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availability may be separately determined. When appropriate, the requester shall describe the intended use of the requested records. Employees at a facility or at a specific address listed in Appendix B will assist the public to a reasonable extent in framing a request.

[53 FR 6972, Mar. 4, 1988; 53 FR 16211, May 5, 1988]

§ 4.6 Initial determinations of availability of records.

(a) The responsible unit which receives a request for records shall promptly log the receipt of the request, and within ten days of its receipt (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) shall initially determine:

(1) Whether the request is for records under the Act, is for materials available otherwise than under the Act, or is for information not contained in existing records and, therefore, not under the Act. The requester shall be promptly notified in writing how the request is being handled when it does not come within the Act.

(2) Whether the records requested are reasonably described and can be located on the basis of the information supplied by the requester. If any of the records requested cannot be identified and located from the information furnished, the unit shall promptly so inform the requester in writing, specifying what additional identification is needed to assist the unit in locating the record, and offering to assist the requester to reformulate the request.

(3) Whether the records no longer exist, or are not in the unit's possession. The unit should, if it knows which unit of the Department or other agency may have the records, forward the request to it. In each instance, the unit shall promptly notify the requester in writing.

(4) Whether the requested records are the exclusive or primary concern of another executive agency. If so, the unit shall refer the request and the responsive records to that other agency for further action under its rules, and promptly notify the requester in writing of this referral. When the subject matter of a classified record originated by another agency indicates that disclosure of the identity of the orginating agency might itself compromise national security, that agency shall be consulted prior to any referral of the responsive records.

(5) Whether the request is a categorical one. A categorical request, i.e., one for all records falling within a reasonably specific but broad category, shall be regarded as conforming to the statutory requirement that records be reasonably described, if the particular records can be identified, searched for, collected and produced without unduly burdening or disrupting the unit's operations. If the categorical request does not reasonably describe the records requested, the unit shall promptly notify the requester in writing specifying what additional identification is needed, and extend to the requester an opportunity to confer with Department personnel to attempt to reformulate the request so as to reasonably describe the records.

(6) In determining records responsive to a request a unit ordinarily shall include only those records within a unit's possession and control as of the date of its receipt of the request.

(7) In each of the situations set forth in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, the procedures relating to fees described in § 4.9 shall be applied and coordinated as appropriate.

(b) An authorized official in the responsible unit shall review the request to determine the availability of the records requested.

(1) The determination shall be made within ten days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal public holidays) of the receipt of the request (as defined in § 4.5(b) of this part), unless the time is extended as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(2) In unusual circumstances, an appropriate official authorized to make initial denials of requests may extend the time for initial determination for up to ten days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal public holidays) by written notice to the requester setting forth the reasons for the extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be sent. Extensions of time for the initial determination and extensions of time on appeal may not exceed a total of ten days, and time taken for the former counts against

available appeal extension time. ''Unusual circumstances'' means, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to the processing of a particular request:

(i) The need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

(ii) The need to search for, collect, and examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are the subject of a single request, or

(iii) The need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practical speed, with another agency or unit having a substantial interest in the determination of the request, or among two or more components of the responsible unit having substantial subject-matter interest in the pertinent documents.

(3) If no determination has been sent to the requester at the end of the initial ten day period, or the last extension date, the requester may consider the request to be initially denied, and exercise a right of appeal of the denial. When no determination can be made within the applicable time period, the responsible unit shall nevertheless exercise due dilligence in continuing to process the request. It shall, on expiration of the applicable time period, inform the requester of the reason for the delay, of the date a determination is expected to be sent, and of the requester's right to treat the delay as a denial and to appeal. It may ask the requester to forego an appeal until a determination is made.

(4) If it is determined that the records requested are to be made available, and there are no further fees to be paid, the responsible official shall promptly notify the requester as to how the disclosable records will be made available. If there are fees still to be paid by the requester, the requester shall be notified that upon payment the records will immediately be made available.

(5) Appendix C lists the limited number of officials who have been authorized to make initial denials of requests for records, except as may be subsequently authorized. A reply initially denying, in whole or in part, a request for records shall be in writing, signed by an authorized official, and it shall include:

(i) A reference to the specific exemptions of the Act authorizing the withholding of the records, stating briefly why the exemption applies and, where relevant why a discretionary release is not appropriate.

(ii) The name and title or position of each official responsible for the denial.

(iii) A statement of the manner in which any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be provided to the requester after deletion of the portion which is determined to be exempt.

(iv) A brief statement of the right of the requester to appeal the determination to the General Counsel and the address to which the appeal should be sent, in accordance with §4.8 (a) and (b).

(6) A copy of each initial denial and its incoming request for records shall be provided to the Assistant General Counsel for Administration.

[53 FR 6972, Mar. 4, 1988; 53 FR 16057, 16211, May 5, 1988]

§4.7 Predisclosure notification procedures for confidential commercial information.

(a) *General policy*. Confidential commercial or financial information provided to the Department of Commerce by a submitter shall not be disclosed pursuant to a Freedom of Information Act request except in accordance with this section.

(b) *Definitions*. (1) The term ''confidential commercial or financial information'' means records provided to the Department by a submitter that arguably contain material exempt from release under Exemption 4 of the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4), because disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm to the submitter.

(2) The term ''submitter'' means any person or entity who provides confidential commercial or financial information to the Department. The term ''submitter'' includes, but is not limited to corporations, state governments and foreign governments.

(c) *Notice to submitters*. A unit of the Department of Commerce shall provide