

(7) *Special effective date for rules relating to change of limitation year.* Notwithstanding subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the provisions of § 1.415-2(b)(4) (relating to the effect of a change of the limitation year) are required to be applied only for changes in limitation years which occur after January 7, 1981. These provisions may also be used for all prior changes in limitation years. However, if the provisions of § 1.415-2(b)(4) are not used for changes in limitation years which occur prior to January 7, 1981, the requirements of § 2.01(4) of Rev. Rul. 75-481, 1975-2 C.B. 188, shall be applicable with respect to such changes.

(8) *Special effective date for TRASOP's.* The limitations of section 415 apply to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan under section 301(d) of the Tax Reduction Act of 1975 ("TRASOP"). The earliest date on which the first plan year of a TRASOP may begin is January 22, 1974. Therefore, notwithstanding subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the limitations of section 415 are applicable for TRASOP plan years beginning before 1975 and for limitation years ending with or within plan years beginning before 1975. However, the aggregation rules of § 1.415-8 do not apply to a limitation year of a TRASOP ending with or within a plan year beginning before 1975.

(9) *Transitional rules.* For special transitional rules, see—

(i) Section 1.415-4 (relating to a transitional rule for defined benefit plans),

(ii) Section 1.415-7(b)(2) (relating to the defined benefit plan fraction applicable to certain participants),

(iii) Section 1.415-7(d) (relating to transitional rules for the defined contribution plan fraction), and

(iv) Section 1.415-7(g) (relating to a special rule for certain plans in effect on September 2, 1974).

(g) *Supersession.* Section 11.415(c)(4)-1 (relating to special elections for section 403(b) annuity contracts purchased by educational organizations, hospitals and home health service agencies) of the Temporary Income Tax Regulations under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is superseded by this section and §§ 1.415-2 through 1.415-10.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1697, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.415-2 Definitions and special rules.

(a) *General application.* Unless otherwise provided in the appropriate section, for purposes of §§ 1.415-1 through 1.415-10, the following definitions and special rules shall apply.

(b) *Limitation year—(1) In general.* (i) Unless the election described in subdivision (ii) of this subparagraph is made, the limitation year, with respect to any qualified plan maintained by the employer, is the calendar year.

(ii) Instead of using the calendar year, an employer may elect to use any other consecutive twelve month period as the limitation year. This includes a fiscal year with an annual period varying from 52 to 53 weeks, so long as the fiscal year satisfies the requirements of section 441(f). If the case of a group of employers which constitute either a controlled group of corporations (within the meaning of section 414(b) as modified by section 415(h)) or trades or businesses (whether or not incorporated) which are under common control (within the meaning of section 414(c) as modified by section 45(h)), the election to use a consecutive twelve month period other than the calendar year as the limitation year must be made by all members of the group that maintain a qualified plan.

(2) *Method of election to use a limitation year other than the calendar year or to change limitation year.* (i) The election described in subparagraph (1)(ii) of this paragraph shall be made by the adoption of a written resolution by the employer. This requirement is satisfied if the election is made in connection with the adoption, by the employer, of the plan or any amendments to such plan.

(ii) This resolution will not be considered a change of the limitation year, if it is adopted or modified on or before the later of the adoption date of the first amendment conforming an existing plan to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, or December 31, 1976.

(3) *Election of multiple limitation years.* Any employer that maintains more than one qualified plan may elect to use different limitation years for each such plan in accordance with rules determined by the Commissioner. The rule described in this subparagraph

also applies to a controlled group of employers (within the meaning of section 414 (b) or (c), as modified by section 415(h)).

(4) *Effect of change of limitation year.*

(i) Once established, the limitation year may be changed only by making the election in the manner described in subparagraph (2) of this paragraph.

(ii) Any change in the limitation year must be a change to a twelve-month period commencing with any day within the current limitation year.

