46828, Sept. 3, 1993; T.D. 8581, 59 FR 66180, Dec. 23, 1994]

§ 1.411(d)–5 Class year plans; plan years beginning after October 22, 1986.

(a) *Plan years beginning prior to 1989.* (1) The requirements of section 411(a)(2) shall be treated as satisfied in the case of a class-year plan if such plan provides that 100 percent of each employee's right to or derived from the contributions of the employer on the employee's behalf with respect to any plan year is nonforfeitable not later than when such participant was performing services for the employer as of the close of each of 5 plan years (whether or not consecutive) after the plan year for which the contributions were made.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (a)(1) of this section if—

(i) Any contributions are made on behalf of a participant with respect to any plan year, and

(ii) Before such participant meets the requirements of paragraph (a)(1) of this section, such participant was not performing services for the employer as of the close of each of any 5 consecutive plan years after such plan year, then the plan may provide that the participant forfeits any right to or derived from the contributions made with respect to such plan year.

(3) This paragraph (a) applies to contributions made for plan years beginning after October 22, 1986.

(b) *Plan years beginning after 1988.* (1) The special class year vesting rule in section 411(d)(4) was repealed by section 1113(b) of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (1986 Act). The repeal is generally effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1988. See section 1111(e) of the 1986 Act for a special effective date rule applicable to certain plans maintained pursuant to collective bargaining agreements.

(2)(i) This subparagraph (2) provides a special rule for class year plans that were in compliance with section 411(d)(4) immediately before the first plan year beginning after section 411(d)(4) is repealed. These plans are not required to retroactively compute years of service under the general section 411(a)(2) rules. Instead, a participant must receive a year of service for each such prior plan year if the employee was performing services on the last day of such year. Similarly, if the participant was not performing services on the last day of such years, the participant will be treated as if a one-year break– in–service occurred for such plan year. This subdivision (i) applies to plan years to which this section applies.

(ii) In the case of a plan year to which § 1.411(d)–3 applied, a class year plan must compute years of service and

breaks in service in a manner consistent with the rules in this paragraph (b)(2)(i), giving appropriate regard to the statutory changes made to section 411(d)(4).

[T.D. 8219, 53 FR 31854, Aug. 22, 1988; 53 FR 48534, Dec. 1, 1988]

§ 1.411(d)–6T Section 204(h) notice.

Q–1: What are the requirements of section 204(h) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (ERISA)?

A–1: (a) *Requirements of section 204(h).* Section 204(h) of ERISA generally requires written notice of an amendment to certain plans that provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual. Section 204(h) generally requires the notice to be provided to plan participants, alternate payees, and employee organizations. The plan administrator must provide the notice after adoption of the plan amendment and not less than 15 days before the effective date of the plan amendment.

(b) *Other notice requirements.* Other provisions of law may require that certain parties be notified of a plan amendment. See, for example, sections 102 and 104 of ERISA, and the regulations thereunder, for the requirements relating to summary plan descriptions and summaries of material modifications.

Q–2: To which plans does section 204(h) of ERISA apply?

A–2: Section 204(h) of ERISA applies to defined benefit plans subject to part 2 of subtitle B of title I of ERISA and to individual account plans subject to such part 2 and to the funding standards of section 302 of ERISA. Accordingly, individual account plans that are not subject to the funding standards of section 302, such as profit-sharing and stock bonus plans, are not subject to section 204(h).

Q–3: *What is section 204(h) notice?*

A–3: *Action 204(h) notice* is notice that complies with section 204(h) of ERISA and the rules in this section.

Q–4: For which amendments is section 204(h) notice required?

A–4: (a) *In general.* Section 204(h) notice is required for an amendment to a plan described in Q&A–2 of this section that provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual.

(b) *Delegation of authority to Commissioner.* The Commissioner of Internal Revenue may provide through publication in the Internal Revenue Bulletin of revenue rulings, notices, or other documents (see § 601.601(d)(2) of this chapter) that section 204(h) notice need not be provided for plan amendments otherwise described in paragraph (a) of this Q&A–4 that the Commissioner determines to be necessary or appropriate, as a result of changes in the law, to maintain compliance with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (Code) (including requirements for tax qualification), ERISA, or other applicable federal law.

Q–5: What is an amendment that affects the rate of future benefit accrual for purposes of section 204(h) of ERISA?

A–5: (a) *In general*—(1) *Defined benefit plans.* For purposes of section 204(h) of ERISA, an amendment to a defined benefit plan affects the rate of future benefit accrual only if it is reasonably expected to change the amount of the future annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age.

(2) *Individual account plans.* For purposes of section 204(h), an amendment to an individual account plan affects the rate of future benefit accrual only if it is reasonably expected to change the amounts allocated in the future to participants' accounts. Changes in the investments or investment options under an individual account plan are not taken into account for this purpose.

(b) *Determination of rate of future benefit accrual.* In accordance with paragraph (a) of this Q&A–5, the rate of future benefit accrual is determined without regard to optional forms of benefit (other than the annual benefit described in paragraph (a) of this Q&A–5), early retirement benefits, or retirement-type subsidies, within the meaning of such terms as used in section 411(d)(6) of the Code (section 204(g) of ERISA). The rate of future benefit accrual is also determined without regard to ancillary benefits and other rights or features as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–4(e).

(c) *Examples.* These examples illustrate the rules in this Q&A–5:

Example 1. A plan is amended with respect to future benefit accruals to eliminate a right to commencement of a benefit prior to normal retirement age. Because the amendment does not affect the annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age, it does not reduce the rate of future benefit accrual for purposes of section 204(h).

Example 2. A plan is amended to modify the assumptions used in converting an annuity form of distribution to a single sum form of distribution. The use of these modified assumptions results in a lower single sum. Because the amendment does not affect the annual benefit commencing at normal retirement age, it does not reduce the rate of future benefit accrual for purposes of section 204(h).

Q–6: What plan provisions are taken into account in determining whether there has been a reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual?

A–6: (a) *Plan provisions taken into account.* All plan provisions that may affect the rate of future benefit accrual of participants or alternate payees must be taken into account in determining whether an amendment provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual. Such provisions include, for example, the dollar amount or percentage of compensation on which benefit accruals are based; in the case of a plan using the permitted disparity under section 401(l) of the Code, the amount of disparity between the excess benefit percentage or excess contribution percentage and the base benefit percentage or base contribution percentage (all as defined in section 401(l)); the definition of service or compensation taken into account in determining an employee's benefit accrual; the method of determining average compensation for calculating benefit accruals; the definition of normal retirement age in a defined benefit plan; the exclusion of current participants from future participation; benefit offset provisions; minimum benefit provisions; the formula for determining the amount of contributions and forfeitures allocated to participants' accounts in an individual account plan; and the actuarial assumptions used to determine contributions under a target benefit plan (as defined in § 1.401(a)(4)–8(b)(3)(i)).

(b) *Plan provisions not taken into account.* Plan provisions that do not affect the rate of future benefit accrual of participants or alternate payees are not taken into account in determining whether there has been a reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual. For example, provisions such as vesting schedules or optional forms of benefit (other than the annual benefit described in Q&A–5(a) of this section) are not taken into account.

(c) *Examples.* The following example illustrates the rules in this Q&A–6:

Example. A defined benefit plan provides a normal retirement benefit equal to 50% of final average compensation times a fraction (not in excess of one), the numerator of which equals the number of years of participation in the plan and the denominator of which equals 20. A plan amendment that changes the numerator or denominator of that fraction must be taken into account in determining whether there has been a reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual.

Q–7: What is the basic principle used in determining whether an amendment provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual for purposes of section 204(h) of ERISA?

A–7: Whether an amendment provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual for purposes of section 204(h) of ERISA is determined based on reasonable expectations taking into account the relevant facts and circumstances at the time the amendment is adopted.

Q–8: Are employees who have not yet become participants in a plan at the time an amendment to the plan is adopted taken into account for any purpose in applying section 204(h) of ERISA with respect to the amendment?

A–8: No. Employees who have not yet become participants in a plan at the time an amendment to the plan is adopted are not taken into account for any purpose in applying section 204(h) of ERISA with respect to the amendment. Thus, if section 204(h) notice is required with respect to an amendment, the plan administrator need not provide section 204(h) notice to such employees.

Q–9: If section 204(h) notice is required with respect to an amendment, must such notice be provided to participants or alternate payees whose rate of future benefit accrual is not reduced by the amendment?

A–9: (a) *In general.* A plan administrator need not provide section 204(h) notice to any participant whose rate of future benefit accrual is reasonably expected not to be reduced by the amendment, nor to any alternate payee under an applicable qualified domestic relations order whose rate of future benefit accrual is reasonably expected not to be reduced by the amendment. A plan administrator need not provide section 204(h) notice to an employee organization unless the employee organization represents a participant to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided.

(b) *Facts and circumstances test.* Whether a participant or alternate payee is described in paragraph (a) of this Q&A–9 is determined based on all relevant facts and circumstances at the time the amendment is adopted.

(c) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules in this Q&A–9:

Example 1. Plan A is amended to reduce significantly the rate of future benefit accrual of all current employees who are participants in the plan. It is reasonable to expect based on the facts and circumstances that the amendment will not reduce the rate of future benefit accrual of former employees who are currently receiving benefits or that of former employees who are entitled to vested benefits. Accordingly, the plan administrator is not required to provide section 204(h) notice to such former employees.

Example 2. Assume in *Example 1* that Plan A also covers two groups of alternate payees. The alternate payees in the first group are entitled to a certain percentage or portion of the former spouse's accrued benefit, and for this purpose the accrued benefit is determined at the time the former spouse begins receiving retirement benefits under the plan. The alternate payees in the second group are entitled to a certain percentage or portion of the former spouse's accrued benefit, and for this purpose the accrued benefit was determined at the time the qualified domestic relations order was issued by the court. It is reasonable to expect that the benefits to be received by the second group of alternate payees will not be affected by any reduction in a former spouse's rate of future benefit accrual. Accordingly, the plan administrator is not required to provide section 204(h) notice to the alternate payees in the second group.

Example 3. Plan B covers hourly employees and salaried employees. Plan B provides the same rate of benefit accrual for both groups. The employer amends Plan B to reduce significantly the rate of future benefit accrual of the salaried employees only. At that time, it is reasonable to expect that only a small percentage of hourly employees will become salaried in the future. Accordingly, the plan administrator is not required to provide section 204(h) notice to the participants who are currently hourly employees.

Example 4. Plan C covers employees in Division M and employees in Division N. Plan C provides the same rate of benefit accrual for both groups. The employer amends Plan C to reduce significantly the rate of future benefit accrual of employees in Division M. At that time, it is reasonable to expect that in the future only a small percentage of employees in Division N will be transferred to Division M. Accordingly, the plan administrator is not required to provide section 204(h) notice to the participants who are employees in Division N.

Example 5. Assume the same facts as in *Example 4,* except that at the time the amendment is adopted, it is expected that soon thereafter Division N will be merged into Division M in connection with a corporate reorganization (and the employees in Division N will become subject to the plan's amended benefit formula applicable to the employees in Division M). In this instance, the plan administrator must provide section 204(h) notice to the participants who are employees in Division M and to the participants who are employees in Division N.

Q–10: Does a notice fail to comply with section 204(h) of ERISA if it contains a summary of the amendment and the effective date, without the text of the amendment itself?

A–10: No, the notice does not fail to comply with section 204(h) of ERISA merely because the notice contains a summary of the amendment, rather than the text of the amendment, if the summary is written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average plan participant and contains the effective date. The summary need not explain how the individual benefit of each participant or alternate payee will be affected by the amendment.

Q–11: How may section 204(h) notice be provided?

A–11: A plan administrator may use any method reasonably calculated to ensure actual receipt of the section 204(h) notice. First class mail to the

last known address of the party is an acceptable delivery method. Likewise, hand delivery is acceptable. Section 204(h) notice may be enclosed along with other notice provided by the employer or plan administrator.

