

(e)(2)(i) of this section concerning related fringe benefit programs. Thus, both the 20 percent merchandise discount and the 15 percent cash bonus provided to the highly compensated employees are includible in such employees' gross incomes.

(f) *Highly compensated employee*—(1) *Government and nongovernment employees.* A highly compensated employee of any employer is any employee who, during the year or the preceding year—

- (i) Was a 5-percent owner,
- (ii) Received compensation from the employer in excess of \$75,000,
- (iii) Received compensation from the employer in excess of \$50,000 and was in the top-paid group of employees for such year, or
- (iv) Was at any time an officer and received compensation greater than 150 percent of the amount in effect under section 415(c)(1)(A) for such year.

For purposes of determining whether an employee is a highly compensated employee, the rules of sections 414 (q), (s), and (t) apply.

(2) *Former employees.* A former employee shall be treated as a highly compensated employee if—

- (i) The employee was a highly compensated employee when the employee separated from service, or
- (ii) The employee was a highly compensated employee at any time after attaining age 55.

[T.D. 8256, 54 FR 28618, July 6, 1989]

**§ 1.132-8T Nondiscrimination rules—1985 through 1988 (temporary).**

(a) *Application of nondiscrimination rules*—(1) *General rule.* To qualify under section 132 for the exclusions for non-additional-cost services, qualified employee discounts, or meals provided at employer-operated eating facilities for employees, the fringe benefit must be available on substantially the same terms to each member of a group of employees which is defined under a reasonable classification set up by the employer that does not discriminate in favor of officers, owners, or highly compensated employees (the “prohibited group employees”).

(2) *Consequences of discrimination.* If the availability of or the provision of the fringe benefit does not satisfy the nondiscrimination rules provided in

this section, the exclusion applies only to those employees (if any) who receive the benefit and who are not prohibited group employees. For example, if an employer offers a 20 percent discount (which otherwise satisfies the requirements for a qualified employee discount) to all nonprohibited group employees and a 35 percent discount to all prohibited group employees, the entire value of the 35 percent discount (not just the excess over 20 percent) is includible in the gross income and wages of the prohibited group employees who make purchases at a discount.

(3) *Scope of the nondiscrimination rules provided in this section.* The nondiscrimination rules provided in this section apply only to fringe benefits provided pursuant to section 132 (a)(1), (a)(2), and (e)(2). These rules have no application to any other employee benefit that may be subject to nondiscrimination requirements under any other section of the Code.

(b) *Coverage requirement*—(1) *Section 132 (a)(1) and (2).* For purposes of the exclusions for no-additional-cost services and qualified employee discounts, the nondiscrimination rules of this section are applied by aggregating the employees of all related employers (as defined in §1.132-1T (c)), but without aggregating employees in different lines of business (as defined in §1.132-4T). Employees in different lines of business will be aggregated, however, if the line of business limitation has been relaxed pursuant to either section 1.132-4T (b) or (c). Except as provided in paragraph (e) of this section, the nondiscrimination rules of this section are generally applied separately to each fringe benefit program of an employer.

(2) *Section 132(e)(2).* For purposes of the exclusion for meals provided at employer-operated eating facilities for employees, the nondiscrimination rules of this section are applied by aggregating the employees of all related employers, without regard to different lines of business, who regularly work at or near the premises on which the eating facility is located. The nondiscrimination rules of this section are applied separately to each eating facility. Each dining room or cafeteria in which meals are served is treated as a separate eating facility, regardless of

whether each such dining room or cafeteria has its own kitchen or other food-preparation area.

