

## Small Business Administration

## § 142.13

usual dwelling place, principal office or place of business; or by

(2) Personal delivery by anyone 18 years of age or older.

(c) The date of service is the date of personal delivery or, in the case of service by registered or certified mail, the date of postmark.

(d) Proof of service—

(1) When service is made by registered or certified mail, the return postal receipt will serve as proof of service.

(2) When service is made by personal delivery, an affidavit of the individual serving the complaint, or written acknowledgment of receipt by the defendant or a representative, will serve as proof of service.

(e) When served with the complaint, the defendant also should be served with a copy of this part 142 and 31 U.S.C. 3801-3812.

### PROCEDURES FOLLOWING SERVICE OF A COMPLAINT

#### § 142.12 How does a defendant respond to the complaint?

(a) A defendant may file an answer with the reviewing official and the Office of Hearings and Appeals within 30 days of service of the complaint. An answer will be considered a request for an oral hearing.

(b) In the answer, a defendant—

(1) Must admit or deny each of the allegations of liability contained in the complaint (a failure to deny an allegation is considered an admission);

(2) Must state any defense on which the defendant intends to rely;

(3) May state any reasons why he or she believes the penalties, assessments, or both should be less than the statutory maximum; and

(4) Must state the name, address, and telephone number of the person authorized by the defendant to act as defendant's representative, if any.

(c) If the defendant is unable to file an answer which meets the requirements set forth in paragraph (b) of this section, the defendant may file with the reviewing official a general answer denying liability, requesting a hearing, and requesting an extension of time in which to file a complete answer. A general answer must be filed within 30 days of service of the complaint.

(d) If the defendant initially files a general answer requesting an extension of time, the reviewing official must promptly file with the ALJ the complaint, the general answer, and the request for an extension of time.

(e) For good cause shown, the ALJ may grant the defendant up to 30 additional days within which to file an answer meeting the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section. Such answer must be filed with OHA and a copy must be served on the reviewing official.

#### § 142.13 What happens if a defendant fails to file an answer?

(a) If a defendant does not file an answer within 30 days after service of the complaint, the reviewing official will refer the complaint to the ALJ.

(b) Once the complaint is referred, the ALJ will promptly serve on the defendant a notice that an initial decision will be issued.

(c) The ALJ will assume the facts alleged in the complaint to be true and, if such facts establish liability under the statute, the ALJ will issue an initial decision imposing the maximum amount of penalties and assessments allowed under the statute.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this section, when a defendant fails to file a timely answer, the defendant waives any right to further review of the penalties and assessments imposed in the initial decision.

(e) The initial decision becomes final 30 days after it is issued.

(f) If, at any time before an initial decision becomes final, a defendant files a motion with the ALJ asking that the case be reopened and describing the extraordinary circumstances that prevented the defendant from filing an answer, the initial decision will be stayed until the ALJ makes a decision on the motion. The reviewing official may respond to the motion.

(g) If, in his motion to reopen, a defendant demonstrates extraordinary circumstances excusing his failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ will withdraw the initial decision, and grant the defendant an opportunity to answer the complaint.

(h) A decision by the ALJ to deny a defendant's motion to reopen a case is

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not subject to review or reconsideration.

### § 142.14 What happens once an answer is filed?

(a) When the reviewing official receives an answer, he must file concurrently, the complaint and the answer with the ALJ, along with a designation of an SBA representative.

(b) When the ALJ receives the complaint and the answer, the ALJ will promptly serve a notice of oral hearing upon the defendant and the representative for SBA, in the same manner as the complaint, service of which is described in §142.11. The notice of oral hearing must be served within six years of the date on which the claim or statement is made.

(c) The notice must include:

(1) The tentative time, place and nature of the hearing;

(2) The legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) The matters of fact and law to be asserted;

(4) A description of the procedures for the conduct of the hearing;

(5) The name, address, and telephone number of the defendant's representative and the representative for SBA; and

(6) Such other matters as the ALJ deems appropriate.

## HEARING PROVISIONS

### § 142.15 What kind of hearing is contemplated?

The hearing is a formal proceeding conducted by the ALJ during which a defendant will have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, present testimony, and dispute liability.

### § 142.16 At the hearing, what rights do the parties have?

(a) The parties to the hearing shall be the defendant and SBA. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3730(c)(5), a private plaintiff in an action under the False Claims Act may participate in the hearing to the extent authorized by the provisions of that Act.

(b) Each party has the right to:

(1) Be represented by a representative;

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(2) Request a pre-hearing conference and participate in any conference held by the ALJ;

(3) Conduct discovery;

(4) Agree to stipulations of fact or law which will be made a part of the record;

(5) Present evidence relevant to the issues at the hearing;

(6) Present and cross-examine witnesses;

(7) Present arguments at the hearing as permitted by the ALJ; and

(8) Submit written briefs and proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law after the hearing, as permitted by the ALJ.

### § 142.17 What is the role of the ALJ?

An ALJ from OHA serves as the Presiding Officer at all hearings, with authority as set forth in §134.218(b) of this chapter.

### § 142.18 Can the reviewing official or ALJ be disqualified?

(a) A reviewing official or an ALJ may disqualify himself or herself at any time.

(b) Upon motion of any party, the reviewing official or ALJ may be disqualified as follows:

(1) The motion must be supported by an affidavit containing specific facts establishing that personal bias or other reason for disqualification exists, including the time and circumstances of the discovery of such facts;

(2) The motion must be filed promptly after discovery of the grounds for disqualification, or the objection will be deemed waived; and

(3) The party, or representative of record, must certify in writing that the motion is made in good faith.

(c) Once a motion has been filed to disqualify the reviewing official, the ALJ will halt the proceedings until resolving the matter of disqualification. If the ALJ determines that the reviewing official is disqualified, the ALJ will dismiss the complaint without prejudice. If the ALJ disqualifies himself or herself, the case will be promptly reassigned to another ALJ.