(iii) For purposes of this paragraph, the limitations of section 415 are to be applied in the normal manner to the new limitation year. Moreover, the limitations of section 415 are to be separately applied to a "limitation period" which begins with the first day of the current limitation year and which ends on the day before the first day of the first limitation year for which the change is effective. The dollar limitation with respect to this limitation period is determined by multiplying (A) the applicable dollar limitation for the calendar year in which the limitation period ends by (B) a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of months (including any fractional parts of a month) in the limitation period, and the denominator of which is 12. This adjustment of the dollar limitation only applies to a defined contribution plan.

(iv) For a special effective date with respect to this paragraph, see §1.415-1(f)(7).

(v) The provisions of this subparagraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. In 1981, an employer with a qualified defined contribution plan using the calendar year as the limitation year elects to change the limitation year to a period beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Because of this change, the plan must satisfy the limitations of section 415(c) for the limitation period beginning January 1, 1981 and ending June 30 of that year. In applying the limitations of section 415(c) to this limitation period, the amount of compensation taken into account may only include compensation for this period. Furthermore, the dollar limitation for this period is the otherwise applicable dollar limitation for calendar year 1981, multiplied by $\frac{1}{2}$.

(5) *Limitation year for years prior to effective date.* The limitation year for all

years prior to the effective date of section 415 is the consecutive twelve-month period which corresponds to the first limitation year of a plan after the effective date of section 415. (See paragraph (b)(1) of this section for rules relating to the determination of a plan's limitation year.)

(6) *Limitation year for multiemployer plans.* In the case of a multiemployer plan (as defined in section 414(f)), the limitation year is the calendar year unless the plan administrator elects otherwise under paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(7) *Limitation year for individuals on whose behalf section 403(b) annuity contracts have been purchased.* (i) The limitation year of an individual on whose behalf a section 403(b) annuity contract has been purchased by an employer is determined in the following manner.

(ii) If the individual is not in control (within the meaning of section 414 (b) or (c) as modified by section 415(h)) of any employer, the limitation year is the calendar year. However, the individual may elect to change the limitation year to another twelve-month period. To do this, the individual must attach a statement to his income tax return filed for the taxable year in which the change is made. Any change in the limitation year must comply with the rules set forth in paragraph (b)(4) of this section.

(iii) If the individual is in control (within the meaning of section 414 (b) or (c) as modified by section 415(h)) of an employer, the limitation year is to be the limitation year of that employer.

(8) *Limitation year for individuals on whose behalf individual retirement plans are maintained.* The limitation year of an individual on whose behalf an individual retirement plan (as described in section 7701(a)(37)) is maintained shall be determined in the manner described in paragraph (b)(7) of this section.

(c) *Defined benefit and defined contribution plan—(1) Defined benefit plan.* A "defined benefit plan" means a plan described in section 414(j).

(2) *Defined contribution plan.* A "defined contribution plan" means a plan described in section 414(i). It includes a money purchase pension plan (as described in §1.401-1(b)(1)(i)), such as a

target benefit plan (as described in § 1.410(a)-4(a)(1)). A hybrid plan (as defined in section 414(k)) is to be treated as a defined contribution plan to the extent that benefits payable under the plan are based upon the individual account of the participant.

(d) *Compensation*—(1) *General definition.* Except as otherwise provided, compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3) includes all remuneration described in paragraph (d)(2) of this section and excludes all other forms of remuneration. Paragraph (d)(3) of this section provides examples of types of remuneration not includible in compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3). Paragraphs (d)(4) and (d)(5) of this section provide rules regarding the payment of compensation in the limitation year. Paragraph (d)(6) of this section provides a special rule for determining the compensation of employees of controlled groups or affiliated service groups. Paragraph (d)(7) of this section provides a special rule for applying the limitations of section 415(c) when a section 403(b) annuity is aggregated with a qualified plan of a controlled employer. Paragraphs (d)(8) and (d)(9) of this section are reserved for special rules for leased employees and for permanent and total disability, respectively. Paragraphs (d)(10) and (d)(11) of this section provide additional definitions of compensation that are treated as satisfying section 415(c)(3). Paragraph (d)(12) of this section permits optional use of prior regulations. Paragraph (d)(13) of this section provides authority to the Commissioner to provide further additional definitions of compensation that satisfy section 415(c)(3).

