

(2) Testified or will testify at any proceeding related to a violation of a commercial motor vehicle safety or security regulation, standard, or order.

(c) It is a violation for any employer to intimidate, threaten, restrain, coerce, blacklist, discharge, discipline, or in any other manner retaliate against any employee because the employee:

(1) Refuses to operate a vehicle because:

(i) The operation violates a regulation, standard, or order of the United States related to commercial motor vehicle safety, health, or security; or

(ii) He or she has a reasonable apprehension of serious injury to himself or herself or the public because of the vehicle's hazardous safety or security condition;

(2) Accurately reports hours on duty pursuant to Chapter 315 of Title 49 of the United States Code; or

(3) Cooperates with a safety or security investigation by the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the National Transportation Safety Board; or

(4) Furnishes information to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, or any Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency as to the facts relating to any accident or incident resulting in injury or death to an individual or damage to property occurring in connection with commercial motor vehicle transportation.

(d) No person may discharge or otherwise retaliate against any employee with respect to the employee's compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the person perceives that the employee has engaged in any of the activities specified in paragraph (e) of this section.

(e) It is a violation for any employer to intimidate, threaten, restrain, coerce, blacklist, discharge, discipline, or in any other manner retaliate against any employee because the employer perceives that:

(1) The employee has filed or is about to file a complaint or has begun or is about to begin a proceeding related to a violation of a commercial motor vehicle safety or security regulation, standard or order;

(2) The employee is about to cooperate with a safety or security investigation by the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the National Transportation Safety Board; or

(3) The employee has furnished or is about to furnish information to the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, or any Federal, State, or local regulatory or law enforcement agency as to the facts relating to any accident or incident resulting in injury or death to an individual or damage to property occurring in connection with commercial motor vehicle transportation.

(f) For purposes of this section, an employee's apprehension of serious injury is reasonable only if a reasonable individual in the circumstances then confronting the employee would conclude that the hazardous safety or security condition establishes a real danger of accident, injury or serious impairment to health. To qualify for protection, the employee must have sought from the employer, and been unable to obtain, correction of the hazardous safety or security conditions.

§ 1978.103 Filing of retaliation complaints.

(a) *Who may file.* An employee who believes that he or she has been retaliated against by an employer in violation of STAA may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such retaliation.

(b) *Nature of Filing.* No particular form of complaint is required. A complaint may be filed orally or in writing. Oral complaints will be reduced to writing by OSHA. If an employee is unable to file a complaint in English, OSHA will accept the complaint in any language.

(c) *Place of Filing.* The complaint should be filed with the OSHA Area Director responsible for enforcement activities in the geographical area where the employee resides or was employed, but may be filed with any OSHA officer or employee. Addresses and telephone numbers for these officials are set forth in local directories and at the following Internet address: <http://www.osha.gov>.

(d) *Time for Filing.* Within 180 days after an alleged violation occurs, an employee who believes that he or she has been retaliated against in violation of STAA may file, or have filed by any person on his or her behalf, a complaint alleging such retaliation. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, e-mail communication, telephone call, hand-delivery, delivery to a third-party commercial carrier, or in-person filing at an OSHA office will be considered the date of filing. The time for filing a complaint may be tolled for reasons warranted by applicable case law.

(e) *Relationship to Section 11(c) complaints.* A complaint filed under STAA alleging facts that would also constitute a violation of Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 29 U.S.C. 660(c), will be deemed to be a complaint under both STAA and Section 11(c). Similarly, a complaint filed under Section 11(c) that alleges facts that would also constitute a violation of STAA will be deemed to be a complaint filed under both STAA and Section 11(c). Normal procedures and timeliness requirements under the respective statutes and regulations will be followed.

§ 1978.104 Investigation.

(a) Upon receipt of a complaint in the investigating office, the Assistant Secretary will notify the respondent of the filing of the complaint by providing the respondent (or the respondent's legal counsel if respondent is represented by counsel) with a copy of the complaint, redacted in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, *et seq.*, and other applicable confidentiality laws. The Assistant Secretary will also notify the respondent (or the respondent's legal counsel if respondent is represented by counsel) of the respondent's rights under paragraphs (b) and (f) of this section. The Assistant Secretary will provide a copy of the unredacted complaint to the complainant (or complainant's legal counsel, if complainant is represented by counsel) and to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

(b) Within 20 days of receipt of the notice of the filing of the complaint provided under paragraph (a) of this

section, the respondent may submit to the Assistant Secretary a written statement and any affidavits or documents substantiating its position. Within the same 20 days, the respondent may request a meeting with the Assistant Secretary to present its position.

(c) Throughout the investigation, the agency will provide to the complainant (or the complainant's legal counsel if complainant is represented by counsel) a copy of all of respondent's submissions to the agency that are responsive to the complainant's whistleblower complaint. Before providing such materials to the complainant, the agency will redact them in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, *et seq.*, and other applicable confidentiality laws.

(d) Investigations will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of any person who provides information on a confidential basis, other than the complainant, in accordance with part 70 of title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(e)(1) A complaint of alleged violation will be dismissed unless the complainant has made a prima facie showing that protected activity or, in circumstances covered by the Act, a perception of protected activity was a contributing factor in the adverse 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 make a prima facie showing as follows:

(i) The employee engaged in a protected activity or, in circumstances covered by the Act, was perceived to have engaged in a protected activity;

(ii) The respondent knew or suspected, actually or constructively, that the employee engaged in the protected activity, or, in circumstances covered by the Act, perceived the employee to have engaged in the protected activity;

(iii) The employee suffered an adverse action; and

(iv) The circumstances were sufficient to raise the inference that the protected activity or, in circumstances covered by the Act, the perception of protected activity, was a contributing factor in the adverse action.