Q–12: If a plan administrator fails to provide section 204(h) notice to more than a de minimis percentage of participants and alternate payees to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided, will the plan administrator be considered to have complied with section 204(h) of ERISA with respect to participants and alternate payees who were provided with timely section 204(h) notice?

A–12: The plan administrator will be considered to have complied with section 204(h) of ERISA with respect to a participant to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided if the participant and any employee organization representing the participant were provided with timely section 204(h) notice. The plan administrator will be considered to have complied with section 204(h) with respect to an alternate payee to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided if the alternate payee was provided with timely section 204(h) notice. Accordingly, the amendment will become effective in accordance with its terms with respect to those participants and alternate payees.

Q–13: Will a plan be considered to have complied with section 204(h) of ERISA if the plan administrator provides section 204(h) notice to all but a de minimis percentage of participants and alternate payees to whom section 204(h) notice must be provided?

A–13: The plan will be considered to have complied with section 204(h) of ERISA and the amendment will become effective in accordance with its terms with respect to all parties to whom section 204(h) notice was required to be provided (including those who did not receive notice prior to discovery of the omission), if the plan administrator—

(a) Has made a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of section 204(h);

(b) Has provided section 204(h) notice to each employee organization that represents any participant to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided;

(c) Has failed to provide section 204(h) notice to no more than a de minimis percentage of participants and alternate payees to whom section 204(h) notice is required to be provided; and

(d) Provides section 204(h) notice to those participants and alternate payees promptly upon discovering the oversight.

Q–14: How does section 204(h) of ERISA apply to a plan that is terminated in accordance with title IV of ERISA?

A–14: (a) *On and after termination date.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b) of this Q&A–14 or any other provisions of this section, a plan that is terminated in accordance with title IV of ERISA is deemed to have satisfied section 204(h) of ERISA not later than the termination date (or date of termination, as applicable) established under section 4048 of ERISA. Accordingly, section 204(h) would not require that any additional benefits accrue after such date.

(b) *Amendment effective before termination date.* An amendment that is effective before the termination date (or date of termination, as applicable) established under section 4048 of ERISA is subject to section 204(h). Accordingly, if such amendment provides for a significant reduction in the rate of future benefit accrual, the plan administrator must provide section 204(h) notice (either separately or with or as part of the notice of intent to terminate) with respect to the amendment. However, if a plan is not amended to reduce significantly the rate of future benefit accrual before the termination date (for example, the plan continues existing benefit accruals until the termination date), section 204(h) notice is not required.

Q–15: When does section 204(h) of ERISA become effective?

A–15: (a) *Statutory effective date.* With respect to defined benefit plans, section 204(h) of ERISA generally applies to plan amendments adopted on or after January 1, 1986. With respect to individual account plans, section 204(h) applies to plan amendments adopted on or after October 22, 1986.

(b) *Regulatory effective date.* This section applies to amendments adopted on or after December 15, 1995, and amendments effective by their terms on or after January 2, 1996.

[T.D. 8631, 60 FR 64322, Dec. 15, 1995]

§ 1.412(b)–2 Amortization of experience gains in connection with certain group deferred annuity contracts.

(a) *Experience gain treatment.* Dividends, rate credits, and credits for forfeitures arising in a plan described in paragraph (b) of this section are experience gains described in section 412(b)(3)(B)(ii) (relating to the amortization of experience gains).

(b) *Plan.* A plan is described in this paragraph (b) if—

(1) The plan is funded solely through a group deferred annuity contract,

(2) The annual single premium required under the contract for the purchase of the benefits accruing during the plan year is treated as the normal cost of the plan for that year, and

(3) The amount necessary to pay in equal annual installments, over the appropriate amortization period, an amount equal to the single premium necessary to provide all past service benefits not initially funded, together with interest thereon, is treated as the annual amortization amount determined under section 412(b)(2)(B) (i), (ii) or (iii).

(c) *Effective date.* This section applies for the first plan year to which section 412 applies that begins after May 22, 1981.

[T.D. 7764, 46 FR 6923, Jan. 22, 1981]

§ 1.412(b)–5 Election of the alternative amortization method of funding.

(a) *Alternative amortization method in general.* Section 1013(d) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 provides an alternative method which may be used by certain multiemployer plans (as defined in section 414(f)) which were in existence on January 1, 1974, for funding certain unfunded past service liability. The multiemployer plans which may elect to use this alternative method are those plans (1) under which, on January 1, 1974, contributions were based on a percentage of pay, (2) which use actuarial assumptions with respect to pay that are reasonably related to past and projected experience, and (3) which use rates of interest that are determined on the basis of reasonable acturial assumptions. The unfunded past service liability to which this method applies is that amount existing as of the date 12 months after the date on which section 412 first applies to the plan. The alternative method allows the plan to fund this liability over a period of 40 plan years by charging the funding standard account with an equal annual percentage of the aggregate pay of all participants in the plan instead of the level dollar charges required under section 412(b)(2)(B). Paragraphs (b), (c), (d) and (e) of this section contain procedural rules for electing this alternative method.

(b) *Election procedure.* To elect the alternative amortization method, a multiemployer plan must attach a statement to the annual report required under section 6058(a) for the plan year for which the election is made, stating that the alternative method for funding unfunded past service liability is being adopted. Advance approval from the Internal Revenue Service is not required. The alternative method must be adopted on or before the last day prescribed for filing the annual report corresponding to the last plan year beginning before January 1, 1982.

(c) *Charges to which the alternative amortization method is applicable.* Once elected, the alternative amortization method is applicable to the unfunded past service liability existing as of the date 12 months after the date on which section 412 first applies to the plan. This results in charges to the funding standard account which are in lieu of—

(1) Charges required under clause (i) of section 412(b)(2)(B), and

(2) Charges required under clause (iii) of section 412(b)(2)(B) if the plan amendments referred to in such clause result in a net increase in the unfunded past service liability existing as of the date 12 months after the date on which section 412 first applies to the plan. Such charges generally will arise only with respect to plan amendments adopted in the first plan year to which section 412 applies.

If the election is made on an annual report corresponding to a plan year after the first plan year to which section 412 applies, recomputation of the contributions due in the prior years (to which section 412 applied) will be necessary.

(d) *Limitation.* The sum of the charges described in this paragraph may not be less than the interest on the unfunded past service liabilities described in section 412(b)(2)(B) (i) and (iii), determined as of the date 12 months after the date on which section 412 first applies to the plan.

(e) *Reporting requirements.* Each annual report required by section 6058(a) and periodic report of the actuary required by section 6059 must include all additional information relevant to the use of the alternative amortization method as may be required by the applicable forms and the instructions for such forms.

[T.D. 7702, 45 FR 40113, June 13, 1980]

§ 1.412(c)(1)–1 Determinations to be made under funding method—terms defined.

(a) *Actuarial cost method and funding method.* Section 3 (31) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (''ERISA'') provides certain acceptable (and unacceptable) actuarial cost methods which may (or may not) be used by employee plans. The term ''funding method'' when used in section 412 has the same meaning as the term ''actuarial cost method'' in section 3 (31) of ERISA. For shortfall method for certain collectively bargained plans, see § 1.412(c)(1)–2; for principles applicable to funding methods in general, see regulations under section 412(c)(3).

(b) *Computations included in funding method.* The funding method of a plan includes not only the overall funding method used by the plan but also each specific method of computation used in applying the overall method. However, the choice of which actuarial assumptions are appropriate to the overall method or to the specific method of computation is not a part of the funding method. For example, the decision to use or not to use a mortality factor in the funding method of a plan is not a part of such funding method. Similarly, the specific mortality rate determined to be applicable to a particular plan year is not part of the funding method. See section 412(c)(5) for the requirement of approval to change the funding method used by a plan.

[T.D. 7733, 45 FR 75202, Nov. 14, 1980]

§ 1.412(c)(1)–2 Shortfall method.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Shortfall method.* The shortfall method is a funding method that adapts a plan's underlying funding method for purposes of section 412. As such, the use of the shortfall method is subject to section 412(c)(3). A plan described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may elect to determine the charges to the funding standard account required by section 412(b) under the shortfall method. These charges are computed on the basis of an estimated number of units of service or production (for which a certain amount per unit is to be charged). The difference between the net amount charged under this method and the net amount that otherwise would have been charged under section 412 for the same period is a shortfall loss (gain) and is to be amortized over certain subsequent plan years.

(2) *Eligibility for use of shortfall.* No plan may use the shortfall method unless—

(i) The plan is a collectively bargained plan described in section 413(a), and

(ii) Contributions to the plan are made at a rate specified under the terms of a legally binding agreement applicable to the plan.

For purposes of this section, a plan maintained by a labor organization which is exempt from tax under section 501(c)(5) is treated as a collectively bargained plan and the governing rules of the organization (such as its constitution, bylaws, or other document that can be altered only through action of a convention of the organization) are treated as a collectively bargained agreement.

(b) *Computation and effect of net shortfall charge*—(1) *In general.* The ''net shortfall charge'' to the funding standard account under the shortfall method is the product of (i) the estimated unit charge described in paragraph (c) of

this section that applies for a particular plan year, multiplied by (ii) the actual number of base units (for example, units of service or production) which occurred during that plan year. When the shortfall method is used, the net shortfall charge is a substitute for the specific charges and credits to the funding standard account described in section 412 (b)(2) and (3)(B).

(2) *Example.* Paragraph (b)(1) of this section may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. A pension plan uses the calendar year as the plan year and the shortfall method. Its estimated unit charge applicable to 1980 is 80 cents per hour of covered employment. During 1980, there were 125,000 hours of covered employment. The net shortfall charge for the plan year is $100,000 (*i.e.*, 125,000×$.80), regardless of the amount which would be charged and credited to the funding standard account under section 412 (b)(2) and (3)(B) had the shortfall method not applied. The funding standard account for 1980 will be separately credited for the amount considered contributed for the plan year under section 412 (b)(3)(A). The other items which may be credited, if applicable, are a waived funding deficiency and the alternative minimum funding standard credit adjustment under section 412(b)(3)(C) and (D) because these items are not credits under section 412(b)(3)(B).

(3) *Plans with more than one contract, contribution rate, employer, or benefit level*—(i) *General rule.* A single plan with more than one contract, contribution rate, employer, or benefit level may compute a separate net shortfall charge for each contract, contribution rate, each employer, or each benefit level. The sum of these charges is the plan's total net shortfall charge. under § 1.412(c)(1)–1(b), the use of separate computations would be a specific method of computation used in applying the overall funding method. See also paragraph (f)(5) of this section.

(ii) *Single valuation.* Only one actuarial valuation shall be made for the single plan on each actuarial valuation date.

(iii) *Reasonableness test.* The specific method of computation of the net shortfall charge must be reasonable, determined in the light of the facts and circumstances.

(c) *Estimated unit charge.* The estimated unit charge is the annual computation charge described in paragraph (d) of this section divided by the estimated base units of service or production described in paragraph (e) of this section.

(d) *Annual computation charge.* The annual computation charge for a plan year is the sum of the following amounts:

(1) The net charges and credits which, but for using the shortfall method, would be made under section 412 (b)(2) and (b)(3)(B).

(2) The amount described in paragraph (g)(3) of this section, if applicable, for amortization of shortfall gain or loss.

(e) *Estimated base units*—(1) *In general.* The estimated base units are the expected units of service or production for a plan year (hours, days, tons, dollars of compensation, etc.), determined as of the base unit estimation date for that plan year under paragraph (f) of this section. This estimate must be based on the past experience of the plan and the reasonable expectations of the plan for the plan year. The specific type of unit used must be described in the statement of funding method for the plan year. (See paragraph (i)(3) of this section for reporting requirements.)