(2) *Items includible as compensation.* For purposes of applying the limitations of section 415, the term “compensation” includes all of the following—

(i) The employee’s wages, salaries, fees for professional services, and other amounts received (without regard to whether or not an amount is paid in cash) for personal services actually rendered in the course of employment with the employer maintaining the plan to the extent that the amounts are includible in gross income (including, but not limited to, commissions

paid salesmen, compensation for services on the basis of a percentage of profits, commissions on insurance premiums, tips, bonuses, fringe benefits, and reimbursements or other expense allowances under a nonaccountable plan (as described in § 1.62-2(c)).

(ii) In the case of an employee who is an employee within the meaning of section 401(c)(1) and the regulations thereunder, the employee’s earned income (as described in section 401(c)(2) and the regulations thereunder).

(iii) Amounts described in sections 104(a)(3), 105(a), and 105(h), but only to the extent that these amounts are includible in the gross income of the employee.

(iv) Amounts paid or reimbursed by the employer for moving expenses incurred by an employee, but only to the extent that at the time of the payment it is reasonable to believe that these amounts are not deductible by the employee under section 217.

(v) The value of a non-qualified stock option granted to an employee by the employer, but only to the extent that the value of the option is includible in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which granted.

(vi) The amount includible in the gross income of an employee upon making the election described in section 83(b).

Paragraphs (d)(2)(i) and (d)(2)(ii) of this section include foreign earned income (as defined in section 911(b)), whether or not excludable from gross income under section 911. Compensation described in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section is to be determined without regard to the exclusions from gross income in sections 931 and 933. Similar principles are to be applied with respect to income subject to sections 931 and 933 in determining compensation described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section.

(3) *Items not includible as compensation.* The term “compensation” does not include items such as—

(i) Contributions made by the employer to a plan of deferred compensation to the extent that, before the application of the section 415 limitations to that plan, the contributions are not includible in the gross income of the employee for the taxable year in which

contributed. In addition, employer contributions made on behalf of an employee to a simplified employee pension described in section 408(k) are not considered as compensation for the taxable year in which contributed. Additionally, any distributions from a plan of deferred compensation are not considered as compensation for section 415 purposes, regardless of whether such amounts are includible in the gross income of the employee when distributed. However, any amounts received by an employee pursuant to an unfunded nonqualified plan is permitted to be considered as compensation for section 415 purposes in the year the amounts are includible in the gross income of the employee.

(ii) Amounts realized from the exercise of a non-qualified stock option, or when restricted stock (or property) held by an employee either becomes freely transferable or is no longer subject to a substantial risk of forfeiture (see section 83 and the regulations thereunder).

(iii) Amounts realized from the sale, exchange or other disposition of stock acquired under a qualified stock option.

(iv) Other amounts which receive special tax benefits, such as premiums for group-term life insurance (but only to the extent that the premiums are not includible in the gross income of the employee), or contributions made by an employer (whether or not under a salary reduction agreement) towards the purchase of an annuity contract described in section 403(b) (whether or not the contributions are excludable from the gross income of the employee).

(4) *Compensation in limitation year.* The compensation (as defined in paragraph (d)(2) of this section) actually paid or made available to an employee within the limitation year is the compensation used for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415.

(5) *Election to use compensation accrued during limitation year—(i) Years beginning after December 31, 1991.* For limitation years beginning after December 31, 1991, an employer may not use accrued compensation. Any election previously made to use accrued compensation is not valid for limita-

tion years beginning after December 31, 1991.

(ii) *De minimis accrued compensation.* Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(5)(i) of this section, an employer may include in compensation amounts earned but not paid in a year because of the timing of pay periods and pay days if these amounts are paid during the first few weeks of the next year, the amounts are included on a uniform and consistent basis with respect to all similarly situated employees, and no compensation is included in more than one limitation period. No formal election is required to include the accrued compensation permitted under this de minimis rule. The rule described in this paragraph (d)(5)(ii) does not apply to a section 403(b) annuity contract or to an individual retirement plan (as defined in section 7701(a)(37)).

