

**PART 12—IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT
IN AGENCY PROCEEDINGS**

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AUTHORITY: Equal Access to Justice Act sec. 203(a)(1) (5 U.S.C. 504 (c)(1)).

SOURCE: 59 FR 23121, May 5, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General Provisions

§ 12.101 Purpose.

The purpose of this part is to state the regulatory requirements for award of attorney fees to eligible individuals and entities in certain administrative proceedings before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in implementation of the Equal Access to Justice Act, 5 U.S.C. 504 (EAJA), which provides for the award of attorney fees and other expenses to parties to “adversary adjudications”, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 504(b)(1)(C). In general, an “adversary adjudication” is an adjudication that is required by statute to be determined on the record after opportunity for

hearing before an agency of the United States and in which the position of the agency, or any component of the agency, is presented by an attorney or other representative who enters an appearance and participates in the proceeding. However, some agency adjudications are expressly excluded from coverage by 5 U.S.C. 504 (e.g., an adjudication for the purpose of granting or renewing a license) even though they fall within this general definition, and certain appeals before an agency board of contract appeals and Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act hearings conducted under 31 U.S.C. ch. 38 are expressly covered.

An eligible party may receive an award in an adversary adjudication when the party prevails over the Commission, unless the Commission’s position was substantially justified or special circumstances make an award unjust. The regulations in this part describe the parties eligible for awards and the proceedings that are covered. They also explain how to apply for awards, and the procedures and standards that the Commission will use to make them.

§ 12.102 When the EAJA applies.

The EAJA applies to any covered adversary adjudication pending or commenced before the Commission on or after August 5, 1985.

§ 12.103 Proceedings covered.

(a) The EAJA applies to the following proceedings:

(1) Hearings under the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act (31 U.S.C. 3801–12);

(2) Any appeal of a decision made pursuant to section 6 of the Contract Disputes Act of 1978 (41 U.S.C. 605) before an agency board of contract appeals as provided in section 8 of that Act (41 U.S.C. 607); and

(3) Adversary adjudications conducted by the Commission pursuant to any other statutory provision that requires a proceeding before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to be so conducted as to fall within the meaning of “adversary adjudication” under 5 U.S.C. 504(b)(1)(C).

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(b) The Commission's failure to identify a type of proceeding as an adversary adjudication shall not preclude the filing of an application by a party who believes the proceeding is covered by the EAJA. Whether the proceeding is covered will then be an issue for resolution in proceedings on the application.

(c) If a proceeding includes both matters covered by the EAJA and matters specifically excluded from coverage, any award made will include only fees and expenses related to covered issues.

§ 12.104 Eligibility of applicants.

(a) To be eligible for an award of attorney fees and other expenses under the EAJA, the applicant must be a party to the adversary adjudication for which it seeks an award. The term "party" is defined in 5 U.S.C. 551(3). The applicant must show that it meets all conditions of eligibility set out in this subpart and in subpart B.

(b) The types of eligible applicants are as follows:

(1) An individual with a net worth of not more than \$2 million;

(2) The sole owner of an unincorporated business who has a net worth of not more than \$7 million, including both personal and business interests, and not more than 500 employees;

(3) A charitable or other tax-exempt organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)) with not more than 500 employees;

(4) A cooperative association as defined in section 15(a) of the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(a)) with not more than 500 employees; and

(5) Any other partnership, corporation, association, unit of local government, or organization with a net worth of not more than \$7 million and not more than 500 employees.

(c) For the purpose of eligibility, the net worth and number of employees of an applicant shall be determined as of the date the proceeding was initiated.

(d) An applicant who owns an unincorporated business will be considered as an "individual" rather than a "sole owner of an unincorporated business" if the issues on which the applicant prevails are related primarily to per-

sonal interests rather than to business interests.

(e) The employees of an applicant include all persons who regularly perform services for remuneration for the applicant, under the applicant's direction and control. Part-time employees shall be included on a proportional basis.

(f) The net worth and number of employees of the applicant and all of its affiliates shall be aggregated to determine eligibility. Any individual, corporation, or other entity that directly or indirectly controls or owns a majority of the voting shares or other interests of the applicant, or any corporation or other entity of which the applicant directly or indirectly owns or controls a majority of the voting shares or other interest, will be considered an affiliate for purposes of this part, unless the adjudicative officer determines that such treatment would be unjust and contrary to the purposes of the Act in light of the actual relationship between the affiliated entities. In addition, the adjudicative officer may determine that financial relationships of the applicant other than those described in this paragraph constitute special circumstances that would make an award unjust.

(g) An applicant that participates in a proceeding primarily on behalf of one or more other persons or entities that would be ineligible is not itself eligible for an award.

§ 12.105 Standards for awards.