(3) *Classes of employees who may be excluded.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, for purposes of applying the nondiscrimination rules of this section to a particular fringe benefit program, there may be excluded from consideration the following classes of employees provided that, with respect to each class (other than the class described in paragraph (b)(3)(iii) of this section), all employees in the class are excluded from participating in the particular fringe benefit program—

(i) All part-time or seasonal employees who are (or who are reasonably expected to be) credited with less than 1,000 hours (or such lesser number required for the program) of service during a calendar year;

(ii) All employees who are included in a unit of employees covered by an agreement with the Secretary of Labor finds to be a collective bargaining agreement between employee representatives and one or more employers, if there is evidence that the particular fringe benefit program was the subject of good faith bargaining between such employee representatives and such employer or employers (and if, after March 31, 1984, the additional condition of section 7701(a)(46) is satisfied);

(iii) All employees who are non-resident aliens and who receive no earned income (within the meaning of section 911(d)(2)) from the employer which constitutes income from services within the United States (within the meaning of section 861(a)(3));

(iv) All employees who have not completed at least one year (or such lesser period required for the program) of service with the employer;

(v) All employees who have separated from the service of the employer in a year prior to the current year (regardless of the reason for the separation);

(vi) All employees who have separated from the service of the employer in a year prior to the current year except for retired and/or disabled employees (either with or without a time limit based on a set number of years since separation from the service of the employer); and

(vii) All employees of a leased section of a department store.

(c) *Classification requirement—(1) General rule.* The determination of whether a particular classification established by an employer discriminates in favor of the prohibited group will depend on the facts and circumstances involved, based on principles similar to those applied in the qualified plan area (see section 410(b)(1)(B) and the regulations thereunder). In general, except as otherwise provided in this section, a classification that would be determined to be nondiscriminatory pursuant to the application of the nondiscrimination standards that are applied in the qualified plan area shall be deemed to be nondiscriminatory for purposes of section 132.

(2) *Classifications that are per se discriminatory.* A classification that, on its face, makes fringe benefits available only to prohibited group employees is per se discriminatory, and no exclusion from gross income is available to any prohibited group employee under section 132. In addition, a classification that is based on either an amount or rate of compensation is per se discriminatory if it favors those with the higher amount or rate of compensation. On the other hand, a classification that is based on factors such as seniority, full-time vs. part-time employment, or job description is not per se discriminatory but may be discriminatory as applied to the workforce of a particular employer.

(3) *Former employees.* When determining whether a classification is discriminatory, former employees shall not be considered together with other employees of the employer. Therefore, a classification is not discriminatory if the employer does not make the fringe benefits available to any former employee. Whether a classification of former employees discriminates in favor of prohibited group employees will depend on the facts and circumstances. The rules of this section shall apply separately to the former employee classification.

(4) *Employer-operated eating facilities for employees—(i) General rule.* If access to an employer-operated eating facility

for employees is available to a classification of employees that discriminates in favor of highly compensated employees, the classification will not be treated as discriminating in favor of the prohibited group employees unless the facility is used, more than a de minimis amount, by any executive group employee.

(ii) *Executive group employees.* For purposes of this paragraph (c)(4), the term “executive group employees” has the same meaning as the term “prohibited group employees” (as defined in paragraph (g) of this section), except that for purposes of identifying highly compensated employees—

(A) The exception provided in paragraph (g)(1)(i)(A) of this section does not apply, and

(B) The phrase “highest-paid one percent of all employees of an employer” is substituted for the phrase “highest-paid ten percent of all employees of an employer” in paragraph (g)(1)(ii)(A) of this section.

(d) *Substantially-the-same-terms requirement—(1) General rule.* Fringe benefits available to a particular classification of employees must be available to each employee in the classification on substantially the same terms. The determination of whether this requirement is met shall depend on the facts and circumstances involved. For example, if a department store provides a 20 percent qualified employee discount to its employees on all merchandise, the substantially-the-same-terms requirement will be satisfied. Similarly, if the discount provided to all employees is 30 percent on certain merchandise (such as apparel), and 20 percent on all other merchandise, the substantially-the-same-terms requirement will be satisfied. However, if the discount provided is 20 percent on all merchandise for hourly employees and 30 percent on all merchandise for salaried employees, the substantially-the-same-terms requirement will not be satisfied. In addition, if the percentage discount varies depending on either an employee’s amount or rate of compensation, or volume of purchases, the substantially-the-same-terms requirement will not be satisfied. In order to determine whether such a discount program satisfies the nondiscrimination require-