(2) *Reasonable expectations.* The reasonableness of expectations used under paragraph (e)(1) of this section is determined under the facts and circumstances of the plan for each plan year as of the relevant base unit estimation date. Expectations will be considered unreasonable if, for example, they do not reflect a consistent and substantial decline or growth in actual base units that has occurred over the course of recent years and that is likely to continue beyond the base unit estimation date. This determination of reasonableness is independent of determinations made under section 412(c)(3) of the reasonableness of actuarial assumptions.

(f) *Base unit estimation date*—(1) *In general.* The base unit estimation date for the current plan year is determined under this paragraph (f). This date shall be an actuarial valuation date no earlier than the last actuarial valuation date occurring at least one year before the earliest date any current

collectively bargained agreement in existence during the plan year came into effect.

(2) *Four-month rule.* For purposes of this paragraph (f), a current collectively bargained agreement is one in effect during at least four months of the current plan year.

(3) *Effective date of agreement.* For purposes of this paragraph (f), a collectively bargained agreement shall be deemed to have come into effect on the effective date of the agreement containing the currently effective provision for contributions to the plan or the benefits provided under the plan.

(4) *Long-term contract rule.* The effective date of a collectively bargained agreement shall be deemed not to occur prior to the first day of the third plan year preceding the current year.

(5) *Special rule for plans computing separate net shortfall charge.* A plan that computes a separate net shortfall charge for each contract, contribution rate, employer, or benefit level under paragraph (b)(3) of this section shall determine the base unit estimation date for each separate charge without regard to any collectively bargained agreement that does not relate to that contract, contribution rate, employer, or benefit level. If a collective bargaining agreement requiring contributions by a certain employer, or prescribing a certain benefit level, is in effect on December 31, 1980, the preceding sentence shall not apply to the computation of a separate net shortfall charge for that employer or benefit level until the earlier of—

(i) The first plan year beginning after the date on which expires the collective bargaining agreement requiring contributions by that employer (or the last collective bargaining agreement relating to that benefit level), or

(ii) The first plan year beginning after December 31, 1983.

(6) *Example.* The rules contained in paragraph (f) of this section are illustrated by the following table. In the table, ''V'' signifies actuarial valuation date (January 1 in each case shown); ''B'' signifies beginning of a contract; and ''E'' signifies end of a contract. The table shows the resulting earliest base unit estimation date with respect to the following assumed items:

COMPUTATION OF EARLIEST BASE UNIT ESTIMATION DATE

Example	Plan year (calendar year basis)											
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Plan A	V			V			V			V		
Contract 1	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....	E/B	.....	E/B	.....	.....	.....	E/B
Base unit estimation date [1]				1973	1973	1973	1976	1976	1979	1979	1979	1979
Plan B	V			V			V			V		
Contract 2	[2]	[2]	[2]	B*	.....	E/B	.....	.....	.....	E/B*	.....	.....
Contract 3	E/B	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....
Base unit estimation date [1]	.....	.....	.....	1973	1973	1973	1976	1976	1976	1976	1979	1979
Plan C	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Contract 4	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....	E/B*	.....	.....	.....	E/B*	.....	.....
Contract 5	.....	.....	E/B	.....	.....	E/B*	.....	.....	.....	.....	E/B*	.....
Base unit estimation date [1]				1974	1974	1977	1977	1977	1977	1978	1979	1981

[1] The base unit estimation date may be on or any time after the actuarial valuation date in the year indicated on this line.
[2] No contract.
* Denotes that a prior contract ends and a new contract begins prior to the fifth month of a plan year.

(g) *Amortization of shortfall gain or loss*—(1) *Definition.* The shortfall gain for a plan is the excess for the plan year of—

(i) The net shortfall charge computed under paragraph (b) of this section over

(ii) The annual computation charge described in paragraph (d) of this section.

The shortfall loss for a plan is the excess for the plan year of the annual computation charge over the net shortfall charge.

(2) *Shortfall amortization period*—(i) *First year.* The plan year in which the amortization of a shortfall gain or loss must begin is the earlier of two years: the fifth plan year following the plan year in which the shortfall gain or loss arose, or the first plan year beginning after the latest scheduled expiration date of a collectively bargained agreement in effect with respect to the plan during the plan year in which the shortfall gain or loss arose. For purposes of this subparagraph, a contract expiring on the last day of a plan year shall be deemed to be renewed on such last day for the same period of years as the contract that succeeds the expiring contract.

(ii) *Last year.* The plan year in which the amortization of a shortfall gain or loss must end is the 15th plan year following the plan year in which the shortfall gain or loss arose. For a multiemployer plan described in section 414(f), the amortization must end with the 20th plan year instead of the 15th.

(3) *Annual amortization amount.* The shortfall gain or loss must be amortized in equal annual installments. The total amount to be amortized must be adjusted for interest at the rate used for determining the plan's normal cost.

(4) *Shortfall gain or loss under spread gain type of funding method*—(i) *In general.* A spread gain type of funding method spreads experience gains and losses over future periods as part of a plan's normal cost. (Examples of spread gain types of funding methods are the aggregate cost method, the frozen initial liability method, and the attained age normal method.) However, a shortfall gain or loss is not an experience gain or loss. Therefore, a plan using a spread gain type of funding method together with the shortfall method must amortize shortfall gains and losses and otherwise meet the requirements of paragraph (g) of this section.

(ii) *Asset adjustment for aggregate method.* A plan using the shortfall method with the aggregate cost method of funding must adjust its plan assets for a shortfall gain or loss in calculating normal cost. The unamortized portion of any shortfall gain is subtracted from plan assets. The unamortized portion of any shortfall loss is added to plan assets.

(5) *Reconciliation of shortfall gain or loss with funding standard account.* At the beginning of each year, the actual unfunded liability under the method used by the plan must equal the outstanding balance of all amortization bases, including bases for shortfall gains and losses, less the credit balance under the funding standard account at the end of the prior year.

(6) *Example.* This paragraph is illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). A multiemployer plan described in section 414 (f) is maintained with the calendar year as the plan year and uses the shortfall method. The plan uses the frozen initial liability funding method. A five percent interest assumption is used by the plan, with payments computed as of the first day of each plan year for all items. The expiration dates of contracts in effect during plan years 1976, 1977, and 1978 are such that the amortization of gains or losses for each year must begin in the fifth following plan year. The assumed plan costs and estimated base units for selected years, and the computations under this section which follow from such assumptions are shown in the following table. In the table, ''*'' denotes an assumed item. The remaining figures have been calculated on the basis of these assumptions.

(A) COMPUTATION OF NET SHORTFALL CHARGE AND SHORTFALL GAIN OR LOSS

Plan year	1976	1977	1978
1. Normal cost* ...	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000
2. Amortization of unfunded liability*	50,000	50,000	50,000
3. Total annual computation charges	$150,000	$150,000	$150,000
4. Estimated base units*	100,000	100,000	100,000
5. Estimated unit charge (line 3÷line 4)	$1.50	$1.50	$1.50
6. Actual units during year*	80,000	90,000	110,000
7. Net shortfall charge for year (line 5×line 6) ..	120,000	135,000	165,000
8. Shortfall (gain) or loss (line 3 − line 7)	30,000	15,000	($15,000)

(B) ANNUAL AMORTIZATION AMOUNT

9. Year of shortfall gain or loss	1976	1977	1978
10. First year of amortization	1981	1982	1983
11. Last year of amortization	1996	1997	1998

(B) ANNUAL AMORTIZATION AMOUNT—Continued

12. (Gain) or loss adjusted for interest to year amortization begins (1–1–76 to 1–1–81, etc.)	$38,288	$19,144	($19,144)
13. Annual amortization (16 years)	$3,364	$1,682	($1,682)

(C) COMPUTATION OF NET SHORTFALL CHARGES FOR SELECTED YEARS (INCLUDING SHORTFALL AMORTIZATION)

Plan year	1981	1982	1983
14. Normal cost*	$120,000	$125,000	$130,000
15. Amortization of unfunded liability*	50,000	50,000	50,000
16. Shortfall amortization (see line 13) from:			
1976	3,364	3,364	3,364
1977	.....	1,682	1,682
1978	.....	.....	(1,682)
17. Total annual computation charges	173,364	180,046	183,364
18. Estimated base units*	110,000	110,000	110,000
19. Estimated unit charge (line 17÷line 18)	1.576	1.637	1.667
20. Actual units during year*	105,000	110,000	105,000
21. Net shortfall charge for year (line 19×line 20)	165,480	180,070	175,035
22. Shortfall (gain) loss (line 17 – line 21)	7,884	(24)	8,329

The amounts in line 22 will be amortized beginning 1986, 1987, and 1988, respectively. The $24 gain in 1982 results from rounding the estimated unit charge.

Example (2). Assume the facts in Example (1). Also assume that the plan uses the frozen initial liability funding method, that the unfunded liability as of January 1, 1976 (corresponding to a 40-year charge of $50,000 due at the beginning of the year) is $900,850, and that actual contributions at the rate of $1.75 per unit are paid at mid-year in 1976.

(A) COMPUTATION OF THE UNFUNDED LIABILITY AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1976

1. Unfunded liability as of 1/1/76	$900,850
2. Normal cost (that used in the calculation of the total annual computation charges)	100,000
3. Interest at 5% due on items 1 and 2	50,043
4. Contribution with interest: $1.75×80,000×1.025 (actual contribution rate times acutal base units times interest adjustment from mid-year)	143,500

(A) COMPUTATION OF THE UNFUNDED LIABILITY AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1976—Continued

5. Unfunded liability as of 12/31/76: item 1+item 2+item 3 – item 4	907,393

(B) COMPUTATION OF THE OUTSTANDING BALANCE OF THE BASES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1976

1. Original base: ($900,850 – $50,000)×1.05	$893,393
2. Shortfall loss $30,000×1.05	31,500
3. Total	924,893

(C) COMPUTATION OF THE CREDIT BALANCE AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1976

1. Net shortfall charge (§ 1.412 (c) (1)–2 (b)) adjusted for interest: $120,000×1.05	$126,000
2. Actual contributions with interest	143,500
3. Credit balance as of 12/31/76: item 2 – item 1	17,500

(D) RECONCILIATION OF COMPUTATIONS

As of January 1, 1977, the unfunded liability ($907,393) equals the outstanding balance of the bases minus the credit balance ($924,893 – $17,500=$907,393).

(h) *Amortization of experience gain or loss*—(1) *General rule.* In the case of a plan using an immediate gain type of funding method, an experience gain or loss shall be amortized pursuant to section 412 (b)(2)(B)(iv) or (b)(3)(B)(ii). (Examples of the immediate gain type of funding method are the unit credit method, the entry age normal cost method, and the individual level premium cost method.) For purposes of this section, a shortfall gain or loss is not an experience gain or loss. The amount of the experience gain or loss must be adjusted for interest at the rate used for determining the plan's normal cost.

(2) *Experience amortization period under shortfall method*—(i) *First year.* The plan year in which the amortization of an experience gain or loss must begin in the case of a plan using the shortfall method is the earlier of two years: the fifth plan year following the plan year in which the experience gain or loss arose, or the first plan year beginning after the last scheduled expiration date of a contract in effect during the plan year in which the experience gain or loss arose. For purposes of this subparagraph a contract expiring on the last day of the plan year shall be deemed to be renewed on such last day

for the same period of years as the contract that succeeds the expiring contract.

(ii) *Last year.* The plan year in which the amortization of an experience gain or loss must end in the case of a plan using the shortfall method is the 15th plan year following the plan year in which the experience gain or loss arose. For a multi-employer plan described in section 414 (f), the amortization must end with the 20th plan year instead of the 15th.

(3) *Use of annual computation charge in determining experience gain or loss.* In the case of a plan using an immediate gain type of funding method, an experience gain or loss is the difference between the expected unfunded liability and the actual unfunded liability under the plan. The expected unfunded liability as of the end of a plan year equals the actual unfunded liability as of the beginning of the year plus normal cost, minus contributions, all adjusted for interest. If the plan adopts the shortfall method, the expected unfunded liability is computed by using the normal cost applicable for the plan year in determining the annual computation charge under paragraph (d) of this section. The same normal cost is used in computing the unfunded liability under the frozen initial liability funding method.

