

(c) In the event a determination is not issued within the applicable time limit and the person making the request therefore chooses to sue the Agency, the Agency-level determination process shall nonetheless continue.

(d) If an appeal not properly marked "FOIA Appeal" on the text of the appeal and/or envelope is thereby delayed in reaching the Appeals Officer, it will not be deemed received by the Appeals Officer until actually received by him/her. In such event, the person making the appeal will be furnished notice of the effective date of receipt.

**§ 212.38 Predisclosure notification procedures for confidential commercial information.**

(a) *In general.* Confidential commercial information provided to the Agency shall not be disclosed pursuant to a FOIA request except in accordance with this section. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) *Confidential commercial information* means records provided to the Agency by a submitter that arguably contain material exempt from release under Exemption 4 of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4), because disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm.

(2) *Submitter* means any person or entity who provides confidential commercial information to the Agency. The term "submitter" includes, but is not limited to, corporations, state governments and foreign governments.

(b) *Notice to submitters.* Whenever the Agency receives a FOIA request for confidential commercial information and, pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section, the submitter of such information is entitled to receive notice of that request, then the Agency shall promptly notify the submitter that it has received the request, unless such a notice is not required pursuant to paragraph (g) of this section. The notice shall be in writing and shall either describe the exact nature of the confidential commercial information requested or provide a copy of the records or portion of the records containing the confidential commercial information. The notice shall be addressed to the sub-

mitter and mailed, postage prepaid, first class mail, to the submitter's last known address. Where notice is required to be given to a voluminous number of submitters, in lieu of such a mailing the notice may be posted or published in a manner and place reasonably calculated to provide notice to the submitters.

(c) *When notice is required; related matters.* (1) For confidential commercial information submitted prior to January 1, 1988, the Agency shall provide a submitter with notice of its receipt of a FOIA request whenever:

(i) The records are less than ten years old and the information has been designated by the submitter as confidential commercial information; or

(ii) The Agency has reason to believe that the disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm to the submitter thereof.

(2) For confidential commercial information submitted to the Agency on or after January 1, 1988, the Agency shall provide a submitter with notice of its receipt of a FOIA request whenever:

(i) The submitter has designated the information as confidential commercial information pursuant to the requirements of this section; or

(ii) The Agency has reason to believe that the disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm to the submitter.

(3) Notice of a request for confidential commercial information falling within paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section shall be required for a period of not more than ten years after the date of submission unless the submitter provides reasonable justification for a designation period of greater duration.

(4) A submitter shall use good-faith efforts to designate by appropriate markings, either at the time a record is submitted to the Agency or within a reasonable period of time thereafter, those portions of the record which it deems to contain confidential commercial information. The designation shall be accompanied by a certification made by the submitter, its agent or

designee that to the best of the submitter's knowledge, information and belief, the record does, in fact, contain confidential commercial information that theretofore has not been disclosed to the public.

(5) Whenever the Agency provides notice to the submitter in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section, the Agency shall at the same time provide written notice to the requester that it is affording the submitter a reasonable period of time within which to object to the disclosure, and that, therefore, the Agency may be required to enlarge the time within which it otherwise would respond to the request.

(d) *Opportunity to object to disclosure.* To the extent permitted by law, the notice required by paragraph (c) of this section shall afford a submitter a reasonable period of time within which the submitter or its authorized representative may provide the Agency with a written objection to the disclosure of the confidential commercial information and demonstrate why the submitter believes that the records contain confidential commercial information whose disclosure would, probably, cause substantial competitive injury to the submitter. Except where a certification already has been made in conformance with the requirements of paragraph (c)(4) of this section, the objection shall be accompanied by certification made by the submitter, its agent or designee, that to the best of the submitter's knowledge, information and belief, the record does, in fact, contain confidential commercial information that theretofore has not been disclosed to the public. Information provided by a submitter pursuant to this paragraph may itself be subject to disclosure under the FOIA.

(e) *Notice of intent to disclose.* (1) The Agency shall give careful consideration to objections made by a submitter pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section prior to making any administrative determination of the issue. Whenever the Agency decides to disclose information despite the objection of a submitter, the Agency shall forward to the submitter a written notice which shall include:

(i) A statement of the reasons for which a submitter's disclosure objections were not sustained; and

(ii) A description of the information to be disclosed.

(2) To the extent permitted by law, the notice required to be given by paragraph (e)(1) of this section shall be provided to the submitter a reasonable number of days prior to the specific disclosure date.

(3) Whenever the Agency provides notice to the submitter in accordance with paragraphs (e) (1) and (2) of this section, the Agency shall at the same time notify the requester

(i) That such a notice has been given and

(ii) Of the proposed date for disclosure.

(f) *Notice of lawsuit.* When a requester brings suit seeking to compel the disclosure of information for which notice is required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section, the Agency shall promptly notify the submitter that such suit has been filed.

(g) *Exceptions to notice requirements.* The notice requirements of this section shall not apply if:

(1) The Agency determines that the information should not be disclosed;

(2) The information has been published or has been officially made available to the public;

(3) Disclosure of the information is required by an Agency rule that;

(i) Was adopted pursuant to notice and public comment;

(ii) Specifies narrow classes of records submitted to the Agency that are to be released under the FOIA; and

(iii) Provides in exceptional circumstances for notice when the submitter provides written justification, at the time the information is submitted or a reasonable time thereafter, that disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm;

(4) For purposes of paragraph (c) of this section, the information requested was not designated by the submitter as exempt from disclosure when the submitter had an opportunity to make such designation at the time of submission of the information or within a reasonable time thereafter, unless;

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(i) The Agency has substantial reason to believe that disclosure of the information would result in competitive harm; or

(ii) The designation made by the submitter appears obviously frivolous; except that, in such case, the Agency must provide the submitter with written notice of any final administrative disclosure determination within a reasonable number of days prior to the specified disclosure date.

### Subpart E—Exemptions From Disclosure

#### § 212.41 Exemptions from publication and disclosure requirements of subparts B, C, and D.

None of the provisions of subparts B, C, and D which provide for publication and disclosure of certain information and records shall be applicable to matters that are:

(a) Specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive Order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive Order;

(b) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of the Agency;

(c) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute;

(d) Trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person and privileged and confidential;

(e) Interagency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency;

(f) Personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(g) Records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information:

(1) Would reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings;

(2) Would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication;

(3) Could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(4) Could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, including a State, local or foreign agency or authority or any private institution which furnished information on a confidential basis, and, in the case of a record or information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful security intelligence investigation, information furnished by a confidential source;

(5) Would disclose techniques and procedure for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law; or

(6) Could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual.

(h) Contained in or related to examination, operating, or condition reports prepared by, on behalf of, or for the use of any agency responsible for the regulation or supervision of financial institutions; and

(i) Geological and geophysical information and data (including maps) concerning wells.

#### § 212.42 Exemption from 5 U.S.C. 552.

Whenever a request is made which involves access to records described in paragraph (g) of § 212.41 and the investigation or proceedings involves a possible violation of criminal law; and there is reason to believe that the subject of the investigation or proceeding is not aware of its pendency, and disclosure of the existence of the records could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings, the Agency may, during only such time as that circumstances continues, treat the records as not subject to the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552 and this subpart.

### Subpart F—Opening of Records for Nonofficial Research Purposes

#### § 212.51 General policy.

(a) The Agency will open its records on an equitable basis to all individuals engaged in private research as soon as