(iii) *Years beginning before January 1, 1992.* For limitation years beginning before January 1, 1992, instead of using the compensation actually paid or made available to an employee during the limitation year, an employer may elect to use the compensation accrued for an entire limitation year for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415. In the case of a group of employers that constitute either a controlled group of corporations (within the meaning of section 414(b) as modified by section 415(h)) or trades or businesses (whether or not incorporated) that are under common control (within the meaning of section 414(c) as modified by section 415(h)), the election to use accrued compensation must be made by all members of the group that maintain a qualified plan. Once an election is made, it remains in effect until it is revoked by the employer or group of employers. The rule described in this paragraph (d)(5)(iii) does not apply to a section 403(b) annuity contract or to an individual retirement plan (as defined in section 7701(a)(37)). If, in a particular limitation year beginning before January 1, 1992, a previously effective election to use accrued compensation is revoked or an election to use accrued compensation is made, any amounts taken into account for compensation purposes for any preceding limitation year may not

be counted again in determining compensation for the particular limitation year.

(6) *Special rule for employees of controlled groups of corporations, etc.* In the case of an employee of two or more corporations which are members of a controlled group of corporations (as defined in section 414(b) as modified by section 415(h)), the term “compensation” for such employee includes compensation from all employers that are members of the group, regardless of whether the employee’s particular employer has a qualified plan. This special rule is also applicable to an employee of two or more trades or businesses (whether or not incorporated) that are under common control (as defined in section 414(c) as modified by section 415(h)), to an employee of two or more members of an affiliated service group as defined in section 414(m), and to an employee of two or more members of any group of employers who must be aggregated and treated as one employer pursuant to section 414(o).

(7) *Special rule when section 403(b) annuity is aggregated with qualified plan of controlled employer.* If a section 403(b) annuity contract is combined or aggregated with a qualified plan of a controlled employer in accordance with either § 1.415-7(h)(2)(i) or § 1.415-8(d)(2), the following rules apply:

(i) In applying separately the limitations of section 415 (b) or (c) to the qualified plan and the limitations of section 415(c) and the exclusion allowance of section 403(b)(2)(A) to the section 403(b) annuity, compensation from the controlled employer may not be aggregated with compensation from the employer purchasing the section 403(b) annuity.

(ii) However, in applying the limitations of section 415(c) in connection with the combining of the section 403(b) annuity with a qualified defined contribution plan or section 415(e) in connection with the aggregating of the section 403(b) annuity with a qualified defined benefit plan, the total compensation from both employers may be taken into account.

(8) *Special rules for leased employees.* [Reserved]

(9) *Special rules for permanent and total disability.* [Reserved]

(10) *Safe harbor rule with respect to plan’s definition of compensation.* If a plan defines compensation for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415 to include only those items specified in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section and to exclude all those items listed in paragraph (d)(3) of this section, if applicable, the plan will automatically be considered to be using a definition of compensation which satisfies section 415(c)(3).

(11) *Alternative definition of compensation.* In lieu of defining compensation in accordance with paragraphs (d)(2) and (d)(3) of this section, for purposes of applying the limitations of section 415 in the case of employees other than self-employed individuals treated as employees within the meaning of section 401(c)(1), a plan may define compensation using either of the following definitions used for wage reporting purposes, as modified herein, and the definition will be considered automatically to satisfy section 415(c)(3):

(i) *Information required to be reported under sections 6041, 6051 and 6052.* Compensation is defined as wages within the meaning of section 3401(a) and all other payments of compensation to an employee by his employer (in the course of the employer’s trade or business) for which the employer is required to furnish the employee a written statement under sections 6041(d), 6051(a)(3), and 6052. See §§ 1.6041-1(a), 1.6041-2(a)(1), 1.6052-1, and 1.6052-2, and also see § 31.6051-1(a)(1)(i)(C) of this chapter. This definition of compensation may be modified to exclude amounts paid or reimbursed by the employer for moving expenses incurred by an employee, but only to the extent that at the time of the payment it is reasonable to believe that these amounts are deductible by the employee under section 217. Compensation under this paragraph (d)(11)(i) must be determined without regard to any rules under section 3401(a) that limit the remuneration included in wages based on the nature or location of the employment or the services performed (such as the exception for agricultural labor in section 3401(a)(2)).