(4) *Example.* This paragraph is illustrated by the following example:

Example. Assume the facts in Example (2) from paragraph (g) (6) of this section, except that the entry age normal funding method is used. Also assume that as of December 31, 1976, the actual unfunded liability is $900,000.

(A) COMPUTATION OF EXPECTED UNFUNDED LIABILITY

1. Actual unfunded liability as of 1–1–76	$900,850
2. Normal cost portion of annual computation charge as of 1–1–76	100,000
3. Interest at 5% due on items 1 and 2	50,043
4. Contribution received with interest: $1.75 × 80,000 × 1.025 (actual contribution rate times actual base units times interest adjustment at mid-year)	143,500
5. Expected unfunded liability as of 12–31–76 (item 1 + item 2 + item 3 − item 4)	907,393

(B) COMPUTATION OF GAIN OR LOSS

1. Expected unfunded liability as of 12–31–76	$907,393

(B) COMPUTATION OF GAIN OR LOSS—Continued

2. Actual unfunded liability as of 12–31–76	900,000
3. Gain (or loss) (item 1 − item 2)	7,393

(i) *Election procedure*—(1) *In general.* To elect the shortfall method, a collectively bargained plan must attach a statement to the annual report required under section 6058 (a) for the first plan year to which it is applied. The statement shall state that the shortfall method is adopted, beginning with the plan year covered by such report. Advance approval from the Internal Revenue Service is not required if the shortfall method is first adopted on or before the later of—

(i) The first plan year to which section 412 applies or

(ii) The last plan year commencing before December 31, 1981.

However, approval must be received pursuant to section 412(c)(5) prior to the adoption of the shortfall method at a later time, or the discontinuance of such method, once adopted.

(2) *Use of specific computation method.* A specific method of computation under the shortfall method is described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, regarding the treatment of more than one contract, employer, or benefit level under the plan. This specific method may be adopted with respect to any plan year to which the shortfall method applies. Approval from the Commissioner must be received under section 412(c)(5) prior to the adoption of this specific computation method for a plan year subsequent to the first plan year to which the shortfall method applies, or prior to the discontinuance of a specific computation method, once adopted.

(3) *Reporting requirements.* Each annual report required by section 6058(a) and periodic report of the actuary required by section 6059 must include all additional information relevant to the use of the shortfall method as may be required by the applicable forms and the instructions for such forms.

(j) *Transitional rule.* In lieu of paragraphs (g)(2) and (h)(2) of this section relating to the amortization period for shortfall and experience gains and losses, for gains and losses arising in plan years beginning before January 1,

1981, a plan may rely on the prior published position of the Internal Revenue Service with respect to the amortization period for shortfall and experience gains and losses.

(k) *Supersession.* This section and § 1.412 (c) (1)–1 supersede §§ 11.412 (c) (1)–1 and (c) (1)–2 of the Temporary Income Tax Regulations Under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974.

(Secs. 412, 7805, Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 914 and 68A Stat. 917; (26 U.S.C. 412 and 7805)), and sec. 3 (31) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 837; (29 U.S.C. 1002)))

[T.D. 7733, 45 FR 75202, Nov. 14, 1980]

§ 1.412(c)(1)–3 Applying the minimum funding requirements to restored plans.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Restoration method.* The restoration method is a funding method that adapts the underlying funding method of section 412 in the case of certain plans that are or have been terminated and are later restored by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The normal operation of the funding standard account, and all other provisions of section 412 and the regulations thereunder, are unchanged except as provided in this § 1.412(c)(1)–3. Under the restoration method, the PBGC shall determine a restoration payment schedule, extending over no more than 30 years, that replaces all charges and credits to the funding standard account attributable to pre-restoration amortization bases. The restoration payment schedule is determined on the basis of an actuarial valuation of the accrued liability of the plan on the initial post-restoration valuation date less the actuarial value of the plan assets on that date. The initial post-restoration valuation date is the date of the valuation that falls in the first plan year beginning on or after the date of the restoration order.

(2) *Applicability of restoration method.* A plan must use the restoration method if, and only if—

(i) The plan is being or has been terminated pursuant to section 4041(c) or section 4042 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA); and

(ii) The plan has been restored by the PBGC pursuant to its authority under section 4047 of ERISA.

(b) *Computation and effect of the initial restoration amortization base*—(1) *In general.* The initial restoration amortization base is determined under the underlying funding method used by the plan. When the plan uses a spread gain funding method that does not maintain an unfunded liability, the plan must change either to an immediate gain method that directly calculates an accrued liability or to a spread gain method that maintains an unfunded liability. A plan may adopt any cost method that satisfies this requirement and that is acceptable under section 412 and the regulations thereunder, provided that the plan administrator follows the procedures established by the Commissioner for changes in funding methods. The initial restoration amortization base is determined using the valuation for the plan year in which the initial post-restoration valuation date falls. The initial restoration amortization base equals the accrued liability with respect to plan benefit liabilities returned by the PBGC less the value of the plan assets returned by the PBGC. The initial restoration amortization base replaces all prior amortization bases including those under section 412(b)(2) (B), (C), and (D) and under section 412(b)(3)(B). Any base resulting from a change in funding method, including a change required under this paragraph, is treated as a prior amortization base within the meaning of this paragraph (b). Any accumulated funding deficiency or credit balance in the funding standard account is set equal to zero when the initial restoration amortization base is established.

(2) *Example.* The following example illustrates the provisions of this paragraph (b):

Example. A pension plan uses the calendar year as its plan year, makes its annual periodic valuation as of January 1, and uses the unit credit actuarial cost method for funding purposes. The plan is in the process of being terminated. By order of the PBGC the plan is restored as of July 1, 1991. The initial post-restoration valuation date is January 1, 1992, and a restoration payment schedule order is issued on October 31, 1992. If, as of January 1, 1992, the accrued liability of the plan is $1,000,000 and the value of the plan assets is

$200,000, the initial restoration amortization base is $800,000.

(c) *Establishment of a restoration payment schedule*—(1) *Certification requirement.* When the PBGC establishes a restoration payment schedule, the Executive Director of the PBGC must certify to the PBGC's Board of Directors, and to the Internal Revenue Service, that the PBGC has reviewed the funding of the plan, the financial condition of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members, the payments required under the restoration payment schedule (taking into account the availability of deferrals authorized under paragraph (c)(4) of this section), and any other factor that the PBGC deems relevant, and, based on that review, determines that it is in the best interests of participants and beneficiaries of the plan and the pension insurance program that the restored plan not be reterminated.

(2) *Requirements for restoration payment schedule*—(i) *Amortization of base over period of no more than 30 years.* The restoration payment schedule must be prescribed in an order requiring the employer to make stated contributions to the plan sufficient to amortize the initial restoration amortization base over a period extending not more than 30 years after the initial post-restoration valuation date (the restoration payment period). Payments included in the restoration payment schedule order are charged to the funding standard account of the plan at the end of each plan year in accordance with paragraph (d) of this section. The restoration payment schedule must provide for total charges that are sufficient to amortize the entire amount of the initial restoration amortization base by the end of the restoration payment period. The scheduled charges need not be in level amounts, but the present value of the prescribed charges on the initial post-restoration valuation date, computed with interest at the valuation rate, must equal the initial restoration amortization base.

(ii) *Minimum annual charge.* The restoration payment schedule must prescribe annual charges that are sufficient to prevent the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base from exceeding whichever of the following amounts is applicable—

(A) During the first 10 plan years on the restoration payment schedule, the amount of the initial restoration amortization base on the date the base was established; or

(B) During plan years 11 through 20 on the restoration payment schedule, the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the tenth plan year, as calculated under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section; or

(C) During plan years 21 through the end of the restoration payment schedule, the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the twentieth plan year, as calculated under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

(iii) *Interim amortization requirements.* The restoration payment schedule must provide for sufficient periodic charges so that the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the tenth plan year and at the end of the twentieth plan year of the restoration payment period will not be larger than the outstanding balance that would have remained at the end of the tenth plan year and at the end of the twentieth plan year, respectively, if the initial restoration amortization base had been amortized in level annual amounts over the restoration payment period at the valuation rate.

(3) *Amendments to the restoration payment schedule.* The order establishing the restoration payment schedule may be amended by the PBGC from time to time with respect to any remaining payments, provided that no amendment may extend the restoration payment period beyond 30 years from the initial post-restoration valuation date, and provided further that the restoration payment schedule, as amended, satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(4) *Deferral of minimum scheduled annual payment amounts*—(i) *Authority to grant deferral.* Not later than 2½ months following the end of the plan year, the PBGC may grant a deferral of the charges required in the restoration payment schedule for that plan year if

the requirements in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section are satisfied. The PBGC may require the plan sponsor and its controlled group members to provide security to the plan as a condition to granting a deferral.

(ii) *Determination of business hardship.* Before granting a deferral under this paragraph (c)(4), the PBGC must make a determination that the granting of the deferral is in the best interests of plan participants and the plan termination insurance system, and that the plan sponsor and its controlled group members are unable to make the scheduled restoration payments without experiencing temporary substantial business hardship. In making these determinations, the factors the PBGC shall consider, include, but are not limited to, the following—

(A) Whether the plan sponsor and its controlled group members are operating at an economic loss;

(B) Whether there is substantial unemployment or underemployment in the trades or businesses of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members;

(C) Whether the sales and profits of the industry or industries are depressed or declining; and

(D) Whether it is reasonable to expect that the plan termination insurance system will suffer a greater loss if the plan is terminated than if it is continued as a restored plan.

(iii) *Amount of deferral.* The amount of the deferral for any particular plan year may not exceed the lesser of the amount that would have been required to be contributed under the restoration payment schedule for that year or interest at the valuation rate on the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base for that year. An amortization payment for a deferral granted for a prior plan year may not be deferred. No deferral may extend the overall restoration payment period beyond 30 years.

(iv) *Modification of payment schedule.* The restoration payment schedule must be adjusted to reflect any deferral granted for a plan year in the manner prescribed in this paragraph (c). The charge otherwise specified in the schedule is reduced by the amount of any deferral. The charges under the restoration payment schedule for the subsequent plan years are increased by the amounts in paragraph (c)(4)(v) of this section.

(v) *Amortization of deferred amount.* The amount of any deferral granted by the PBGC for any plan year must be amortized in level amounts over five years or such shorter period as may be prescribed by the PBGC, at the valuation rate, beginning with the plan year following the year of the deferral.

(vi) *Number of deferrals permitted.* The PBGC may not grant more than five deferrals of the minimum scheduled payments as required by this section during the restoration payment period and no more than three of these deferrals may be granted during the first ten years of that period.

(vii) *Deferrals override minimum annual charges and interim amortization requirements.* In determining the minimum annual charge under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section and in applying the interim amortization requirements of paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section, the unamortized balances of any deferrals granted by the PBGC under this paragraph shall be added to the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base otherwise allowable.

(d) *Charging the scheduled restoration payments to the funding standard account.* In addition to any other charges and credits prescribed in the normal operation of the funding standard account under section 412, the amount of each payment specified in the restoration payment schedule shall be charged against the funding standard account of the plan for the plan year to which that payment is attributed in the restoration payment schedule. To the extent that the restoration payment schedule provides for payments before the end of the plan year, the annual charge to the funding standard account attributable to the restoration payment schedule is equal to the sum of the periodic payments for the plan year accumulated with interest at the valuation rate to the last day of the plan year.

(e) *Changes in actuarial assumptions or methods.* The plan administrator must notify the PBGC of any changes in the actuarial assumptions or methods used

by the plan. Upon notification of any such change, the PBGC may make any changes to the restoration payment schedule that it deems appropriate.

