

## § 700.245

(f) *Filing of denials.* Copies of all replies denying, in whole or part, a request for a record which are issued under this section of §700.243 shall be promptly submitted by the Freedom of Information Act Officer, denials to the Executive Director and the Commission's legal counsel.

### § 700.245 Time limits on processing of initial requests.

(a) *Basic limit.* Requests for records shall be processed promptly. A determination whether to grant or deny a request shall be made within no more than ten (10) days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after receipt of a request. This determination shall be communicated immediately to the requester.

(b) *Running of basic time limit.* For purposes of paragraph (a) of this section, the time limit commences to run when a request is received at the Commission's office in Flagstaff, Arizona.

(c) *Extensions of time.* In the following unusual circumstances, the time limit for acting upon an initial request may be extended to the extent reasonably necessary to the proper processing of the particular request, but in no case may the time limit be extended for more than ten (10) working days:

(1) The need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

(2) The need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request; or

(3) The need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the agency having substantial subject-matter interest therein.

(d) *Authority to make extensions.* (1) An extension of time under paragraph (c) of this section may be made only by the Freedom of Information Act Officer or such higher authority as the Commission has in writing designated.

(2) The person requesting the records shall be notified in writing of the ex-

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tension. The written notice shall state the reason for the extension and the date on which a determination on the request is expected to be dispatched.

(3) The Freedom of Information Act Officer shall be responsible for promptly furnishing copies of such notices to the Executive Director and the Commission's legal counsel.

(e) *Treatment of delay as denial.* (1) If no determination has been reached at the end of the ten (10) day period for deciding an initial request, or the last extension thereof, the requester may deem his request denied and may exercise a right of appeal in accordance with the provisions of §700.247.

(2) When no determination can be reached within the applicable time limit, the responsible official shall nevertheless continue to process the request. On expiration of the time limit, the responsible official shall inform the requester of the reason for the delay, of the date on which a determination may be expected to be dispatched, and of his right to treat the delay as a denial for purposes of appeal to the Commission in accordance with §700.247. The requester may be asked to consider delaying use of his right to appeal until the date on which the determination is expected to be dispatched. If the requester so agrees, he is deemed not to have treated the failure to respond within the applicable time limit as a denial for purposes of the running of the twenty (20) working-day appeal period set out in §700.247. If a determination of the request is not issued by the new agreed upon date, or if the request is denied in whole or part, the requester will have available his full right of appeal under §700.247, including the entire twenty (20) working-day period for filing of the appeal.

### § 700.247 Appeals.

(a) *Right of appeal.* Where a request for records has been denied, in whole or part, the person submitting the request may appeal the denial to the Commission.

(b) *Time for appeal.* An appeal must be received no later than twenty (20) days (Saturdays, Sundays, and public legal holidays excepted) after the date of the initial denial, in the case of a denial of an entire request, or twenty (20) days

(Saturdays, Sundays, and public legal holidays excepted) after records have been made available, in the case of a partial denial.

(c) *Form of appeal.* (1) An appeal shall be initiated by filing a written notice of appeal. The notice shall be accompanied by copies of the original request and the initial denial and should, in order to expedite the appellate process and give the requester an opportunity to present his arguments, contain a brief statement of the reasons why the requester believes the initial denial to have been in error.

(2) The appeal shall be addressed to Freedom of Information Act Officer, Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation Commission, P.O. Box KK, Flagstaff, Arizona 86002.

(3)(i) Both the envelope containing the notice of appeal and the face of the notice shall bear the legend "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL". The failure of an appeal to bear such a legend will not disqualify an appeal from processing under §2.18 if the appeal otherwise meets the requirements of this section. An appeal not bearing the legend "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL" will not, however, be deemed to have been received for purposes of the running of the time limit set out in §700.249 until it has been identified by Commission personnel as a Freedom of Information appeal and marked by them with this legend.

(ii) Commission personnel identifying a communication from the public not bearing the legend "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL" as an appeal otherwise meeting the requirements of this section shall immediately (A) mark the communication with the legend "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL," (B) date the appeal to reflect the date on which it was identified, and (C) take steps to assure proper processing of the appeal under the procedures in this subpart.

(4) The Freedom of Information Act Officer shall be responsible for promptly furnishing copies of such notices to the Executive Director and the Commission's legal counsel.

#### § 700.249 Action on appeals.

(a) *Authority.* Appeals from initial denials of requests for records shall be de-

ecided for the Commission by the Executive Director after consultation with the Commission's legal counsel.

(b) *Time limit.* A final determination on any appeal shall be made within twenty (20) days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and public legal holidays) after receipt of the appeal.

(c) *Extensions of time.* (1) If the time limit for responding to the initial request for a record was not extended under the provisions of §700.245 or was extended for fewer than ten (10) working days, the time for processing of the appeal may be extended by the Executive Director to the extent reasonably necessary to the proper processing of the appeal, but in no event may the extension, when taken together with any extension made during processing of the initial request, result in an aggregate extension with respect to any one request of more than ten (10) working days. The time for processing of an appeal may be extended only if one or more of the unusual circumstances listed in §700.245(c) requires an extension.

(2) The Executive Director shall, in writing, advise the appellant of the reasons for the extension and the date on which a final determination of the appeal is expected to be dispatched.

(3) If no determination on the appeal has been reached at the end of the twenty (20) working-day period for deciding an appeal, or the last extension thereof, the requester is deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies, giving rise to a right of review in a district court of the United States as specified in 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4). When no determination can be reached within the applicable time limit, the appeal will nevertheless continue to be processed. On expiration of the time limit, the requester shall be informed of the reason for the delay, of the date on which a determination may be expected to be dispatched, and of his right to seek judicial review. The requester may be asked to consider delaying resort to his right to judicial review until the date on which the determination on his appeal is expected to be dispatched.