(a) A prevailing applicant may receive an award for fees and expenses incurred in connection with a proceeding or a significant and discrete substantive portion of the proceeding, unless the position of the Commission over which the applicant has prevailed was substantially justified. The position of the Commission includes, in addition to the position taken by the Commission in the adversary adjudication, the action or failure to act by the Commission upon which the adversary adjudication is based. The burden of proof that an award should not be made to a prevailing applicant because the Commission's position was substantially justified is on the Commission counsel.

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(b) An award will be reduced or denied if the applicant has unduly or unreasonably protracted the proceeding or if special circumstances make the award sought unjust.

§ 12.106 Allowable fees and expenses.

(a) Awards will be based on rates customarily charged by persons engaged in the business of acting as attorneys, agents, and expert witnesses, even if the services were made available without charge or at reduced rate to the applicant.

(b) No award for the fee of an attorney or agent under this part may exceed \$75.00 per hour. No award to compensate an expert witness may exceed the highest rate at which the Commission pays expert witnesses. However, an award may also include the reasonable expenses of the attorney, agent, or witness as a separate item, if the attorney, agent, or witness ordinarily charges clients separately for these expenses.

(c) In determining the reasonableness of the fee sought for an attorney, agent, or expert witness, the adjudicative officer shall consider the following:

(1) If the attorney, agent, or witness is in private practice, his or her customary fees for similar services, or, if an employee of the applicant, the fully allocated costs of the services;

(2) The prevailing rate for similar services in the community in which the attorney, agent, or witness ordinarily performs services;

(3) The time actually spent in the representation of the applicant;

(4) The time reasonably spent in light of the difficulty or complexity of the issues in the proceeding; and

(5) Other factors that bear on the value of the services provided.

(d) The reasonable cost of any study, analysis, engineering report, test, project, or similar matter prepared on behalf of a party may be awarded, to the extent that the charge for the services does not exceed the prevailing rate for similar services, and the study or other matter was necessary for preparation of applicant's case.

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§ 12.107 Rulemaking on maximum rates for attorney fees.

(a) If warranted by an increase in the cost of living or by special circumstances (such as limited availability of attorneys qualified to handle certain types of proceedings), the Commission may adopt regulations providing that attorney fees may be awarded at a rate higher than \$75 per hour in some, or all of the types of proceedings covered by this part. The Commission will conduct any rulemaking proceedings for this purpose under the informal rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act.

(b) Any person may file with the Commission a petition for rulemaking to increase the maximum rate for attorney fees, in accordance with the requirements of 10 CFR 2.802. The petitioner should identify the rate the petitioner believes the Commission should establish and the types of proceedings in which the rate should be used. It should also explain fully the reasons why the higher rate is warranted. Within 90 days after the petition is filed, the Commission will determine whether it will initiate a rulemaking proceeding, deny the petition, or take other appropriate action on the petition. The Commission will act on the petition in accordance with 10 CFR 2.803.

§ 12.108 Awards against other agencies.

If an applicant is entitled to an award because it prevails over another agency of the United States that participates in a proceeding before the Commission and takes a position that is not substantially justified, the award or an appropriate portion of the award shall be made against that agency.

§ 12.109 Decisionmaking authority.

Unless otherwise ordered by the Commission in a particular proceeding, each application under this part shall be assigned for decision to the official or decisionmaking body that entered the decision in the adversary adjudication. That official or decisionmaking body is referred to in this part as the "adjudicative officer."

Subpart B—Information Required From Applicants**§ 12.201 Contents of application.**

(a) An application for an award of fees and expenses under the EAJA shall identify the applicant and the proceeding for which an award is sought. The application shall show that the applicant has prevailed and identify the position of the Commission or other agency that the applicant alleges was not substantially justified. Unless the applicant is an individual, the application shall also state the number of employees of the applicant and describe briefly the type and purpose of its organization or business.

(b) The application shall also include a statement that the applicant's net worth does not exceed \$2 million (if an individual) or \$7 million (for all other applicants, including their affiliates). However, an applicant may omit this statement if:

(1) The applicant attaches a copy of a ruling by the Internal Revenue Service that it qualifies as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)) or, in the case of a tax-exempt organization not required to obtain a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service on its exempt status, a statement that describes the basis for the applicant's belief that it qualifies under this section; or

(2) The applicant states that it is a cooperative association as defined in section 15(a) of the Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U.S.C. 1141j(a)).

(c) The application shall state the amount of fees and expenses for which an award is sought.

(d) The application may also include any other matters that the applicant wishes the Commission to consider in determining whether, and in what amount, an award should be made.

(e) The application shall be signed by the applicant or an authorized officer or attorney of the applicant. It shall also contain or be accompanied by a written verification under oath or under penalty of perjury that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

§ 12.202 Net worth exhibit.