(f) *Change to restoration method.* A plan that has been restored must use the restoration method until the initial restoration amortization base has been fully amortized. The use of this method does not require prior approval from the Commissioner. A plan using the restoration method must compute the charges to the funding standard account to amortize the initial restoration amortization base in accordance with the order of the PBGC and in accordance with this section.

(g) *Deficit reduction contribution*—(1) *Calculation of deficit reduction contribution.* For any plan using the restoration method, the deficit reduction contribution under section 412(l)(2) is equal to the sum of—

(i) The unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount; plus

(ii) The unfunded new liability amount.

(2) *Unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount.* The unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount is the amount necessary to amortize fully the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability in installments, as prescribed by the PBGC, over not more than 30 years. The annual amount need not be level, but at all times the present value of the future amortization charges prescribed under the restoration payment schedule, at the current liability interest rate, must equal the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability and the schedule must provide that at the end of no more than 30 years the entire amount of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability base will have been fully amortized. The schedule prescribed for amortization of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability must comply with the requirements imposed in paragraph (c) of this section on the restoration payment schedule, except as provided in paragraph (g)(7) of this section and except that the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability at the end of the tenth plan year must not be greater than the outstanding balance of the section 412(l) restoration liability that would have remained at the end of the tenth plan year if the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability had been amortized in level amounts over the restoration payment period at the actual current liability interest rate for each year, increased by the current liability interest rate differential as defined under paragraph (g)(7) of this section. The unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount for the tenth plan year otherwise prescribed under the restoration payment schedule is increased by any outstanding current liability interest rate differential. By issuing an appropriate order, the PBGC may permit the outstanding current liability interest rate differential to be amortized over the tenth through the fourteenth plan years. If the PBGC permits the amortization of the outstanding current liability interest rate differential, then the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount for each year to which an amortization payment is attributed under the order shall be increased by such payment. The outstanding balance otherwise required by paragraph (g)(2) of this section is increased by the outstanding balance, if any, of the base resulting from the amortization of the current liability interest rate differential. The PBGC may amend the amortization schedule for the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability subject to the limits on amendments to the amortization schedule prescribed for the initial restoration amortization base.

(3) *Establishment of unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability.* In the plan year in which the initial post-restoration valuation date falls, the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability is equal to the unfunded current liability of the plan.

(4) *Unfunded new liability amount.* In the case of a plan using the restoration method, the unfunded new liability amount is the applicable percentage, as defined in section 412(l)(4)(C), of the unfunded new liability determined under paragraph (g)(5) of this section.

(5) *Unfunded new liability.* The unfunded new liability of a plan using the restoration method is the excess, if any, of the unfunded current liability

of the plan, within the meaning of section 412(l)(8)(A) for the plan year (determined without taking into account any unpredictable contingent event benefits, even if the event has occurred) over the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability determined under paragraph (g)(3) of this section.

(6) *Offset of amortization charges.* The amounts charged to the funding standard account pursuant to the restoration payment schedule in order to amortize the initial restoration base, as described in paragraph (d) of this section, must be offset against the deficit reduction contribution in paragraph (g)(1) of this section along with any other applicable amounts provided in section 412(l)(1)(A)(ii).

(7) *Interest rate differential.* During the first 10 plan years after the initial post-restoration valuation date, the restoration payment schedule must prescribe an unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount for each plan year that is sufficient to prevent the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability from exceeding the initial amount of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability increased by the current liability interest rate differential. The current liability interest rate differential at any point during the first ten years of the restoration payment period is the excess, if any, of the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability determined using the actual current liability interest rate for each year, taking into account the charges described in paragraph (d) of this section, over the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability determined using the lowest, for each year, of the initial current liability interest rate, the current liability interest rate for the computation year, and the valuation interest rate, taking into account the charges described in paragraph (d) of this section.

(h) *Election of the alternative minimum funding standard.* A plan using the restoration method may not elect the alternative minimum funding standard under section 412(g).

(i) *Funding review by the PBGC.* The PBGC must review the funding of any plan using the restoration method at least once in each plan year. As a result of a funding review, the PBGC may amend the restoration payment schedule as provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. As part of the funding review, the Executive Director of the PBGC must certify to the PBGC's Board of Directors, and to the Internal Revenue Service, that the PBGC has reviewed the funding of the plan, the financial condition of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members, the payments required under the restoration payment schedule (taking into account the availability of deferrals authorized under paragraph (c)(4) of this section), and any other factor that the PBGC deems relevant, and, based on that review, determines that it is in the best interests of participants and beneficiaries of the plan and the pension insurance program that the restored plan not be reterminated.

[T.D. 8494, 58 FR 54491, Oct. 22, 1993]

§ 1.412(c)(1)–3T Applying the minimum funding requirements to restored plans (Temporary).

(a) *In general*—(1) *Restoration method.* The restoration method is a funding method that adapts the underlying funding method of section 412 in the case of certain plans that are or have been terminated and are later restored by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The normal operation of the funding standard account, and all other provisions of section 412 and the regulations thereunder, are unchanged except as provided in this § 1.412(c)(1)–3T. Under the restoration method, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation shall determine a restoration payment schedule, extending over no more than 30 years, that replaces all charges and credits to the funding standard account attributable to pre-restoration amortization bases. The restoration payment schedule is determined on the basis of an actuarial valuation of the accrued liability of the plan on the initial post-restoration valuation date less the actuarial value of the plan assets on that date. The initial post-restoration valuation date is the date of the first valuation that falls in the first plan year

beginning on or after the later of October 23, 1990, or the date of the restoration order.

(2) *Applicability of restoration method.* A plan must use the restoration method if, and only if:

(i) The plan is being or has been terminated pursuant to section 4041(c) or section 4042 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), and

(ii) The plan has been restored by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation pursuant to its authority under section 4047 of ERISA.

(b) *Computation and effect of the initial restoration amortization base*—(1) *In general.* The initial restoration amortization base is determined under the underlying funding method used by the plan. When the plan uses a spread gain funding method that does not maintain an unfunded liability, the plan must change either to an immediate gain method that directly calculates an accrued liability or to a spread gain method that maintains an unfunded liability. A plan may adopt any cost method that satisfies this requirement and that is acceptable under section 412 and the regulations thereunder, provided that the plan follows the procedures established by the Commissioner for changes in funding methods. The initial restoration amortization base is determined using the valuation for the plan year in which the initial post-restoration valuation date falls. The initial restoration amortization base equals the accrued liability with respect to plan benefit liabilities returned by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation less the value of the plan assets returned by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The initial restoration amortization base replaces all prior amortization bases including those under subparagraphs (B), (C), and (D) of section 412(b)(2) and under subparagraph (B) of section 412(b)(3). Any base resulting from a change in funding method is treated as a prior amortization base within the meaning of this paragraph (b). Any accumulated funding deficiency or credit balance in the funding standard account is set equal to zero when the initial restoration amortization base is established.

(2) *Example.* A pension plan uses the calendar year as its plan year, makes its annual periodic valuation as of January 1, and uses the unit credit actuarial cost method for funding purposes. The plan is in the process of being terminated. By order of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation the plan is restored as of July 1, 1991, and a restoration payment schedule order issued on October 31, 1992. The initial post-restoration valuation date is January l, 1993. If, as of that date, the accrued liability of the plan is $1,000,000 and the value of the plan assets is $200,000, the initial restoration amortization base is $800,000.

(c) *Establishment of a restoration payment schedule*—(1) *Certification requirement.* When the PBGC establishes a restoration payment schedule, the Executive Director of the PBGC must certify to the Corporation's Board of Directors, and to the Internal Revenue Service, that the Corporation has reviewed the funding of the plan, the financial condition of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members, the payments required under the restoration payment schedule (taking into account the availability of deferrals authorized under paragraph (c)(4) of this section), and any other factor that the Corporation deems relevant, and, based on that review, determines that it is in the best interests of participants and beneficiaries of the plan and the pension insurance program that the restored plan not be reterminated.

(2) *Requirements for restoration payment schedule*—(i) *Amortization of base over period of no more than 30 years.* The restoration payment schedule must be prescribed in an order requiring the employer to make stated contributions to the plan sufficient to amortize the initial restoration amortization base over a period extending not more than 30 years after the initial post-restoration valuation date (the restoration payment period). The restoration payment schedule must be sufficient to amortize the entire amount of the initial restoration amortization base by the end of the restoration payment period. The scheduled charges need not be in level amounts, but the present value of the prescribed charges on the initial

post-restoration valuation date, computed with interest at the valuation rate, must equal the initial restoration amortization base.

(ii) *Minimum annual charge.* The restoration payment schedule must require annual charges that are sufficient to prevent the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base from exceeding whichever of the following amounts is applicable:

(A) During the first 10 plan years on the restoration payment schedule, the amount of the initial restoration amortization base on the date the base was established, or

(B) During plan years 11 through 20 on the restoration payment schedule, the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the tenth plan year, as calculated under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) below, or

(C) During plan years 21 through the end of the restoration payment schedule, the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the twentieth plan year, as calculated under paragraph (c)(2)(iii) below.

(iii) *Interim amortization requirements.* The restoration payment schedule must provide for sufficient periodic charges so that the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base at the end of the tenth plan year and at the end of the twentieth plan year of the restoration payment period will not be larger than the outstanding balance that would have remained at the end of the tenth plan year and at the end of the twentieth plan year, respectively, if the initial restoration amortization base had been amortized in level amounts over the restoration payment period at the valuation rate.

(3) *Amendments to the restoration payment schedule.* The order establishing the restoration payment schedule may be amended by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation from time to time with respect to any remaining payments, provided that no amendment may extend the restoration payment period beyond 30 years from the initial post-restoration valuation date, and provided further that the restoration payment schedule, as amended, satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(4) *Deferral of minimum scheduled annual payment amounts*—(i) *Authority to grant deferral.* Not later than 2½ months following the end of the plan year, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may grant a deferral of the charges required in the restoration payment schedule for that plan year if the requirements in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section are satisfied. The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may require the plan sponsor and its controlled group members to provide security to the plan as a condition to granting a deferral.

(ii) *Determination of business hardship.* Before granting a deferral under this paragraph (c)(4), the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation must make a determination that the granting of the deferral is in the best interests of plan participants and the plan termination insurance system, and that the plan sponsor and its controlled group members are unable to make the scheduled restoration payments without experiencing temporary substantial business hardship. In making these determinations, the factors the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation shall consider, include, but are not limited to, the following:

(A) Whether the plan sponsor and its controlled group members are operating at an economic loss,

(B) Whether there is substantial unemployment or underemployment in the trades or businesses of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members,

(C) Whether the sales and profits of the industry or industries are depressed or declining, and

(D) Whether it is reasonable to expect that the plan termination insurance system will suffer a greater loss if the plan is terminated than if it is continued as a restored plan.

(iii) *Amount of deferral.* The amount of the deferral for any particular plan year may not exceed the lesser of the amount that would have been required to be contributed under the restoration payment schedule for that year or interest on the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base for that year. An amortization

payment for a deferral granted for a prior plan year may not be deferred. No deferral may extend the overall restoration payment period beyond 30 years.

(iv) *Modification of payment schedule.* The restoration payment schedule must be adjusted to reflect any deferral granted for a plan year in the manner prescribed in this paragraph (c). The charge otherwise specified in the schedule is reduced by the amount of any deferral. The charges under the restoration payment schedule for the subsequent plan years are increased by the amounts in paragraph (c)(4)(v) of this section.

(v) *Amortization of deferred amount.* The amount of any deferral granted by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation for any plan year must be amortized in level amounts over five years or such shorter period as may be prescribed by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, at the valuation rate, beginning with the plan year following the year of the deferral.

(vi) *Number of deferrals permitted.* The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may not grant more than five deferrals of the minimum scheduled payments as required by this section during the restoration payment period and no more than three of these deferrals may be granted during the first ten years of that period.

