

by multiplying the otherwise applicable limitation by a fraction—

(i) The numerator of which is the number of years of service with the employer as of, and including, the current limitation year, and

(ii) The denominator of which is 10. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term “year of service” is to be determined on a reasonable and consistent basis.

(2) *Examples.* The provision of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). C begins employment with Acme Corporation on January 1, 1977, at the age of 58. Acme maintains only a non-contributory defined benefit plan which provides for a straight life annuity beginning at age 65 and uses the calendar year for the limitation and plan year. Acme has never maintained a defined contribution plan. C becomes a participant in Acme’s plan on January 1, 1978 and works through December 31, 1983, when he is age 65. C begins to receive benefits under the plan in 1984. C’s average compensation for his high 3 years of service is \$20,000. Furthermore, under the terms of Acme’s plan, for purposes of computing C’s nonforfeitable percentage in his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions, C has only 7 years of service with Acme (1977–1983). Therefore, because C has less than 10 years of service with Acme at the time he begins to receive benefits under the plan, the maximum permissible annual benefit payable with respect to C is only \$14,000 ($\$20,000 \times 7/10$).

Example (2). Assume the same facts as in example (1), except that C’s average compensation for his high 3 years is \$8,000. Because C has less than 10 years of service with Acme at the time he begins to receive benefits, the maximum benefit payable with respect to C would be reduced to \$5,600 ($\$8,000 \times 7/10$). However, the special rule for total benefits not in excess of \$10,000, provided in paragraph (f) of this section, is applicable in this case. Accordingly, C may receive an annual benefit of \$7,000 ($\$10,000 \times 7/10$) without the benefit limitations of this section being exceeded.

Example (3). ABC corporation maintains a defined benefit plan. Instead of adjusting the benefit limitations in accordance with the method described in subparagraph (1) of this paragraph, the plan provides that the plan administrator may make the necessary adjustment by multiplying the otherwise applicable limitation by a fraction—(1) the numerator of which is the number of completed months of service with the employer, and (2) the denominator of which is 120. The plan further provides that a completed month of

service with the employer is any calendar month in which the employee is credited with at least 83 hours of service. Provided that an hour of service is determined in a manner that is reasonable and consistent, the plan may use this alternative rule for making the adjustment required when a participant has less than 10 years of service with the employer at the time he begins to receive benefits under the plan.

(h) *Benefits under certain collectively bargained plans.* For a special rule affecting the compensation limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(B) and paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section, see section 415(b)(7). For a special effective date with respect to this rule, see § 1.415-1(f)(5).

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1700, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.415-4 Transitional rule for defined benefit plans.

(a) *In general.* If all of the conditions described in paragraph (b) of this section are satisfied, the annual benefit payable to an individual who was a participant in a defined benefit plan at any time before October 3, 1973, will not be considered to exceed the limitations of section 415(b) and § 1.415-3(a). In the case of an individual who was a participant in more than one defined benefit plan at any time before October 3, 1973, the annual benefit payable to that individual from each plan will be deemed not to exceed the limitations of section 415(b) and § 1.415-3(a) if the benefit from each plan satisfies all of the conditions described in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Conditions for application of transitional rule.* The conditions are—

(1) The annual benefit payable to the participant does not exceed 100 percent of that participant’s annual rate of compensation (as defined in paragraph (c) of this section) on October 2, 1973, or, if earlier, as of the date the participant separated from the service of the employer.

(2) The annual benefit payable to the participant does not exceed the annual benefit which would have been payable to the participant at any time if—

(i) All the terms and conditions of the plan which were actually in effect on October 2, 1973 (or if earlier, on the date the participant separated from the

service of the employer) had remained in effect, and

(ii) The participant's compensation taken into account for determining benefits under the plan for any period after October 2, 1973, did not exceed his annual rate of compensation (as defined in paragraph (c) of this section) on that date.

(3) The annual benefit payable to a participant who separated from the service of the employer before October 2, 1973, does not exceed the participant's nonforfeitable accrued benefit under the plan as of the date he separated from service.

(c) *Special rules*—(1) *Annual rate of compensation*. For purposes of this section, a participant's annual rate of compensation for a particular calendar year shall be the greater of—

(i) The participant's compensation for that calendar year as determined in accordance with the rules provided in § 1.415-2(d), or

(ii) The compensation which would be used to determine benefits under the plan if the employee separated from the service of the employer on October 2, 1973, or, if earlier, the employee's actual date of separation from the service of the employer.

(2) *Cost-of-living adjustments*. (i) If the plan, as in existence on October 2, 1973, provided for a post-retirement cost of living adjustment to benefits, the adjustment may be taken into account in determining the participant's allowable benefit under paragraph (b) of this section. However, under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, if a plan is amended after October 2, 1973 to provide for cost-of-living benefit increases for retired participants, the transitional rule of this section will not apply to any increased benefit attributable to the amendment.

(ii) Any cost-of-living increase in the dollar limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(A) under section 415(d) and § 1.415-5(a) may be taken advantage of by an individual who is otherwise using the transitional rule set forth in this section. Thus, for example, if, due to cost-of-living increases under section 415(d) and § 1.415-5(a), the dollar limitation for 1981 is greater than \$110,625, to the extent allowed under section 415(b), a plan may provide that an individual

who is otherwise receiving a benefit of \$110,625 per year under the transitional rule of this section, may receive the greater amount in 1981.

