

§ 1515.6

fee he or she is prepared to pay to acquire the information. (See also § 1515.11)

(5) The Freedom of Information Act does not require a government agency to create or research information; rather, it only requires that existing records be made available to the public.

§ 1515.6 CEQ's response to a request.

(a) Upon receipt of any written request for information or records, under the Act, the CEQ FOIA Officer or his or her designee, will make an initial determination on the request within 20 days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays and Federal holidays) from the date CEQ receives the request unless unusual or exceptional circumstances exist. The CEQ FOIA Officer will provide written notification of the determination, including, if applicable, notification that the request has been referred to another agency for consultation as set forth above in § 1515.5(b)(3). CEQ may make one request to the requester for information and toll the 20-day period while it is awaiting such information that it has reasonably requested from the requester. It may also toll the 20-day period if necessary to clarify with the requester issues regarding fee assessment. In either case, CEQ's receipt of the requester's response to its request for information or clarification ends the tolling period.

(b) Requests received by the CEQ FOIA Officer or his or her designee will be assigned an individualized tracking number if they will take more than 10 days to process. Requesters may call the FOIA Public Liaison at (202) 456-6224 and, using the tracking number, obtain information about the request, including the date on which CEQ originally received the request and an estimated date on which CEQ will complete action on the request.

(c) If it is appropriate to grant the request, a staff member will immediately collect the requested materials in order to accompany, wherever possible, the Freedom of Information Officer's letter conveying decision.

(d) If a request is denied in part or in full, the letter conveying the decision will be signed by the CEQ FOIA Officer, and will include: The reasons for any

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denial, including any FOIA exemption(s) applied by the FOIA Officer in denying the request; an estimate of the volume of records or information withheld, in number of pages or in some other reasonable form of estimation. This estimate does not need to be provided, if the volume is otherwise indicated through exemptions on records disclosed in part or, if providing an estimate would harm an interest protected by an applicable exemption; and the procedure for filing an appeal.

§ 1515.7 Expedited processing.

(a) Requests and appeals will be taken out of order and given expedited treatment whenever it is determined that they involve:

(1) Circumstances in which the lack of expedited treatment could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual; or

(2) An urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged Federal Government activity, if made by a person primarily engaged in disseminating information.

(b) A request for expedited processing may be made at the time of the initial request for records or at any later time.

(c) A requester who seeks expedited processing must submit a written statement, certified to be true and correct to the best of that person's knowledge and belief, explaining in detail the basis for requesting expedited processing. For example, a requester within the category described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, if not a full-time member of the news media, must establish that he or she is a person whose main professional activity or occupation is information dissemination, though it need not be his or her sole occupation. A requester within the category (a)(2) of this section must also establish a particular urgency to inform the public about the government activity involved in the request, beyond the public's right to know about government activity generally. Formal certification may be waived as a matter of administrative discretion.

(d) Within 10 days of its receipt of a request for expedited processing, the CEQ FOIA Officer will decide whether