(d) *Charging the scheduled restoration charges to the funding standard account.* In addition to any other charges and credits prescribed in the normal operation of the funding standard account under section 412, the amount of each charge specified in the restoration payment schedule shall be charged against the funding standard account of the plan for the plan year to which that payment is attributed in the restoration payment schedule.

(e) *Changes in actuarial assumptions.* If changes in actuarial assumptions increase or decrease the charges that would be required to amortize the outstanding balance of the initial restoration amortization base over the remaining years of the restoration payment schedule, the plan must notify the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation of the changes so that it may make appropriate changes to the restoration payment schedule.

(f) *Change to restoration method.* A plan that has been restored must use the restoration method until the initial restoration amortization base has been fully amortized. The use of this method does not require prior approval from the Commissioner. A plan using the restoration method must compute the charges and credits to the initial restoration amortization base in accordance with the order of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and in accordance with this section.

(g) *Deficit reduction contribution*—(1) *Calculation of deficit reduction contribution.* For any plan using the restoration method, the deficit reduction contribution under section 412(l)(2) is equal to the sum of—

(i) The unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount, plus

(ii) The unfunded new liability amount.

(2) *Unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount.* The unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount is the amount necessary to amortize fully the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability in installments, as prescribed by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, over not more than 30 years. The annual amount need not be level, but at all times the present value of the future amortization charges under the restoration payment schedule, at the current liability interest rate, must equal the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability and the schedule must provide that at the end of no more than 30 years the entire amount of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability base will have been fully amortized. The schedule prescribed for amortization of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability must comply with the requirements imposed in paragraph (c) of this section on the restoration payment schedule, except as provided in paragraph (g)(7) of this section and except that the maximum permitted outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability at the end of the tenth plan year must not be greater than the outstanding balance of the section 412(l) restoration liability that would have remained at

the end of the tenth plan year if the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability had been amortized in level amounts over the restoration payment period at the current liability interest rate, increased by the current liability interest rate differential as defined under paragraph (g)(7) of this section. The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may amend the amortization schedule for the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability subject to the limits on amendments to the amortization schedule prescribed for the initial restoration amortization base.

(3) *Establishment of unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability.* In the plan year in which the initial post-restoration valuation date falls, the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability is equal to the unfunded current liability of the plan.

(4) *Unfunded new liability amount.* In the case of a plan using the restoration method, the unfunded new liability amount is the applicable percentage, as defined in section 412(l)(4)(C), of the unfunded new liability determined under paragraph (g)(5) of this section.

(5) *Unfunded new liability.* The unfunded new liability of a plan using the restoration method is the unfunded current liability of the plan for the plan year less the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability determined under paragraph (g)(3) of this section and less any unpredictable contingent event benefit liabilities (without regard to whether or not the event has occurred).

(6) *Offset of amortization charges.* The charges specified in the restoration payment schedule to amortize the initial restoration amortization base, must be offset against the deficit reduction contribution in paragraph (g)(1) of this section along with any other applicab1e amounts provided in section 412 (l)(1)(A)(ii).

(7) *Interest rate differential.* During the first 10 plan years after the initial post-restoration valuation date, the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability amount for the plan as determined for purposes of this section must be sufficient to prevent the outstanding balance of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability from exceeding the initial amount of the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability increased by the current liability interest rate differential. The current liability interest rate differential at any point during the first ten years of the restoration payment period is the excess if any of the accumulated interest on the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability computed at the current liability interest rate over the accumulated interest on the unfunded section 412(l) restoration liability computed at the least of the valuation rate, the current liability interest rate and current liability interest rate for the plan year in which the initial post restoration valuation date falls. The current liability interest rate differential is charged to the funding standard account at the end of the tenth plan year, but the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may, as part of the restoration payment schedule order, or a modification to that order, direct that the charging of this amount must be spread over not more than 5 years, beginning with the eleventh plan year.

(h) *Election of the alternative minimum funding standard.* A plan using the restoration method may not elect the alternative minimum funding standard under section 412(g).

(i) *Funding review by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.* The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation must review the funding of any plan using the restoration method at least once in each plan year. As a result of a funding review, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation may amend the restoration payment schedule as provided in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. As part of the funding review, the Executive Director of the PBGC must certify to the Corporation's Board of Directors, and to the Internal Revenue Service, that the Corporation has reviewed the funding of the plan, the financial condition of the plan sponsor and its controlled group members, the payments required under the restoration payment schedule (taking into account the availability of deferrals authorized under paragraph (c)(4) of this section), and any other factor that the Corporation deems relevant, and, based on that review, determines that it is in the

best interests of participants and beneficiaries of the plan and the pension insurance program that the restored plan not be reterminated.

[T.D. 8317, 55 FR 42707, Oct. 23, 1990; 56 FR 19038, Apr. 25, 1991]

§ 1.412(c)(2)–1 Valuation of plan assets; reasonable actuarial valuation methods.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *In general.* This section prescribes rules for valuing plan assets under an actuarial valuation method which satisfies the requirements of section 412(c)(2)(A). An actuarial valuation method is a funding method within the meaning of section 412(c)(3) and the regulations thereunder. Therefore, certain changes affecting the actuarial valuation method are identified in this section as changes in a plan's funding method.

(2) *Exception for certain bonds, etc.* The rules of this section do not apply to bonds or other evidences of indebtedness for which the election described in section 412(c)(2)(B) has been made, nor are such assets counted in applying paragraphs (b) or (c) of this section. Also, an election under section 412(c)(2)(B) is not a change in funding method within the meaning of section 412(c)(5).

(3) *Money purchase pension plan.* A money purchase pension plan must value assets for the purpose of satisfying the requirements of section 412(c)(2)(A) solely on the basis of their fair market value (under paragraph (c) of this section).

(4) *Defined benefit plans.* (i) To satisfy the requirements of section 412(c)(2)(A), an actuarial method valuing assets of a defined benefit plan must meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section.

(ii) In general, the purpose of paragraph (b) of this section is to permit use of reasonble actuarial valuation methods designed to mitigate short-run changes in the fair market value of plan assets. The funding of plan benefits and the charges and credits to the funding standard account required by section 412 are generally based upon the assumption that the defined benefit plan will be continued by the employer. Thus, short-run changes in the value of plan assets presumably will offset one another in the long term. Accordingly, in the determination of the amount required to be contributed under section 412 it is generally not necessary to recognize fully each change in fair market value of the assets in the period in which it occurs.

(iii) The asset valuation rules contained in paragraph (b) produce a ''smoothing'' effect. Thus, investment performance, including appreciation or depreciation in the market value of the assets occurring in each plan year, may be recognized gradually over several plan years. This ''smoothing'' is in addition to the ''smoothing'' effect which results, for example, from amortizing experience losses and gains over 15 or 20 years under section 412(b)(2 (B)(iv) and (3)(B)(ii).

(b) *Asset valuation method requirements*—(1) *Consistent basis.* (i) The actuarial asset valuation method must be applied on a consistent basis. Any change in meeting the requirements of this paragraph (b) is a change in funding method subject to section 412(c)(5).

(ii) A method may satisfy the consistency requirement even though computations are based only on the period elapsed since the adoption of the method or on asset values occurring during that period.

(2) *Statement of plan's method.* The method of determining the actuarial value (but not fair market value) of the assets must be specified in the plan's actuarial report (required under section 6059). The method must be described in sufficient detail so that another actuary employing the method described would arrive at a reasonably similar result. Whether a deviation from the stated actuarial valuation method is a change in funding method is to be determined in accordance with section 412(c)(5) and the regulations thereunder. A deviation to include a type of asset not previously held by the plan would not be a change in funding method.

(3) *Consistent valuation dates.* The same day or days (such as the first or the last day of a plan year) must be used for all purposes to value the plan's assests for each plan year, or portion of plan year, for which a valuation is made. For purposes of this section, each such day is a valuation date. A

change in the day or days used is a change in funding method.

(4) *Reflect fair market value.* The valuation method must take into account fair market value by making use of the—

(i) Fair market value (determined under paragraph (c) of this section), or

(ii) Average value (determined under paragraph (b)(7) of this section) of the plan's assets as of the applicable asset valuation date. This is done either directly in the computation of their actuarial value or indirectly in the computation of upper or lower limits placed on that value.

(5) *Results above and below fair market or average value.* A method will not satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (b) if it is designed to produce a result which will be consistently above or below the values described in paragraph (b)(4) (i) and (ii). However, a method designed to produce a result which consistently falls between fair market value and average value will satisfy this requirement. See Example (5) in paragraph (b)(9) of this section for an illustration of a method described in the preceding sentence.

(6) *Corridor limits.* (i) Regardless of how the method reflects fair market value under paragraph (b)(4), the method must result in an actuarial value of the plan's assets which is not less than a minimum amount and not more than a maximum amount. The minimum amount is the lesser of 80 percent of the current fair market value of plan assets as of the applicable asset valuation date or 85 percent of the average value (as described in subparagraph (7)) of plan assets as of that date. The maximum amount is the greater of 120 percent of the current fair market value of plan assets as of the applicable asset valuation date or 115 percent of the average value of plan assets as of that date.

(ii) Under a plan's method, a preliminary computation of the expected actuarial value may fall outside the prescribed corridor. A method meets the requirements of paragraph (b)(6)(i) of this section is such a case only by adjusting the expected actuarial value to the nearest corridor limit applicable under the method. A plan may use an actuarial valuation method with a narrower corridor than the general corridor required under paragraph (b)(6)(i). The adjustment to the nearest corridor limit of such a method for purposes of this subdivision (ii) would be determined by the narrower corridor stated in the description of the plan's method.

(7) *Average value.* the average value of plan assets is computed by—

(i) Determining the fair market value of plan assets at least annually,

(ii) Adding the current fair market value of the assets (as of the applicable valuation date) and their adjusted values (as described in paragraph (b)(8) of this section) for a stated period not to exceed the five most recent plan years (including the current year), and

(iii) Dividing this sum by the number of values (including the current fair market value) considered in computing the sum described in subdivision (ii).

(8) *Adjusted value.* (i) the adjusted value of plan assets for a prior valuation date is their fair market value on that date with certain positive and negative adjustments. These adjustments reflect changes that occur between the prior asset valuation date and the current valuation date. However, no adjustment is made for increases or decreases in the total value of plan assets that result from the purchase, sale, or exchange of plan assets or from the receipt of payment on a debt obligation held by the plan.

(ii) In determining the adjusted value of plan assets for a prior valuation date, there is added to the fair market value of the plan assets of that date the sum of all additions to the plan assets since that date, excluding appreciation in the fair market value of the assets. The additions would include, for example, any contribution to the plan; any interest or dividend paid to the plan; and any asset not taken into account in a prior valuation of assets, but taken into account for the current year, in computing the fair market value of plan assets under paragraph (c) of this section.

(iii) In determining the adjusted value of plan assets for a prior valuation date, there is subtracted from the fair market value of the plan assets on that date the sum of all reductions in plan assets since that date, excluding depreciation in the fair market value

of the assets. The reductions would include, for example, any benefit paid from plan assets; any expense paid from plan assets; and any asset taken into account in a prior valuation of assets but not taken into account for the current year, in computing the fair market value of plan assets under paragraph (c) of this section.

(9) *Examples.* This paragraph (b) may be illustrated by the following examples. In each example, assume that the pension plan uses a consistent actuarial method of valuing its assets within the meaning of paragraph (b)(1), (2), and (3) of this section.

Example (1). Plan A considers the value of its assets to be initial cost, increased by an assumed rate of growth of X percent annually. Under the circumstances, the X-percent factor used by the plan is a reasonable assumption. Thus, this method is not designed to produce results consistently above or below fair market value as prohibited by paragraph (b)(5) of this section. Also, the method requires that the actuarial value be adjusted as required to fall within the corridor under paragraph (b) (6) and (7) of this section. Therefore, the method reflects fair market value as required by paragraph (b)(4) of this section.