ments of section 132, each group of employees that does receive fringe benefits on substantially the same terms must be treated as a separate classification. However, subject to the rules of paragraph (e)(2) of this section, an employer may divide a fringe benefit program into two programs for purposes of aggregating groups of employees. See Example (1) of paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(2) *Terms relating to priority.* Certain fringe benefits made available to employees are available only in limited quantities that may be insufficient to meet employee demand. This may occur either because of employer policy (such as where an employer determines that only a certain number of units of a specific product will be made available to employees each year) or because of the nature of the fringe benefit (such as where an employer provides a no-additional-cost transportation service that is limited to the number of seats available just before departure). Under these circumstances, an employer may find it necessary to establish some method of allocating the limited fringe benefits among the employees eligible to receive the fringe benefits. An allocation among employees on a “first-come, first-served” basis will not violate the substantially-the-same-terms requirement provided that such an allocation is not discriminatory in practice. In addition, an allocation among employees on a lottery basis will not violate the substantially-the-same-terms requirement provided that such an allocation is nondiscriminatory in practice. For example, assume that an employer has a limited number of a particular benefit to offer to its employees. Assume further that the employees interested in receiving the benefit submit their names to the employer who then selects a number of names, at random, equal to the number of fringe benefits available. This lottery system would not violate the substantially-the-same-terms requirement. An allocation among employees on other than a “first-come, first-served”, lottery, or similar basis will violate the substantially-the-same-terms requirement. Therefore, an allocation based on seniority, full-time vs.

part-time employment, or job description will violate the substantially-the-same-terms requirement. In order to determine whether such a fringe benefit program satisfies the nondiscrimination requirements of section 132, each group of employees that does receive fringe benefits on substantially the same terms must be treated as a separate classification. For purposes of this rule, the last two sentences of paragraph (d)(1) of this section apply.

(3) *Examples.* The followings examples illustrate the provisions of this paragraph (d):

*Example 1.* Assume that with respect to a benefit available in limited quantities an employer provides priority to employees based on seniority. Assume further that all non-prohibited group employees have ten years of seniority and all prohibited group employees have nine years seniority. If each of these groups were tested separately, the benefits offered to prohibited group employees would be discriminatory under this section. In this case, the employer could divide the fringe benefit program provided to non-prohibited group employees into two parts: one relating to nine years of seniority and one relating to an additional year of seniority. As restructured in this manner, all employees receive the benefit relating to nine years seniority and only non-prohibited group employees receive the benefit relating to an additional year of seniority. Both groups (all employees and all non-prohibited group employees) are nondiscriminatory groups.

*Example 2.* Assume that prices charged to prohibited group employees at an employer-operated eating facility for employees are lower than prices charged to non-prohibited group employees. The substantially-the-same requirement is not satisfied.

(4) *Disproportionate use of eating facility.* If access to an employer-operated eating facility for employees is technically available on substantially-the-same-terms (to (i) all employees who regularly work at or near the premises on which the eating facility is located (the employee group), or (ii) a non-discriminatory classification of the employee group, but in practice a highly disproportionate number of the prohibited group employees in the employee group, compared to the non-prohibited group employees in the employee group, use the facility, the substantially-the-same-terms requirement will not be satisfied unless no member

of the executive group eats there more than a de minimis amount.

(e) *Aggregation of separate fringe benefit programs—(1) General rule.* If an employer maintains more than one fringe benefit program, i.e., two or more classifications of employees providing either identical or different fringe benefits, the nondiscrimination requirements of section 132 will generally be applied separately to each such program. Thus, a determination that one fringe benefit program discriminates in favor of prohibited group employees generally will not cause other fringe benefit programs covering the same prohibited group employees to be treated as discriminatory.