(3) *Retirement benefit beginning before age 55*. If a defined benefit plan provides a retirement benefit beginning before age 55, no actuarial adjustment of the benefit which can be provided under the transitional rule of this section is required to be made.

(4) *Retirement benefit payable in a form other than a straight life annuity*. If a defined benefit plan, as in existence on October 2, 1973, provided a retirement benefit in a form other than a straight life annuity, no actuarial adjustment (as otherwise required under § 1.415-3(c)) of the benefit which can be provided under the transitional rule of this section is required to be made. However, if the plan is amended after October 2, 1973, to provide a benefit of greater value than the benefit provided under the plan as of October 2, 1973, the transitional rule of this section will not apply to the increase in the value of the benefit attributable to the amendment. (See paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section.)

(d) *Examples*. The provisions of this section may be illustrated by the following examples:

Example (1). N, a participant in a non-contributory defined benefit plan maintained by his employer, retired on February 17, 1969, and became eligible to receive benefits under the plan. At that time, N had attained age 65, the normal retirement age under the plan. N's annual rate of compensation on February 17, 1969, was \$90,000. Under the terms of the plan, as in effect on February 17, 1969, N was entitled to an annual benefit of \$86,000, which was N's accrued nonforfeitable benefit as of that date. Because the annual benefit payable with respect to N (i) does not exceed 100 percent of N's compensation on February 17, 1969, (ii) does not exceed the annual benefit to which N was entitled on retirement, and (iii) did not exceed N's nonforfeitable accrued benefit on retirement, the plan may provide an annual benefit of \$86,000 with respect to N for limitation years to which section 415 applies without violating the limitations imposed by section 415(b) and § 1.415-3.

Example (2). Assume the same facts as in example (1) except that on February 17, 1969, when N retired and became eligible to receive benefits under the plan, N had not attained the age of 55. Because the adjustment

required under section 415(b)(2)(C) for retirement benefits beginning before age 55 is only applicable to the dollar limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(A), under paragraph (c)(3) of this section, no actuarial adjustment of the annual benefit of \$86,000 payable with respect to N is required to be made. Therefore, the plan may pay annual benefits of \$86,000 to N, even though N retires and is eligible to receive benefits before age 55.

[T.D. 7748, 46 FR 1703, Jan. 7, 1981]

§ 1.415-5 Cost of living adjustments for defined benefit plans.

(a) *Dollar limitation*—(1) *In general.* Under section 415(d)(1)(A), the dollar limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(A) applicable to defined benefit plans for limitation years to which section 415 applies is adjusted annually to take into account increases in the cost of living. The adjustment of the dollar limitation is made by multiplying an annual adjustment factor by \$75,000. For purposes of this paragraph, the annual adjustment factor is to be determined by the Commissioner.

(2) *Effective date of adjustment.* The adjusted dollar limitation applicable to defined benefit plans is effective as of January 1 of each calendar year and applies with respect to limitation years ending with or within that calendar year.

(3) *Application of adjusted figure.* The adjusted dollar limitation is applicable to employees who are participants in a defined benefit plan and to employees who have retired or otherwise terminated their service under the plan with a nonforfeitable right to accrued benefits, regardless of whether they have actually begun to receive such benefits. However, for purposes of this subparagraph, the annual benefit payable to a terminated participant, which is otherwise limited by the dollar limitation, may only be increased in accordance with cost-of-living adjustments of the dollar limitation if the plan specifically provides for such post-retirement adjustments.

(b) *Average compensation for high 3 years of service limitation*—(1) *In general.* Under section 415(d)(1)(C), with regard to participants who have separated from service with a nonforfeitable right to an accrued benefit, the compensation limitation described in section 415(b)(1)(B) applicable to limita-

tion years to which section 415 applies may be adjusted annually to take into account increases in the cost of living. For any limitation year beginning after the separation occurs, the adjustment of the compensation limitation is made by multiplying the annual adjustment factor (as defined in paragraph (b)(2) of this section) by the compensation limitation applicable to the participant in the limitation year he separated from the service of the employer. In the case of a participant who has separated from service prior to the first limitation year to which section 415 applies, the cost-of-living adjustment of the compensation limitation under this paragraph for all limitation years prior to the effective date of section 415 is to be determined as provided by the Commissioner. For purposes of the adjustment described in this subparagraph, the annual benefit payable to a terminated participant, which is otherwise limited by the compensation limitation, may only be increased in accordance with cost-of-living adjustments of the compensation limitation if the plan specifically provides for such post-retirement adjustments.

(2) *Annual adjustment factor for compensation limitation.* For any limitation year beginning after the separation occurs, the annual adjustment factor is a fraction, the numerator of which is the adjusted dollar limitation for the limitation year in which the compensation limitation is being adjusted and the denominator of which is the adjusted dollar limitation for the limitation year in which the participant separated from service. In determining the adjusted dollar limitation for purposes of computing the annual adjustment factor under this subparagraph, the rule provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section (relating to the effective date of the adjusted dollar limitation) shall be applicable.

(3) *Example.* The provisions of this paragraph may be illustrated by the following example:

Example. X is a participant in a qualified defined benefit plan maintained by his employer. The plan has a calendar year limitation year. Under the terms of the plan, X is entitled to a benefit consisting of a straight life annuity equal to 100 percent of X's compensation for his high 3 years of service. X's average compensation for his high 3 years is