(a) Each applicant, except a qualified tax-exempt organization or cooperative association must provide with its application a detailed exhibit showing the net worth of the applicant and any affiliates (as defined in §12.104(f) of this part) when the proceeding was initiated. The exhibit may be in any form convenient to the applicant that provides full disclosure of the applicant's and its affiliates' assets and liabilities and is sufficient to determine whether the applicant qualifies under the standards in this part. The adjudicative officer may require an applicant to file additional information to determine its eligibility for an award.

(b) Ordinarily, the net worth exhibit will be included in the public record of the proceeding. However, an applicant that objects to public disclosure of information in any portion of the exhibit and believes there are legal grounds for withholding it from disclosure may submit that portion of the exhibit directly to the adjudicative officer in a sealed envelope labeled "Confidential Financial Information," accompanied by a motion to withhold the information from public disclosure. The motion shall describe the information sought to be withheld and explain, in detail, why it falls within one or more of the specific exemptions from mandatory disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(1)–(9), why public disclosure of the information would adversely affect the applicant, and why disclosure is not required in the public interest. The material in question shall be served on counsel representing the agency against which the applicant seeks an award, but need not be served on any other party to the proceeding. If the adjudicative officer finds that the information should not be withheld from disclosure, it shall be placed in the public record of the proceeding. Otherwise, any request to inspect or copy the exhibit shall be disposed of in accordance with the Commission's established procedures under the Freedom of Information Act, 10 CFR part 9, subpart A.

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§ 12.203 Documentation of fees and expenses.

The application shall be accompanied by full documentation of the fees and expenses, including the cost of any study, analysis, engineering report, test, project, or similar matter for which an award is sought. A separate itemized statement shall be submitted for each professional firm or individual whose services are covered by the application, showing the hours spent in connection with the proceeding by each individual, a description of the specific services performed, the rates at which each fee has been computed, any expenses for which reimbursement is sought, the total amount claimed, and the total amount paid or payable by the applicant or by any other person or entity for the services provided. The adjudicative officer may require the applicant to provide vouchers, receipts, logs, or other substantiation for any fees or expenses claimed, pursuant to § 12.306 of this part.

§ 12.204 When an application may be filed.

(a) An application may be filed whenever the applicant has prevailed in the proceeding or in a significant and discrete substantive portion of the proceeding, but in no case later than 30 days after the date on which a decision or order disposing of the merits of the proceeding or any other complete resolution of the proceeding, such as a settlement or voluntary dismissal, becomes final and unappealable, both within the NRC and to the courts.

(b) If after the filing of an application for an award, review or reconsideration is sought or taken of a decision as to which an applicant believes it has prevailed, proceedings for the award of fees shall be stayed pending final disposition of the underlying controversy. When the United States appeals the underlying merits of an adversary adjudication to a court, no decision on an application for fees and other expenses in connection with that adversary adjudication shall be made until a final and unreviewable decision is rendered by the court on the appeal or until the underlying merits of the case have been finally determined pursuant to the appeal.

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Subpart C—Procedures for Considering Applications

§ 12.301 Filing and service of documents.

Any application for an award or other pleading or document related to an application shall be filed and served on all parties to the proceeding in the same manner as other pleadings in the proceeding, except as provided in § 12.202(b) for confidential financial information.

§ 12.302 Answer to application.

(a) Within 30 days after service of an application, counsel representing the NRC against which an award is sought may file an answer to the application. Unless the NRC counsel requests an extension of time for filing or files a statement of intent to negotiate under paragraph (b) of this section, failure to file an answer within the 30-day period may be treated as a consent to the award requested.

(b) If the NRC counsel and the applicant believe that the issues in the fee application can be settled, they may jointly file a statement of their intent to negotiate a settlement. The filing of this statement shall extend the time for filing an answer for an additional 30 days, and further extensions may be granted by the adjudicative officer upon request by the NRC counsel and the applicant.

(c) The answer shall explain in detail any objections to the award requested and identify the facts relied on in support of the NRC counsel's position. If the answer is based on any alleged facts not already in the record of the proceeding, the NRC counsel shall include with the answer either supporting affidavits or a request for further proceedings under § 12.306.

§ 12.303 Reply.

Within 15 days after service of an answer, the applicant may file a reply. If the reply is based on any alleged facts not already in the record of the proceeding, the applicant shall include with the reply either supporting affidavits or a request for further proceedings under § 12.306.

§ 12.304 Comments by other parties.

Any party to a proceeding other than the applicant and the NRC counsel may file comments on an application within 30 days after it is served, or on an answer within 15 days after it is served. A commenting party may not participate further in proceedings on the application unless the adjudicative officer determines that the public interest requires participation in order to permit full exploration of matters raised in the comments.