(2) *Exception—(i) Related fringe benefit programs.* If one of a group of fringe benefit programs discriminates in favor of prohibited group employees, no related fringe benefit provided to such prohibited group employees under any other fringe benefit program may be excluded from the gross income of such prohibited group employees. For example, assume a department store provides a 20 percent merchandise discount to all employees under one fringe benefit program. Assume further that under a second fringe benefit program, the department store provides an additional 15 percent merchandise discount to a group of employees defined under a classification which discriminates in favor of the prohibited group. Because the second fringe benefit program is discriminatory, the 15 percent merchandise discount provided to the prohibited group employees is not a qualified employee discount. In addition, because the 20 percent merchandise discount provided under the first fringe benefit program is related to the fringe benefit provided under the second fringe benefit program, the 20 percent merchandise discount provided the prohibited group employees is not a qualified employee discount. Thus, the entire 35 percent merchandise discount provided to the prohibited group employees is includible in such employees' gross incomes.

(ii) *Employer-operated eating facilities for employees.* For purposes of paragraph (e)(2)(i) of this section, meals at different employer-operated eating facilities for employees are not related

fringe benefits, so that a prohibited group employee may exclude the value of a meal at a nondiscriminatory facility even though any meals provided to him or her at the discriminatory facility cannot be excluded.

(f) *Cash bonuses or rebates.* A cash bonus or rebate provided to an employee by an employer that is determined pursuant to the value of employer-provided property or services purchased by the employee, is treated as an equivalent employee discount. For example, assume a department store provides a 20 percent merchandise discount to all employees under a fringe benefit program. In addition, assume that the department store provides cash bonuses to a group of employees defined under a classification which discriminates in favor of the prohibited group. Assume further that such cash bonuses equal 15 percent of the value of merchandise purchased by each employee. This arrangement is substantively identical to the example described in paragraph (e)(2) of this section. Thus, both the 20 percent merchandise discount and the 15 percent cash bonus provided to the prohibited group employees are includible in such employees' gross incomes.

(g) *Prohibited group employees—(1) Highly compensated—(i) General rule.* Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph (g)(1)(i), any employee of an employer who has (or is reasonably expected to have) compensation during a calendar year equal to or greater than the employer's base compensation amount is highly compensated. There are two exceptions to this rule:

(A) Any employee who has (or is reasonably expected to have) compensation during a calendar year equal to or greater than \$50,000 is highly compensated, regardless of whether such compensation is in excess of the base compensation amount, and

(B) Any employee who is reasonably expected to have compensation during a calendar year equal to or less than \$20,000 is not highly compensated, unless no employee of the employer is reasonably expected to have compensation equal to or greater than \$35,000.

The determination of whether an employee is a highly compensated employee will be determined based on the

entire employee workforce of all employers aggregated pursuant to the rules of section 414 (b), (c), or (m) without regard to the regular workplace of the employees.

(ii) *Base compensation amount—(A) General rule.* The term "base compensation amount" is defined as that amount corresponding to the lowest annual compensation amount received by the highest-paid ten percent of all employees of an employer (the number of employees in the top ten percent will be increased to the next highest integer if necessary), determined on the basis of the preceding calendar year. For purposes of this paragraph (g)(1)(ii), the term "employer" includes all entities that would be aggregated pursuant to the rules of section 414 (b), (c), or (m).

(B) *Employees that are excluded.* For purposes of determining the base compensation amount with respect to a fringe benefit program, employees described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section are excluded whether or not they are covered under the fringe benefit program, except that: (1) Employees described in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section are taken into account with respect to the program even if they are excluded under paragraph (b)(3), and (2) employees described in paragraph (b)(3)(i) and (iv) of this section are taken into account with respect to the program unless they are excluded under paragraph (b)(3).