Example (2). Plan B computes the actuarial value of its assets as follows: It determines the fair market value of the plan assets. Then the fair market value is adjusted to the extent necessary to make the actuarial value fall within a ''5 percent'' corridor. This corridor is plus or minus 5 percent of the following amount: the fair market value of the assets at the beginning of the valuation period plus an assumed annual growth of 4 percent with adjustments for contributions and benefit payments during the period. This method reflects fair market value in a manner prescribed by paragraph (b)(4) of this section. If the 4 percent factor used by the plan is a reasonable assumption, this method is not designed to produce results consistently above or below fair market value, and thus it satisfies paragraph (b)(5). However, this method is unacceptable because in some instances it may result in an actuarial value outside the corridor described in paragraph (b)(6) of this section. This method would be permitted if a second corridor were imposed which would adjust the value of the total plan assets to the corridor limits as required by paragraph (b)(6).

Example (3). Plan C values its assets by multiplying their fair market value by an index number. The use of the index results in the hypothetical average value that plan assets present on the valuation date would have had if they had been held during the current and four preceding years, and had appreciated or depreciated at the actual yield rates including appreciation and depreciation experienced by the plan during that period. However, the method requires an adjustment to the extent necessary to bring the resulting actuarial value of the assets inside the corridor described in the statement of the plan's actuarial valuation method. In this case, the stated corridor is 90 to 110 percent of fair market value, a corridor narrower than that described in paragraph (b)(7) of this section. This method is permitted.

Example (4). Plan D values its assets by multiplying their fair market value by 95 percent. Although the method reflects fair market value and the results of this method will always be within the required corridor, it is not acceptable because it will consistently result in a value less than fair market value.

Example (5). Plan E values its assets by using a five-year average method with appropriate adjustments for the period. Under the particular method used by Plan E, assets are not valued below 80 percent of fair market value or above 100 percent of fair market value. If the average produces a value that exceeds 100 percent of fair market value, the excess between 100 and 120 percent is recorded in a ''value reserve account.'' In years after one in which the average exceeds 100 percent of fair market value, amounts are subtracted from this account and added, to the extent necessary, to raise the value produced by the average for that year to 100 percent of fair market value. This method is permitted because it reflects fair market value under paragraph (b)(4) of this section by appropriately computing an average value, it satisfies paragraph (b)(5) by producing a result that falls consistently between fair market value and average value, and it properly reflects the corridor described in paragraph (b)(7).

Example (6). All assets of Plan F are invested in a trust fund and the plan year is the calendar year. The actuarial value is determined by averaging fair market value over 4 years. An actuarial valuation is performed as of December 31, 1988.

(i) The average value as of December 31, 1988, is computed as follows:

	1986	1986	1987	1987	1988	1988
Fair market value: Jan. 1	.....	$150,000	.....	$196,500	.....	$238,000
Contributions	$65,000	.....	$62,000	.....	$66,000	.....
Benefit payments	(22,000)	.....	(24,000)	.....	(25,000)	.....
Expenses	(6,500)	.....	(7,000)	.....	(7,500)	.....

	1986	1986	1987	1987	1988	1988
Interest and dividends	8,000	44,500	7,500	38,500	7,000	240,500
Net realized gains (losses)	.....	(2,000)	.....	6,000	.....	(8,000)
Balancing item [1]	.....	4,000	.....	(3,000)	.....	(42,000)
Fair market value: Dec. 31	.....	196,500	.....	238,000	.....	228,000

[1] This equals the increase (decrease) in unrealized appreciation.

Adjusted values	1985	1986	1987	1988
Fair market value: Dec. 31	$150,000	$196,500	$238,000	$228,000
Net adjustments:				
1988	40,500	40,500	40,500	.....
1987	38,500	38,500	.....	.....
1986	44,500	.....	.....	.....
Total	273,500	275,500	278,500	228,000

Average value: 1988=$273,500 + $275,500 + $278,500 + $228,000 ÷ 4=$263,875

(ii) Plan F properly determines an average value under paragraph (b)(7) of this section for use as an actuarial value. Therefore, the valuation method meets the requirements of this section.

Example (7). Plan G computes the actuarial value of the plan assets as follows: The current fair market value of the plan assets is averaged with the most recent prior adjusted actuarial value. This average value is adjusted up or down toward the current fair market value by 20 percent of the difference between it and the current fair market value of the assets. This value is further adjusted to the extent necessary to fall within the corridor described in the statement of the plan's actuarial valuation method. The lower end of the corridor is the lesser of 80 percent of the fair market value of the plan assets or 85 percent of the average value of the plan assets. The higher end of the corridor is the greater of 120 percent of the fair market value of plan assets or 115 percent of the average value of plan assets. Average value for purposes of the corridor is determined under paragraph (b)(7) of this section. Assuming the numerical data of Example (6), the application of the corridor is as follows. The actuarial asset value as of December 31, 1988, must not be less than $182,400 (80 percent of current fair market value, $228,000) nor greater than $303,456 (115 percent of average value, 263,875). This method is permitted because it reflects fair market value in a manner permitted by paragraph (b)(4) of this section, it produces an actuarial value which is neither consistently above nor consistently below fair market or average value to satisfy paragraph (b)(5), and it is appropriately limited by the corridor described in paragraph (b)(6).

(c) *Fair market value of assets*—(1) *General rules.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (c), the fair market value of a plan's assets for purposes of this section is the price at which the property would change hands between a willing buyer and a willing seller, neither being under any compulsion to buy or sell and both having reasonable knowledge of relevant facts.

(d) *Methods for taking into account the fair market value of certain agreements.* [Reserved]

(e) *Effective date and transition rules*—(1) *Effective date.* This section applies to plan years to which section 412, or section 302 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, applies.

(2) *Special rule for certain plan years.* For plan years beginning prior to November 12, 1980, the amounts required to be determined under section 412 may be computed on the basis of any reasonable actuarial method of asset valuation which takes into account the fair market value of the plan's assets, even if the method does not meet all of the requirements of paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section.

(3) *Plan years beginning on or after November 12, 1980.* Paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section apply beginning with the first valuation of plan assets made for a plan year to which section 412 applies that begins on or after November 12, 1980. The statement of the plan's actuarial asset valuation method required by paragraph (b)(2) of this section must be included with the plan's actuarial report for that year, in addition to any subsequent reports.

(4) *Effect of change of asset valuation method.* A plan which is required to change its asset valuation method to

comply with paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section must make the change no later than the time when the plan is first required to comply with this section under paragraph (e)(3). A method of adjustment must be used to take account of any difference in the actuarial value of the plan's assets based on the old and new valuation methods. The plan may use either—

(i) A method of adjustment described in paragraph (e)(5) or (e)(6) of this section without prior approval by the Commissioner, or

(ii) Any other method of adjustment if the Commissioner gives prior approval under section 412(c)(5).

(5) *Retroactive recomputation method.* (i) Under this method of adjustment, the plan recomputes the balance of the funding standard account as of the beginning of the first plan year for which it uses its new asset valuation method to comply with paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section. This new balance is recomputed by retroactively applying the plan's new method as of the first day of the first plan year to which section 412 applies.

(ii) Beginning with the first plan year for which it uses its new method, the plan computes the normal cost and amortization charges and credits to the funding standard account based on the retroactive application of its new method as of the first day of the first plan year to which section 412 applies.

(iii) If the recomputed aggregate charges exceed the recomputed aggregate credits to the funding standard account as of the end of the first plan year for which the plan uses its new method, an additional contribution to the plan may be necessary to avoid an accumulated funding deficiency in that year. The use of the retroactive recomputation method may also result in an accumulated funding deficiency for years prior to that first year. In such cases, the rules of section 412(c)(10), relating to the time when certain contributions are deemed to have been made, apply.

(6) *Prospective gain or loss adjustment method.* (i) Under this method of adjustment the plan values its assets under its new method no later than the valuation date for the first plan year beginning after [the publication date of this section]

(ii) Regardless of the type of funding method used by a plan, the difference in the value of the assets under the old and the new asset valuation methods may be treated as arising from an experience loss or gain; or alternatively it may be treated as arising from a change in actuarial assumptions.

(iii) The treatment of this difference as an experience gain or loss or as a change in actuarial assumptions must be consistent with the treatment of such gains, losses, or changes under the funding method used by the plan. Thus, if a plan uses a spread gain type funding method other than the aggregate cost method, the difference in the value of assets under the old and the new asset valuation methods may be either amortized or spread over future periods as a part of normal cost. Examples of this type of funding method are the frozen initial liability cost method and the attained age normal cost method. With an aggregate method, the difference in the value of assets under the old and the new asset valuation methods must be spread over future periods as a part of normal cost.

(Secs. 412(c)(2) and 7805 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (88 Stat. 916 and 68A Stat. 917; 26 U.S.C. 412(c)(2) and 7805))

[T.D. 7734, 45 FR 74718, Nov. 12, 1980]

§1.412(c)(3)–1 Reasonable funding methods.

(a) *Introduction*—(1) *In general.* This section prescribes rules for determining whether or not, in the case of an ongoing plan, a funding method is reasonable for purposes of section 412(c)(3). A method is unreasonable only if it is found to be inconsistent with a rule prescribed in this section. The term ''reasonable funding method'' under this section has the same meaning as the term ''acceptable actuarial cost method'' under section 3(31) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

(2) *Computations included in method.* See §1.412(c)(1)–1(b) for a discussion of matters that are, and are not, included in the funding method of a plan.

(3) *Plans using shortfall.* The shortfall method is a method of determining

charges to the funding standard account by adapting the underlying funding method of certain collectively bargained plans in the manner described in § 1.412(c)(1)–2. As such, the shortfall method is a funding method. The underlying method of a plan that uses the shortfall method must be a reasonable funding method under this section. The rules contained in this section, relating to cost under a reasonable funding method, apply in the shortfall method to the annual computation charge under § 1.412(c)(1)–2(d).

(4) *Scope of funding method.* Except for the shortfall method, a reasonable funding method is applied to the computation of—

(i) The normal cost of a plan for a plan year; and, if applicable,

(ii) The bases established under section 412(b)(2)(B), (C), and (D), and (3)(B) (''amortizable bases'').

(b) *General rules for reasonable funding methods*—(1) *Basic funding formula.* At any time, except as provided by the Commissioner, the present value of future benefits under a reasonable funding method must equal the sum of the following amounts:

(i) The present value of normal costs (taking into account future mandatory employee contributions, within the meaning of section 411(c)(2)(C), in the case of a contributory plan) over the future working lifetime of participants;

(ii) The sum of the unamortized portions of amortizable bases, if any, treating credit bases under section 412(b)(3)(B) as negative numbers; and

(iii) The plan assets, decreased by a credit balance (and increased by a debit balance) in the funding standard account under section 412(b).

(2) *Normal cost.* Normal cost under a reasonable funding method must be expressed as—

(i) A level dollar amount, or a level percentage of pay, that is computed from year to year on either an individual basis or an aggregate basis; or

(ii) An amount equal to the present value of benefits accruing under the method for a particular plan year.

(3) *Application to shortfall.* Paragraph (b)(2) will not fail to be satisfied merely because an amount described in (i) or (ii) is expressed as permitted under the shortfall method.

(c) *Additional requirements*—(1) *Inclusion of all liabilities.* Under a reasonable funding method, all liabilities of the plan for benefits, whether vested or not, must be taken into account.

(2) *Production of experience gains and losses.* If each actuarial assumption is exactly realized under a reasonable funding method, no experience gains or losses are produced.

(3) *Plan population*—(i) *In general.* Under a reasonable funding method, the plan population must include three classes of individuals: participants currently employed in the service of the employer; former participants who either terminated service with the employer, or retired, under the plan; and all other individuals currently entitled to benefits under the plan. See § 1.412(c)(3)–1(d)(2) for rules concerning anticipated future participants.