§ 12.305 Settlement.

The applicant and the NRC counsel may agree on a proposed settlement of the award before final action on the application, either in connection with a settlement of the underlying proceeding, or after the underlying proceeding has been concluded, in accordance with the NRC's standard settlement procedure. If a prevailing party and the NRC's counsel agree on a proposed settlement of an award before an application has been filed, the application shall be filed with the proposed settlement.

§ 12.306 Further proceedings.

(a) Ordinarily, the determination of an award will be made on the basis of the written record. However, on request of either the applicant or the NRC counsel, or on the adjudicative officer's own initiative, the adjudicative officer may order further proceedings, such as an informal conference, oral argument, additional written submissions or, as to issues other than substantial justification (such as the applicant's eligibility or substantiation of fees and expenses), pertinent discovery or an evidentiary hearing. Further proceedings shall be held only when necessary for full and fair resolution of the issues arising from the application, and shall be conducted as promptly as possible. Whether or not the position of the agency was substantially justified shall be determined on the basis of the administrative record, as a whole, which is made in the adversary adjudication for which fees and other expenses are sought.

(b) A request that the adjudicative officer order further proceedings under this section shall specifically identify

the information sought or the disputed issues and shall explain why the additional proceedings are necessary to resolve the issues.

§ 12.307 Decision.

(a) The adjudicative officer shall issue an initial decision on the application within 90 days after completion of proceedings on the application. If the adjudicative officer fails to issue an initial decision within 90 days, he or she shall notify the parties of the reason for the delay and shall set a new deadline.

(b) The initial decision shall include written findings and conclusions on the applicant's eligibility and status as a prevailing party, and an explanation of the reasons for any difference between the amount requested and the amount awarded. The decision shall also include, if at issue, findings on whether the NRC's position was substantially justified, whether the applicant unduly protracted the proceedings, or whether special circumstances make an award unjust. If the applicant has sought an award against more than one agency, the decision shall allocate responsibility for payment of any award made among the agencies, and shall explain the reasons for the allocation made.

§ 12.308 Agency review.

(a) Either the applicant or the NRC counsel may seek review of the initial decision on the fee application, or the Commission may decide to review the decision on its own initiative, in accordance with the Commission's review procedures set out in 10 CFR 2.341. The filing of a petition for review is mandatory for a party to exhaust its administrative remedies before seeking judicial review. If neither the applicant nor NRC counsel seeks review and the Commission does not take review on its own initiative, the initial decision on the application shall become a final decision of the NRC 120 days after it is issued.

(b) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any other part of the Commission's regulations, the initial decision shall be inoperative (*i.e.*, the decision shall not be final and any award made shall not be paid) until the later of—

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(1) The expiration of the 120 day period provided in paragraph (a) of this section; or

(2) If within the 120 day period provided in paragraph (a) of this section the Commission elects to review the decision, the Commission's issuance of a final decision on review of the initial decision.

(c) Whether to review a decision on its own motion is a matter within the discretion of the Commission. If review is taken, the Commission will issue a final decision on the application or remand the application to the adjudicative officer for further proceedings.

[59 FR 23121, May 5, 1994, as amended at 77 FR 46599, Aug. 3, 2012]

§ 12.309 Judicial review.

Judicial review of final agency decisions on awards may be sought as provided in 5 U.S.C. 504(c)(2).

§ 12.310 Payment of award.

An applicant seeking payment of an award shall submit to the appropriate official of the paying agency a copy of the Commission's final decision granting the award, accompanied by a certification that the applicant will not seek review of the decision in the United States courts. Where the award is granted against the Commission, the applicant shall make the submission to the Director, Division of Accounting and Finance, Office of the Controller, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555. The NRC will pay the amount awarded to the applicant within 60 days.

PART 13—PROGRAM FRAUD CIVIL REMEDIES

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AUTHORITY: Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1986, secs. 6101–6104 (31 U.S.C. 3801–3812); Government Paperwork Elimination Act sec. 1704 (44 U.S.C. 3504 note). Sections 13.13(a) and (b) also issued under Pub. L. 101–410, as amended by section 31001(s), Pub. L. 104–134, (28 U.S.C. 2461 note).

SOURCE: 56 FR 47135, Sept. 18, 1991, unless otherwise noted.

§ 13.1 Basis and purpose.

(a) *Basis.* This part implements the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986, Public Law No. 99–509, §§ 6101–6104, 100 Stat. 1874 (October 21, 1986) (31 U.S.C. 3801–3812). 31 U.S.C. 3809 requires each authority head to promulgate regulations necessary to implement the provisions of that Act.

(b) *Purpose.* This part (1) establishes administrative procedures for imposing civil penalties and assessments against persons who make, submit, or present,