(C) *Exception to preceding calendar year rule.* In the case of an employer's first year of operation, or where an employer's business has changed significantly from the prior calendar year (e.g., due to an acquisition or merger), the employer must make a good faith attempt to either determine or adjust the base compensation amount for the current year based on reasonable estimates of current year compensation.

(iii) *Compensation.* The term "compensation" is defined as the amount reportable on a Form W-2 as income. Amounts that would be excluded from income but for section 132(h)(1) are not included in compensation for purposes of this paragraph (g)(1). Compensation includes amounts received from all entities which would be treated as a single employer under section 414 (b), (c),

or (m) and is not restricted to amounts received with respect to any one line of business.

(iv) *Employee*. Generally, for purposes of determining whether an employee is highly compensated under this paragraph (g)(1), the term “employee” does not include any individual who does not perform services for the employer as an employee during the calendar year. For example, if an employer has active employees, retired or disabled employees, and widows or widowers who are “employees” under section 132(f)(1)(B), the general rule (described in paragraph (g)(1)(i) of this section) applies only to the active employees.

(2) *Owner*—(i) *General rule*. For purposes of this section, the term “owner” means any employee who owns a one percent or greater interest in either the employer or in any entity that would be aggregated with the employer pursuant to the rules of section 414 (b), (c), or (m). In addition, such an employee shall be treated as an owner of all entities that would be aggregated with the employer pursuant to the rules of section 414 (b), (c), or (m).

(ii) *Determining ownership*. Ownership in a corporation shall be determined pursuant to the rules of section 318(a). For purposes of determining ownership in an entity other than a corporation, the rules of section 318(a) shall apply in a manner similar to the way in which they apply for purposes of determining ownership in a corporation. For non-corporate interests, capital or profits interest must be substituted for stock.

(3) *Officer*—(i) *Non-government*. For purposes of this section, an officer of a non-government employer is any employee who is appointed, confirmed, or elected by the Board or shareholders of the employer. An employee who is an officer of an employer shall be treated as an officer of all entities treated as a single employer pursuant to section 414 (b), (c), or (m). The number of officers is not to exceed one-percent of the total number of employees of all entities treated as a single employer pursuant to section 414 (b), (c), or (m) (increased to the next highest integer, if necessary). If the number of officers exceeds one-percent of all employees, then the limitation is to be applied to employees in descending order of com-

pensation (as defined in paragraph (g)(1)(iii) of this section). Thus, if an employer with 1,000 employees has 11 board-appointed officers, the employee with the least compensation of those officers would not be an officer under this paragraph (g)(3)(i). In determining the total number of employees with respect to a fringe benefit program, employees described in paragraph (b)(3) of this section are excluded whether or not they are covered under the fringe benefit program, except that (A) employees described in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section are taken into account with respect to the program even if they are excluded under paragraph (b)(3), and (B) employees described in paragraph (b)(3) (i) and (iv) of this section are taken into account with respect to the program unless they are excluded under paragraph (b)(3).

(ii) *Government*. For purposes of this section, an officer of a government employer is any—

(A) Elected official,

(B) Federal employee appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. However, in the case of any commissioned officer of the United States Armed Forces, an officer is any employee with the rank of brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) or above, and

(C) State or local executive officer comparable to individuals described in paragraphs (g)(3)(ii) (A) and (B) of this section.

For purposes of this paragraph (g)(3)(ii), the term “government” includes any Federal, state, or local governmental unit, and any agency or instrumentality thereof.

(4) *Former employees*. [Reserved]

[T.D. 8063, 50 FR 52309, Dec. 23, 1985, as amended by T.D. 8256, 54 FR 28600, July 6, 1989]

#### § 1.132-9 Qualified transportation fringes.

(a) *Table of contents*. This section contains a list of the questions and answers in § 1.132-9.

(1) *General rules*.

Q-1. What is a qualified transportation fringe?

Q-2. What is transportation in a commuter highway vehicle?

Q-3. What are transit passes?