

§ 1.4

U.S.C. 552(a)(2) and § 1.4 to be made available for public inspection and copying.

(b) Information regarding the publication and distribution (by sale or otherwise) of indexes and supplements to indexes that are maintained in accordance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2) and § 1.4(c);

(c) The title and mailing address of the official or officials of the agency authorized to receive requests for records submitted in accordance with § 1.5(a), and to make determinations regarding whether to grant or deny such requests. Authority to make such determinations includes authority to:

(1) Extend the 20 working day administrative deadline for reply pursuant to § 1.16;

(2) Make discretionary releases pursuant to § 1.19(b);

(3) Make determinations regarding the charging of fees pursuant to appendix A to this subpart;

(d) The title and mailing address of the agency official who is authorized to receive appeals submitted in accordance with § 1.14 and to make determinations regarding whether to grant or deny such appeals. Authority to determine appeals includes authority to:

(1) Extend the 20 working day administrative deadline for reply pursuant to § 1.16 (to the extent the maximum extension authorized by § 1.16(c) was not used with regard to the initial request;

(2) Make discretionary releases pursuant to § 1.19(b);

(3) Make determinations regarding the charging of fees pursuant to appendix A to this subpart; and

(e) Other information which would be of concern to a person wishing to request records from that agency in accordance with this subpart.

[65 FR 46337, July 28, 2000]

§ 1.4 Public access to certain materials.

(a) In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2), each agency within the Department shall make the following materials available for public inspection and copying (unless they are promptly published and copies offered for sale):

(1) Final opinions, including concurring and dissenting opinions, as well as

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orders, made in the adjudication of cases;

(2) Those statements of policy and interpretation which have been adopted by the agency and are not published in the FEDERAL REGISTER;

(3) Administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that affect a member of the public;

(4) Copies of all records, regardless of form or format, which have been released pursuant to a FOIA request under 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(3), and which because of the nature of their subject matter, have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records. Agencies shall decide on a case by case basis whether records fall into this category, based on the following factors:

(i) Previous experience with similar records;

(ii) The particular characteristics of the records involved, including their nature and the type of information contained in them; and

(iii) The identity and number of requesters and whether there is widespread media, historical, academic, or commercial interest in the records.

(5) A general index of the records referred to in paragraph (a)(4) of this section.

(b) Records encompassed within paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(5) of this section created on or after November 1, 1996, shall be made available to the public by computer telecommunications or, if computer telecommunications means have not been established by the agency, by other electronic means.

(c) Each agency of the Department shall maintain and make available for public inspection and copying current indexes providing identifying information regarding any matter issued, adopted or promulgated after July 4, 1967, and required by paragraph (a) of this section to be made available or published. Each agency shall publish and make available for distribution copies of such indexes and supplements to such indexes at least quarterly, unless it determines by notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER that publication would be unnecessary and impracticable. After issuance of such notice,

each agency shall provide copies of any index upon request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication.

(d) Each agency is responsible for preparing reference material or a guide for requesting records or information from that agency. This guide shall also include an index of all major information systems, and a description of major information and record locator systems.

(e) Each agency shall also prepare a handbook for obtaining information from that agency. The handbook should be a short, simple explanation to the public of what the FOIA is designed to do, and how a member of the public can use it to access government records. The handbook should be available on paper and through electronic means, and it should identify how a requester can access agency Freedom of Information Act annual reports. Similarly, the annual reports should refer to the handbook and how to obtain it.

(f) It is appropriate to make frequently requested records available in accordance with paragraph (a)(4) of this section in situations where public access in a timely manner is important, and it is not intended to apply where there may be a limited number of requests over a short period of time from a few requesters. Agencies may remove a record from this access medium when the appropriate official determines that it is unlikely there will be substantial further requests for that document.

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§ 1.5 Requests for records.

(a) Any person who wishes to inspect or obtain copies of any record of any agency of the Department shall submit a request in writing and address the request to the official designated in regulations promulgated by that agency. The requester may ask for a fee waiver. All such requests for records shall be deemed to have been made pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, regardless of whether the request specifically mentions the Freedom of Information Act. To facilitate processing of a request, the requester should place the phrase "FOIA REQUEST" in capital letters on the front of the envelope

or on the cover sheet of the facsimile transmittal.

(b) A request must reasonably describe the records to enable agency personnel to locate them with reasonable effort. Where possible, a requester should supply specific information regarding dates, titles, names of individuals, names of offices, and names of agencies or other organizations that may help identify the records. If the request relates to a matter in pending litigation, the requester should identify the court and its location.

(c) If an agency determines that a request does not reasonably describe the records, the agency shall inform the requester of this fact and extend the requester an opportunity to clarify the request or to confer promptly with knowledgeable agency personnel to attempt to identify the records the requester is seeking. The "date of receipt" in such instances, for purposes of § 1.13, shall be the date of receipt of the amended or clarified request.

(d) If a request for records or a fee waiver made under this subpart is denied, the requester shall have the right to appeal the denial. Requesters also may appeal agency determinations of a requester's status for purposes of fee levels under sec. 5 of appendix A to this subpart. All appeals must be in writing and addressed to the official designated in regulations promulgated by the agency which denied the request. To facilitate processing of an appeal, the requester should place the phrase "FOIA APPEAL" in capital letters on the front of the envelope or on the cover sheet of the fax transmittal.

(e) Requests that are not addressed to a specific agency in USDA, or which pertain to more than one USDA agency, or which are sent to the wrong agency of USDA, should be forwarded to the Department's FOIA Officer in the Office of Communications, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

(f) The Department FOIA Officer will determine which agency or agencies should process the request, and, where necessary, refer the request to the appropriate agency or agencies. The Department FOIA Officer will also notify the requester of the referral and of the