(ii) *Section 3401(a) wages.* Compensation is defined as wages within the meaning of section 3401(a) (for purposes of income tax withholding at the source) but determined without regard to any rules that limit the remuneration included in wages based on the nature or location of the employment or the services performed (such as the exception for agricultural labor in section 3401(a)(2)).

(12) *Optional use of prior regulations.* For years beginning before September 19, 1991, employers are permitted, in defining compensation for purposes of section 415(c)(3), to comply with either the provisions of this § 1.415-2(d) or the prior regulation provisions of § 1.415-2(d). See § 1.415-2(d) as contained in the CFR edition revised as of April 1, 1991.

(13) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability provide additional definitions of compensation that are treated as satisfying section 415(c)(3).

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1698, Jan. 7, 1981, as amended by T.D. 8361, 56 FR 47667, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10815, 10953, Mar. 31, 1992]

§ 1.415-3 Limitations for defined benefit plans.

(a) *General rules—(1) Maximum limitations.* Under section 415(b) and this section, to satisfy the provisions of section 415(a) for any limitation year, the annual benefit (as defined in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section) to which a participant is entitled at any time under a defined benefit plan may not, during the limitation year, exceed the lesser of—

(i) \$75,000, or

(ii) 100 percent of the participant's average compensation for his high 3 years of service.

As required in § 1.415-1(d), in order to satisfy the limitations on benefits of this section, the plan provisions must preclude the possibility that any annual benefit exceeding these limitations will be payable at any time. Thus, a plan may fail to satisfy the limitations of this section even though no participant has actually accrued a benefit in excess of these limitations.

(2) *Adjustment to dollar limitation.* The dollar limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(A) and paragraph (a)(1)(i) of

this section is adjusted for cost of living increases under section 415(d) and § 1.415-5(a). The adjusted figure is effective as of January 1 of each calendar year and is applicable to limitation years that end during that calendar year.

(3) *Average compensation for high 3 years of service.* For purposes of applying the limitation on benefits described in this section, a participant's high 3 years of service is the period of 3 consecutive calendar years (or, the actual number of consecutive years of employment for those employees who are employed for less than 3 consecutive years with the employer) during which the employee had the greatest aggregate compensation (as defined in § 1.415-2(d)) from the employer. For purposes of this subparagraph, in determining a participant's high 3 years, the plan may use any 12 month period instead of the calendar year provided that it is uniformly and consistently applied.

(b) *Definitions of terms—(1) Annual benefit.* (i) The term "annual benefit" means a benefit which is payable annually in the form of a straight life annuity under a plan. Such benefit does not include any benefits attributable to either employee contributions or rollover contributions (as defined in sections 402(a)(5), 403(a)(4), 408(d)(3) and 409(b)(3)(C)). Additionally, in applying the limitations on benefits described in paragraph (a)(1) of this section to the annual benefit of a participant, it is immaterial if the participant works beyond the normal retirement age as determined under the terms of the plan. Thus, for example, if an individual, who is subject to the dollar limitation of section 415(b)(1)(A) (\$110,625 for 1980), retires in 1980 after working past the plan's normal retirement age of 65, the plan may only provide such individual with an annual benefit of \$110,625 in 1980 and not the actuarial equivalent of the amount the individual would have been entitled to receive at age 65 in order to comply with the section 415(b) limitations.

(ii) If the plan provides for a benefit which is not payable in the form of a straight life annuity, the benefit is adjusted in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section for purposes of applying