

regard to the disclosure or nondisclosure of information in agency records that has been submitted by a business. When, in the course of responding to an FOIA request, an agency cannot readily determine whether the information obtained from a person is privileged or confidential business information, the policy of USDA is to obtain and consider the views of the submitter of the information and to provide the submitter an opportunity to object to any decision to disclose the information. If a request (including a subpoena duces tecum as described in §1.215) is received in USDA for information that has been submitted by a business, the agency shall:

(a) Provide the business information submitter with prompt notification of a request for that information (unless it is readily determined by the agency that the information requested should not be disclosed or, on the other hand, that the information is not exempt by law from disclosure). Afford business information submitter reasonable time in which to object to the disclosure of any specified portion of the information. The submitter must explain fully all grounds upon which disclosure is opposed. For example, if the submitter maintains that disclosure is likely to cause substantial harm to it competitive position, the submitter must explain item-by-item why disclosure would cause such harm. Information provided by a business submitter pursuant to this paragraph may itself be subject to disclosure under FOIA;

(b) Notify the requester of the need to inform the submitter of a request for submitted business information;

(c) Determine whether the requested records are exempt from disclosure or must be released;

(d) Provide business information submitters with notice of any determination to disclose such records prior to the disclosure date, in order that the matter may be considered for possible judicial intervention; and

(e) Notify business information submitters promptly of all instances in which FOIA requesters bring suit seeking to compel disclosure of submitted information.

[65 FR 46339, July 28, 2000]

§ 1.13 Date of receipt of requests or appeals.

The date of receipt of a request or appeal shall be the date it is received in the agency and office responsible for the administrative processing of FOIA requests or appeals.

[65 FR 46339, July 28, 2000]

§ 1.14 Appeals.

(a) Requesters seeking administrative appeal of a denial of a request for records or denial of a fee waiver must ensure that the appeal is received by the agency within 45 days of the date of the denial letter.

(b) Each agency shall provide for review of appeals by an official different from the official or officials designated to make initial denials.

(c) 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)(A)(ii) provides that each agency in the Department to which an appeal of a denial is submitted shall inform the requester of its determination concerning that appeal within 20 working days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays), plus any extension authorized by §1.16, of its date of receipt. If the agency determines to grant the appeal, it shall inform the requester of any conditions surrounding the granting of the request (e.g., payment of fees) and the approximate date upon which compliance will be effected. If the agency grants only a portion of the appeal, it shall treat the portion not granted as a denial. If it determines to deny the appeal either in part or in whole, it shall inform the requester of that decision and of the following:

(1) The reasons for denial;

(2) The name and title or position of each person responsible for denial of the appeal; and

(3) The right to judicial review of the denial in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4).

(d) Each agency, upon a determination that it wishes to deny an appeal, shall send a copy of the records requested and of all correspondence relating to the request to the Assistant General Counsel, General Law Division, Office of the General Counsel (“Assistant General Counsel”). When the volume of records is so large as to make sending a copy impracticable,

§ 1.15

7 CFR Subtitle A (1-1-08 Edition)

the agency shall enclose an informative summary of those records. The agency shall not deny an appeal until it receives concurrence from the Assistant General Counsel

(e) The Assistant General Counsel shall promptly review the matter (including necessary coordination with the agency) and render all necessary assistance to enable the agency to respond to the appeal within the administrative deadline or any extension of the administrative deadline.

[65 FR 46339, July 28, 2000]

§ 1.15 General provisions respecting release of records.

(a) When releasing documents, agencies shall provide the record in any form or format the requester specifies, if the record is readily reproducible in that form or format. Agencies shall make reasonable efforts to maintain their records in forms or formats that are reproducible. In responding to requests for records, agencies shall make reasonable efforts to search for records in electronic form or format, except when such efforts would significantly interfere with the operation of an agency's automated information system. Such determinations shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

(b) In the event a requested record contains some portions that are exempt from mandatory disclosure and others that are not, the official responding to the request shall ensure that all reasonably segregable non-exempt portions are disclosed, and that all exempt portions are identified according to the specific exemption or exemptions which are applicable. The amount of deleted information shall be indicated on the released portion of paper records. Deletions may be marked by use of brackets or darkened areas indicating removal of information, or by any other method that would reasonably demonstrate the extent of the deletion. In the case of electronic deletion, or deletion in audiovisual or microfiche records, if technically feasible, the amount of redacted information shall be indicated at the place in the records, if technically feasible, the amount of redacted information shall be indicated at the place in the record where such

deletion was made. This may be done by use of brackets, shaded areas, or some other identifiable technique which will clearly show the limits of the deleted information.

(c) If, in connection with a request or an appeal, a charge is to be made in accordance with sec. 8 of appendix A to this subpart, agencies shall inform the requester of the fee amount and of the basis for the charge. Each agency, in accordance with sec. 8 of appendix A to this subpart, may require payment of the entire fee, or a portion of the fee, before it provides the requested records. An agency shall require full payment of any delinquent fee owed by the requester plus any applicable interest prior to releasing records on a subsequent request or appeal. If a requester refuses to remit payment in advance, an agency may refuse to process the request or appeal with written notice to that effect forwarded to the requester. The "date of receipt" appeal for which advance payment has been required shall be the date that payment is received.

(d) In the event compliance with the request or appeal involves inspection of records by the requester rather than providing copies of the records, the agency response shall include the name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person to be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient time for such inspection.

(e) Whenever duplication fees, or search fees for unsuccessful searches (see sec. 4(f) of appendix A to this subpart), are anticipated to exceed \$25.00, and the requester has not indicated, in advance, a willingness to pay fees as high as those anticipated, agencies shall notify the requester of the amount of the anticipated fee. If an extensive and therefore costly successful search is anticipated, agencies also should notify requesters of the anticipated fees. The notification shall offer the requester the opportunity to confer with agency personnel to reform the request to meet the requester's needs at a lower fee. In appropriate cases, an advance deposit in accordance with sec. 8 of appendix A to this subpart may be required.

[65 FR 46340, July 28, 2000]