

§ 404.260

SPECIAL MINIMUM PRIMARY INSURANCE AMOUNTS

§ 404.260 Special minimum primary insurance amounts.

Regardless of the method we use to compute your primary insurance amount, if the special minimum primary insurance amount described in § 404.261 is higher, then your benefits (and those of your dependents or survivors) will be based on the special minimum primary insurance amount. Special minimum primary insurance amounts are not based on a worker's average earnings, as are primary insurance amounts computed under other methods. Rather, the special minimum primary insurance amount is designed to provide higher benefits to people who worked for long periods in low-paid jobs covered by social security.

§ 404.261 Computing your special minimum primary insurance amount.

(a) *Years of coverage.* (1) The first step in computing your special minimum primary insurance amount is to find the number of your years of coverage, which is the sum of—

(i) The quotient found by dividing your total creditable social security earnings during the period 1937-1950 by \$900, disregarding any fractional remainder; plus

(ii) The number of your computation base years after 1950 in which your social security earnings were at least the amounts shown in appendix IV. (*Computation base years* mean the same here as in other computation methods discussed in this subpart.)

(2) You must have at least 11 years of coverage to qualify for a special minimum primary insurance amount computation. However, special minimum primary insurance amounts based on little more than 10 years of coverage are usually lower than the regular minimum benefit that was in effect before 1982 (see §§ 404.212(e) and 404.222(b) of this part). In any situation where your primary insurance amount computed under another method is higher, we use that higher amount.

(b) *Computing your special minimum primary insurance amount.* (1) First, we subtract 10 from your years of coverage

and multiply the remainder (at least 1 and no more than 20) by \$11.50;

(2) Then we increase the amount found in paragraph (b)(1) of this section by any automatic cost-of-living or *ad hoc* increases that have become effective since December 1978 to find your special minimum primary insurance amount. See appendix V for the applicable table, which includes the 9.9 percent cost-of-living increase that became effective June 1979, the 14.3 percent increase that became effective June 1980, and the 11.2 percent increase that became effective June 1981.

Example: Ms. F, who attained age 62 in January 1979, had \$10,000 in total social security earnings before 1951 and her post-1950 earnings are as follows:

| Year | Earnings |
|------|----------|
| 1951 | \$1,100 |
| 1952 | 950 |
| 1953 | 0 |
| 1954 | 1,000 |
| 1955 | 1,100 |
| 1956 | 1,200 |
| 1957 | 0 |
| 1958 | 1,300 |
| 1959 | 0 |
| 1960 | 1,300 |
| 1961 | 0 |
| 1962 | 1,400 |
| 1963 | 1,300 |
| 1964 | 0 |
| 1965 | 500 |
| 1966 | 700 |
| 1967 | 650 |
| 1968 | 900 |
| 1969 | 1,950 |
| 1970 | 2,100 |
| 1971 | 2,000 |
| 1972 | 1,500 |
| 1973 | 2,700 |
| 1974 | 2,100 |
| 1975 | 2,600 |
| 1976 | 3,850 |
| 1977 | 4,150 |
| 1978 | 0 |

Her primary insurance amount under the average-indexed-monthly-earnings method as of June 1981 is \$240.40 (based on average indexed monthly earnings of \$229). Her guaranteed-alternative primary insurance amount under the average-monthly-wage method as of June 1981 is \$255.80 (based on average monthly wages of \$131).

However, Ms. F has enough earnings before 1951 to allow her 11 years of coverage before 1951 (\$10,000÷\$900=11, plus a remainder, which we drop). She has sufficient earnings in 1951-52, 1954-56, 1958, 1960, 1962-63, 1969-71, 1973, and 1976-77 to have a year of coverage for each of

those years. She thus has 15 years of coverage after 1950 and a total of 26 years of coverage. We subtract 10 from her years of coverage, multiply the remainder (16) by \$11.50 and get \$184.00. We then apply the June 1979, June 1980, and June 1981 automatic cost-of-living increases (9.9 percent, 14.3 percent, and 11.2 percent, respectively) to that amount to find her special minimum primary insurance amount of \$202.30 effective June 1979, \$231.30 effective June 1980, and \$257.30 effective June 1981. (See appendices V and VI.) Since her special minimum primary insurance amount is higher than the primary insurance amounts computed for her under the other methods described in this subpart for which she is eligible, her benefits (and those of her family) are based on the special minimum primary insurance amount.

[47 FR 30734, July 15, 1982, as amended at 48 FR 46143, Oct. 11, 1983]

COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES

§ 404.270 Cost-of-living increases.

Your primary insurance amount may be automatically increased each December so it keeps up with rises in the cost of living. These automatic increases also apply to other benefit amounts, as described in § 404.271.

[47 FR 30734, July 15, 1982, as amended at 51 FR 12603, Apr. 14, 1986]

§ 404.271 When automatic cost-of-living increases apply.

Besides increases in the primary insurance amounts of current beneficiaries, automatic cost-of-living increases also apply to—

(a) The benefits of certain uninsured people age 72 and older (see § 404.380);

(b) The special minimum primary insurance amounts (described in §§ 404.260 through 404.261) of current and future beneficiaries;

(c) The primary insurance amounts of people who after 1978 become eligible for benefits or die before becoming eligible (beginning with December of the year they become eligible or die), although certain limitations are placed on the automatic adjustment of the frozen minimum primary insurance amount (as described in § 404.277); and

(d) The *maximum family benefit amounts* in column V of the benefit table in appendix III.

[47 FR 30734, July 15, 1982, as amended at 51 FR 12603, Apr. 14, 1986]

§ 404.272 Indexes we use to measure the rise in the cost-of-living.

(a) *The bases.* To measure increases in the cost-of-living for annual automatic increase purposes, we use either:

(1) The revised Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban wage earners and clerical workers as published by the Department of Labor, or

(2) The average wage index (AWI), which is the average of the annual total wages that we use to index (*i.e.*, update) a worker's past earnings when we compute his or her primary insurance amount (§ 404.211(c)).

(b) *Effect of the OASDI fund ratio.* Which of these indexes we use to measure increases in the cost-of-living depends on the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) fund ratio.

(c) *OASDI fund ratio for years after 1984.* For purposes of cost-of-living increases, the OASDI fund ratio is the ratio of the combined assets in the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund (see section 201 of the Social Security Act) on January 1 of a given year, to the estimated expenditures from the Funds in the same year. The January 1 balance consists of the assets (*i.e.*, government bonds and cash) in the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund, plus Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) and Self-Employment Contributions Act (SECA) taxes transferred to these trust funds on January 1 of the given year, minus the outstanding amounts (principal and interest) owed to the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund as a result of interfund loans. Estimated expenditures are amounts we expect to pay from the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and the Disability Insurance Trust Funds during the year, including the net amount that we pay into the Railroad Retirement Account, but excluding principal repayments and interest payments to the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund and transfer payments between the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and the Disability Insurance Trust Funds. The ratio as calculated under this rule is rounded to the nearest 0.1 percent.