

to subparagraph (2) of this paragraph) chooses to set up a separate account for each such asset, and has sought to compute an average life for such assets on which to base his depreciation deductions (so that he uses the same life for each account), the allowance of losses on normal retirements from such accounts may in some situations substantially distort income. Such distortion would result from the fact that the use of average useful life (and, accordingly, average rate) assumes that while some assets normally will be retired before expiration of the average life, others normally will be retired after expiration of the average life. Accordingly, where a taxpayer chooses to account separately for such assets instead of accounting for them in multiple asset accounts, and the result is to substantially distort his income, the rules with respect to the allowance of losses on normal retirements shall be applied to such assets in the same manner as though the assets had been accounted for in multiple asset accounts using a rate based upon average expected useful life.

(4) Whenever a taxpayer is treated under this paragraph as though his assets were accounted for in a multiple asset account using an average life rate, and, therefore, he is denied a loss on retirements, the unrecovered cost less salvage of each asset which was accounted for separately may be amortized in accordance with the regulation stated in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section.

(e) *Accounting treatment of asset retirements.* (1) In the case of a normal retirement where under the foregoing rules no loss is recognized and where the asset is retired without disposition or abandonment, (i) if the asset was contained in a multiple asset account, the full cost of such asset, reduced by estimated salvage, shall be charged to the depreciation reserve, or (ii) if the asset was accounted for separately, the unrecovered cost or other basis, less salvage, of the asset may be amortized through annual deductions from gross income in amounts equal to the unrecovered cost or other basis of such asset, divided by the average expected useful life (not the remaining useful life) applicable to the asset at the time

of retirement. For example, if an asset is retired after six years of use and at the time of retirement depreciation was being claimed on the basis of an average expected useful life of ten years, the unrecovered cost or other basis less salvage would be amortized through equal annual deductions over a period of ten years from the time of retirement.

(2) Where multiple asset accounts are used and acquisitions and retirements are numerous, if a taxpayer, in order to avoid unnecessarily detailed accounting for individual retirements, consistently follows the practice of charging the reserve with the full cost or other basis of assets retired and of crediting it with all receipts from salvage, the practice may be continued so long as, in the opinion of the Commissioner, it clearly reflects income. Conversely, where the taxpayer customarily follows a practice of reporting all receipts from salvage as ordinary taxable income such practice may be continued so long as, in the opinion of the Commissioner, it clearly reflects income.

(f) *Cross reference.* For special rules in connection with the retirement of the last assets of a given year's acquisitions under the declining balance method, see example (2) in paragraph (b) of § 1.167 (b)-2.

§ 1.167(a)-9 Obsolescence.

The depreciation allowance includes an allowance for normal obsolescence which should be taken into account to the extent that the expected useful life of property will be shortened by reason thereof. Obsolescence may render an asset economically useless to the taxpayer regardless of its physical condition. Obsolescence is attributable to many causes, including technological improvements and reasonably foreseeable economic changes. Among these causes are normal progress of the arts and sciences, supersession or inadequacy brought about by developments in the industry, products, methods, markets, sources of supply, and other like changes, and legislative or regulatory action. In any case in which the taxpayer shows that the estimated useful life previously used should be shortened by reason of obsolescence greater than had been assumed in computing

such estimated useful life, a change to a new and shorter estimated useful life computed in accordance with such showing will be permitted. No such change will be permitted merely because in the unsupported opinion of the taxpayer the property may become obsolete. For rules governing the allowance of a loss when the usefulness of depreciable property is suddenly terminated, see § 1.167(a)-8. If the estimated useful life and the depreciation rates have been the subject of a previous agreement, see section 167(d) and § 1.167(d)-1.

§ 1.167(a)-10 When depreciation deduction is allowable.

(a) A taxpayer should deduct the proper depreciation allowance each year and may not increase his depreciation allowances in later years by reason of his failure to deduct any depreciation allowance or of his action in deducting an allowance plainly inadequate under the known facts in prior years. The inadequacy of the depreciation allowance for property in prior years shall be determined on the basis of the allowable method of depreciation used by the taxpayer for such property or under the straight line method if no allowance has ever been claimed for such property. The preceding sentence shall not be construed as precluding application of any method provided in section 167(b) if taxpayer's failure to claim any allowance for depreciation was due solely to erroneously treating as a deductible expense an item properly chargeable to capital account. For rules relating to adjustments to basis, see section 1016 and the regulations thereunder.

(b) The period for depreciation of an asset shall begin when the asset is placed in service and shall end when the asset is retired from service. A proportionate part of one year's depreciation is allowable for that part of the first and last year during which the asset was in service. However, in the case of a multiple asset account, the amount of depreciation may be determined by using what is commonly described as an "averaging convention", that is, by using an assumed timing of additions and retirements. For example, it might be assumed that all addi-

tions and retirements to the asset account occur uniformly throughout the taxable year, in which case depreciation is computed on the average of the beginning and ending balances of the asset account for the taxable year. See example (3) under paragraph (b) of § 1.167(b)-1. Among still other averaging conventions which may be used is the one under which it is assumed that all additions and retirements during the first half of a given year were made on the first day of that year and that all additions and retirements during the second half of the year were made on the first day of the following year. Thus, a full year's depreciation would be taken on additions in the first half of the year and no depreciation would be taken on additions in the second half. Moreover, under this convention, no depreciation would be taken on retirements in the first half of the year and a full year's depreciation would be taken on the retirements in the second half. An averaging convention, if used, must be consistently followed as to the account or accounts for which it is adopted, and must be applied to both additions and retirements. In any year in which an averaging convention substantially distorts the depreciation allowance for the taxable year, it may not be used.

§ 1.167(a)-11 Depreciation based on class lives and asset depreciation ranges for property placed in service after December 31, 1970.

(a) *In general*—(1) *Summary*. This section provides an asset depreciation range and class life system for determining the reasonable allowance for depreciation of designated classes of assets placed in service after December 31, 1970. The system is designed to minimize disputes between taxpayers and the Internal Revenue Service as to the useful life of property, and as to salvage value, repairs, and other matters. The system is optional with the taxpayer. The taxpayer has an annual election. Generally, an election for a taxable year must apply to all additions of eligible property during the taxable year of election, but does not apply to additions of eligible property in any other taxable year. The taxpayer's election, made with the return