

Office of the Secretary of Labor**§ 24.5**

make copies thereof), may question persons being proceeded against and other employees of the charged employer, and may require the production of any documentary or other evidence deemed necessary to determine whether a violation of the law involved has been committed.

(c) Investigations under this part shall be conducted in a manner which protects the confidentiality of any person other than the complainant who provides information on a confidential basis, in accordance with part 70 of this title.

(d)(1) Within 30 days of receipt of a complaint, the Assistant Secretary shall complete the investigation, determine whether the alleged violation has occurred, and give notice of the determination. The notice of determination shall contain a statement of reasons for the findings and conclusions therein and, if the Assistant Secretary determines that the alleged violation has occurred, shall include an appropriate order to abate the violation. Notice of the determination shall be given by certified mail to the complainant, the respondent, and their representatives (if any). At the same time, the Assistant Secretary shall file with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S. Department of Labor, the original complaint and a copy of the notice of determination.

(2) The notice of determination shall include or be accompanied by notice to the complainant and the respondent that any party who desires review of the determination or any part thereof, including judicial review, shall file a request for a hearing with the Chief Administrative Law Judge within five business days of receipt of the determination. The complainant or respondent in turn may request a hearing within five business days of the date of a timely request for a hearing by the other party. If a request for a hearing is timely filed, the notice of determination of the Assistant Secretary shall be inoperative, and shall become operative only if the case is later dismissed. If a request for a hearing is not timely filed, the notice of determination shall become the final order of the Secretary.

(3) A request for a hearing shall be filed with the Chief Administrative Law Judge by facsimile (fax), telegram, hand delivery, or next-day delivery service. A copy of the request for a hearing shall be sent by the party requesting a hearing to the complainant or the respondent (employer), as appropriate, on the same day that the hearing is requested, by facsimile (fax), telegram, hand delivery, or next-day delivery service. A copy of the request for a hearing shall also be sent to the Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health and to the Associate Solicitor, Division of Fair Labor Standards, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20210.

§ 24.5 Investigations under the Energy Reorganization Act.

(a) In addition to the investigation procedures set forth in § 24.4, this section sets forth special procedures applicable only to investigations under the Energy Reorganization Act.

(b)(1) A complaint of alleged violation shall be dismissed unless the complainant has made a *prima facie* showing that protected behavior or conduct as provided in § 24.2(b) was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint.

(2) The complaint, supplemented as appropriate by interviews of the complainant, must allege the existence of facts and evidence to meet the required elements of a *prima facie* case, as follows:

(i) The employee engaged in a protected activity or conduct, as set forth in § 24.2;

(ii) The respondent knew that the employee engaged in the protected activity;

(iii) The employee has suffered an unfavorable personnel action; and

(iv) The circumstances were sufficient to raise the inference that the protected activity was likely a contributing factor in the unfavorable action.

(3) For purposes of determining whether to investigate, the complainant will be considered to have met the required burden if the complaint on its face, supplemented as appropriate through interviews of the complainant, alleges the existence of facts and either direct or circumstantial evidence to

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meet the required elements of a *prima facie* case, *i.e.*, to give rise to an inference that the respondent knew that the employee engaged in protected activity, and that the protected activity was likely a reason for the personnel action. Normally the burden is satisfied, for example, if it is shown that the adverse personnel action took place shortly after the protected activity, giving rise to the inference that it was a factor in the adverse action. If these elements are not substantiated in the investigation, the investigation will cease.

(c)(1) Notwithstanding a finding that a complainant has made a *prima facie* showing required by this section with respect to complaints filed under the Energy Reorganization Act, an investigation of the complainant's complaint under that Act shall be discontinued if the respondent demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of the complainant's protected behavior or conduct.

(2) Upon receipt of a complaint under the Energy Reorganization Act, the respondent shall be provided with a copy of the complaint (as supplemented by interviews of the complainant, if any) and advised that any evidence it may wish to submit to rebut the allegations in the complaint must be received within five business days from receipt of notification of the complaint. If the respondent fails to make a timely response or if the response does not demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the unfavorable action would have occurred absent the protected conduct, the investigation shall proceed. The investigation shall proceed whenever it is necessary or appropriate to confirm or verify the information provided by respondent.

(d) Whenever the Assistant Secretary dismisses a complaint pursuant to this section without completion of an investigation, the Assistant Secretary shall give notice of the dismissal, which shall contain a statement of reasons therefor, by certified mail to the complainant, the respondent, and their representatives. At the same time the Assistant Secretary shall file with the Chief Administrative Law Judge, U.S.

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Department of Labor, a copy of the complaint and a copy of the notice of dismissal. The notice of dismissal shall constitute a notice of determination within the meaning of § 24.4(d), and any request for a hearing shall be filed and served in accordance with the provisions of § 24.4(d) (2) and (3).

§ 24.6 Hearings.

(a) *Notice of hearing.* The administrative law judge to whom the case is assigned shall, within seven calendar days following receipt of the request for hearing, notify the parties by certified mail, directed to the last known address of the parties, of a day, time and place for hearing. All parties shall be given at least five days notice of such hearing. However, because of the time constraints upon the Secretary by the above statutes, no requests for postponement shall be granted except for compelling reasons or with the consent of all parties.

(b) *Consolidated hearings.* When two or more hearings are to be held, and the same or substantially similar evidence is relevant and material to the matters at issue at each such hearing, the Chief Administrative Law Judge may, upon motion by any party or on his own or her own motion, order that a consolidated hearing be conducted. Where consolidated hearings are held, a single record of the proceedings shall be made and the evidence introduced in one case may be considered as introduced in the others, and a separate or joint decision shall be made, as appropriate.

(c) *Place of hearing.* The hearing shall, where possible, be held at a place within 75 miles of the complainant's residence.

(d) *Right to counsel.* In all proceedings under this part, the parties shall have the right to be represented by counsel.

(e) *Procedures, evidence and record—(1) Evidence.* Formal rules of evidence shall not apply, but rules or principles designed to assure production of the most probative evidence available shall be applied. The administrative law judge may exclude evidence which is immaterial, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious.

(2) *Record of hearing.* All hearings shall be open to the public and shall be