(ii) *Limited exclusion for certain recent participants.* Under a reasonable funding method, certain individuals may be excluded from the first class of individuals described in paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section unless otherwise provided by the Commissioner. The excludable individuals are participants who would be excluded from participation by the minimum age or service requirement of section 410 but who, under the terms of the plan, participate immediately upon entering the service of the employer.

(iii) *Special exclusion for ''rule of parity'' cases.* Under a reasonable funding method, certain individuals may be excluded from the second class of individuals described in paragraph (c)(3)(i) of this section. The excludable individuals are those former participants who have terminated service with the employer without vested benefits and whose service might be taken into account in future years because the ''rule of parity'' of section 411(a)(6)(D) does not permit that service to be disregarded. However if the plan's experience as to separated employees' returning to service has been such that the exclusion described in this subparagraph would be unreasonable, the exclusion would no longer apply.

(4) *Use of salary scale*—(i) *General acceptability.* The use of a salary scale assumption is not inappropriate merely

because of the funding method with which it is used. Therefore, in determining whether actuarial assumptions are reasonable, a salary scale will not be considered to be prohibited merely because a particular funding method is being used.

(ii) *Projection to appropriate salary.* Under a reasonable funding method, salary scales reflected in projected benefits must be the expected salary on which benefits would be based under the plan at the age when the receipt of benefits is expected to begin.

(5) *Treatment of allocable items.* Under a reasonable funding method that allocates assets to individual participants to determine costs, the allocation of assets among participants must be reasonable. An initial allocation of assets among participants will be considered reasonable only if it is in proportion to related liabilities. However, the Commissioner may determine, based on the facts and circumstances, that it is unreasonable to continue to allocate assets on this basis beyond the initial year. Under a reasonable funding method that allocates liabilities among different elements of past and future service, the allocation of liabilities must be reasonable.

(d) *Prohibited considerations under a reasonable funding method*—(1) *Anticipated benefit changes*—(i) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner, a reasonable funding method does not anticipate changes in plan benefits that become effective, whether or not retroactively, in a future plan year or that become effective after the first day of, but during, a current plan year.

(ii) *Exception for collectively bargained plans.* A collectively bargained plan described in section 413(a) may on a consistent basis anticipate benefit increases scheduled to take effect during the term of the collective-bargaining agreement applicable to the plan. A plan's treatment of benefit increases scheduled in a collective bargaining agreement is part of its funding method. Accordingly, a change in a plan's treatment of such benefit increases (for example, ignoring anticipated increases after taking them into account) is a change of funding method.

(2) *Anticipated future participants.* A reasonable funding method must not anticipate the affiliation with the plan of future participants not employed in the service of the employer on the plan valuation date. However, a reasonable funding method may anticipate the affiliation with the plan of current employees who have not satisfied the participation requirements of the plan.

(e) *Special rules for certain funding methods*—(1) *Applicability of special rules.* Paragraph (e) of this section applies to a funding method that determines normal cost under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section.

(2) *Use of salary scale.* For rules relating to use of a salary scale assumption, see paragraph (c)(4) of this section.

(3) *Allocation of liabilities.* In determining a plan's normal cost and accrued liability for a particular plan year, the projected benefits of the plan must be allocated between past years and future years. Except in the case of a career average pay plan, this allocation must be in proportion to the applicable rates of benefit accrual under the plan. Thus, the allocation to past years is effected by multiplying the projected benefit by a fraction. The numerator of the fraction is the participant's credited years of service. The denominator is the participant's total credited years of service at the anticipated benefit commencement date. Adjustments are made to account for changes in the rate of benefit accrual. An allocation based on compensation is not permitted. In the case of a career average pay plan, an allocation between past and future service benefits must be reasonable.

(f) *Treatment of ancillary benefit costs*—(1) *General rule.* Under a reasonable funding method, except as otherwise provided by this paragraph (f), ancillary benefit costs must be computed by using the same method used to compute retirement benefit costs under a plan.

(2) *Ancillary benefit defined.* For purposes of this paragraph an ancillary benefit is a benefit that is paid as a result of a specified event which—

(i) Occurs not later than a participant's separation from service, and

(ii) Was detrimental to the participant's health.

Thus, for example, benefits payable if a participant dies or becomes disabled prior to separation from service are ancillary benefits because the events giving rise to the benefits are detrimental to the participant's health. However, an early retirement benefit, a social security supplement (as defined in § 1.411(a)–7(c)(4)(ii)), and the vesting of plan benefits (even if more rapid than is required by section 411) are not ancillary benefits because those benefits do not result from an event which is detrimental to the participant's health.

(3) *Exception for certain insurance contracts.* Under a reasonable funding method, regardless of the method used to compute retirement benefit costs, the cost of an ancillary benefit may equal the premium paid for that benefit under an insurance contract if—

(i) The ancillary benefit is provided under the contract, and

(ii) The benefit is guaranteed under the contract.

(4) *Exception for 1-year term funding and other approved methods.* [Reserved]

(5) *Section 401(h) benefits.* Section 412 does not apply to benefits that are described in section 401(h) and for which a separate account is maintained.

(g) *Examples.* The principles of this section are illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). Assume that a plan, using funding method A, is in its first year. No contributions have been made to the plan, other than a nominal contribution to establish a corpus for the plan's trust. There is no past service liability, and the normal cost is a constant percentage of an annually determined amount. The constant percentage is 99 percent, and the annually determined amount is the excess of the present value of future benefits over plan assets. The present value of future benefits is $10,000. Under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the present value of future benefits must equal the present value of future normal costs plus plan assets. (No amortizable bases exist, nor are there credit or debit balances.) Under method A, the present value of future normal costs would equal the sum of a series of annually decreasing amounts. Because of the constant percentage factor, the present value of future normal costs over the years can never equal $10,000, the present value of future benefits. In effect, then, assets under method A can never equal the present value of future benefits if all assumptions are exactly realized. Therefore, method A is not a reasonable funding method.

Example (2). Assume that a plan, using funding method B, determines normal cost by computing the present value of benefits expected to be accrued under the plan by the end of 10 years after the valuation date and adding to this the present value of benefits expected to be paid within these 10 years. Plan assets are subtracted from the sum of the two present value amounts. The difference then is divided by the present value of salaries projected over the 10 years. Under paragraph (c)(1) of this section, all liabilities of a plan must be taken into account. Because method B takes into account only benefits paid or accrued by the end of 10 years, it is not a reasonable funding method.

Example (3). Assume that a plan, using funding method C, determines normal cost as a constant percentage of compensation. (This percentage is determined as follows: The excess of projected benefits over accrued benefits is computed. Then the present value of this excess is divided by the present value of future salaries.) However, the accrued liability is computed each year as the present value of accrued benefits. (This computation does not reflect normal cost as a constant percentage of compensation. Thus, normal cost under the plan does not link accrued liabilities under the plan for consecutive years as would be the case, for example, under a unit credit cost method.) In determining gains and losses, method C compares the actual unfunded liability (the accrued liability less assets) with the expected unfunded liability (the sum of the actual unfunded liability in the previous year and the normal cost for the previous year less the contribution made for the previous year, all adjusted for interest). Under paragraph (c)(2) of this section, if actuarial assumptions are exactly realized, experience gains and losses must not be produced. Under method C, the use of a constant percentage in computing normal cost (and the expected unfunded liability) coupled with the manner of computing the accrued liability (and the actual unfunded liability) generally produces gains in the earlier years and losses in the later years if each actuarial assumption is exactly realized. Therefore, method C is not a reasonable funding method.

Example (4). Assume that a plan, using funding method D, bases benefits on final average pay. Under method D, the past service liability on any date equals the present value of the accrued benefit on that date based on compensation as of that date. The normal cost for any year equals the present value of a certain amount. That amount is the excess of the projected accrued benefit as of the end of the year over the actual accrued benefit at the beginning of the year. Accrued benefits, projected as of the end of a year, reflect a 1-year salary projection.

Under paragraph (c)(4) of this section, salary scales reflected in projected benefits must project salaries to the salary on which benefits would be based under the plan at the age when the receipt of benefits under the plan is expected to begin. Because the plan is not a career average pay plan and compensation is projected only 1 year, method D is not a reasonable funding method. (Under paragraph (c)(4) of this section, the use of a salary scale assumption could be required with a unit credit method if, without the use of a salary scale, assumptions in the aggregate are unreasonable.)

Example (5). Assume that a plan, using method E, a unit credit funding method, calculates a participant's accrued benefit according to the following formula: 2 percent of final salary for the first 10 years of service and 1 percent of final salary for the years of service in excess of 10. Under the plan, no employee may be credited with more than 25 years of service. The actuarial assumptions for the valuation include a salary scale of 5 percent per year. For a participant at age 40 with 15 years of service, a current salary of $20,000 and a normal retirement age of 65, the accrued liability for the retirement benefit is the present value of an annuity of $16,932 per year, commencing at age 65. The $16,932 is calculated as follows:

$$\$20{,}000 \times 3.3864 \times 35\% \times \frac{(10\times 2)+(5\times 1)}{(10\times 2)-(15\times 1)+(15\times 0)}$$

(3.3864 is 1.05 raised to the 25th power; the 25th power reflects the difference between normal retirement age and attained age (65–40).)

Salary under this method is projected to the age when the receipt of benefits is expected to begin. Therefore, method E meets the requirement of paragraph (c)(4) of this section. Also, the allocation of benefits under method E between past and future years of service meets the requirements of paragraph (e)(3) of this section.

Example (6). Assume that a plan that has two participants and that previously used the unit credit cost method wishes to change the funding method at the beginning of the plan year to funding method F, a modification of the aggregate cost method. The modification involves determining normal cost for each of the two participants under the plan. Therefore, it requires an allocation of assets to each participant for valuation purposes. The actuary proposes to allocate the assets on hand at the beginning of the plan year of the change in funding method in proportion to the accrued liabilities calculated under the unit credit cost method. The relevant results of the calculations are shown below:

	Employees		Totals
	M	N	
Accrued Liabilities (unit credit method):			
Dollar amount	15,670	906	16,576
Per cent of total	94.53	5.47	100.00
Assets:			
Dollar amount	7,835	453	8,288
per cent of total	94.53	5.47	100.00

The proposed allocation in proportion to the accrued liabilities under the unit credit cost method satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c)(5) of this section at the beginning of the first plan year for which the new method is used.

Example (7). The facts are the same as in Example (6). However, the actuary proposes to allocate all the assets to employee M, the older employee. Method F, under these facts, is not an acceptable funding method because the allocation is not in proportion to related liabilities as required under paragraph (c)(5) of this section.

[T.D. 7746, 45 FR 86430, Dec. 31, 1980]

§ 1.412(c)(3)–2 Effective dates and transitional rules relating to reasonable funding methods.

(a) *Introduction.* This section prescribes effective dates for rules relating to reasonable funding methods, under section 412(c)(3) and § 1.412(c)(3)–1. Also, this section sets forth rules concerning adjustments to a plan's funding standard account that are necessitated by a change in funding method, and a provision setting forth procedural requirements for use of an optional phase-in of required changes.

(b) *Effective date*—(1) *General rule.* Except as otherwise provided by subparagraph (2) of this paragraph, § 1.412(c)(3)–1 applies to any valuation of a plan's liabilities (within the meaning of section 412(c)(9)) as of a date after April 30, 1981.

(2) *Exception.* If a collective bargaining agreement which determines contributions to a plan is in effect on April 30, 1981, then § 1.412(c)(3)–1 applies to any valuation of that plan's liabilities as of a date after the earlier of the date on which the last such collective bargaining agreement expires or April 30, 1984.

(3) *Transitional rule.* The reasonableness of a funding method used in making a valuation of a plan's liability as of a date before the effective date determined under subparagraph (1) or (2)