

49 CFR

Part 209

Railroad Safety Enforcement Procedures

Subpart D

Disqualification Procedures

209.307

Reply.

(a) Within 30 days after receipt of the notice of proposed disqualification issued under § 209.305, the respondent shall reply in writing to the charges. The respondent may furnish affidavits and any other documentary evidence in support of the reply. Further, the respondent may elect to-

(1) Stipulate to the charges and consent to the imposition of the disqualification order under the conditions set forth in the notice;

(2) Make an informal response as provided in § 209.309; or

(3) Request a hearing as provided in § 209.311.

(b) The Chief Counsel may extend the reply period for good cause shown, provided the request for extension is served before the expiration of the period provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

(c) Failure of the respondent to reply to the notice of proposed disqualification within the period provided in paragraph (a) of this section or an extension thereto provided under paragraph (b) of this section constitutes a waiver of the respondent's right to appear and contest the charges or the proposed disqualification. Respondent's failure to reply authorizes the Chief Counsel, without further notice to the respondent, to find the respondent unfit for the performance of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 and to order the respondent disqualified from performing them for the period and under the other conditions described in the notice of proposed disqualification. The Chief Counsel shall serve respondent with the disqualification order and provide a copy of the order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed.

209.309

Informal response.

(a) If the respondent elects to make an informal response to a notice of proposed disqualification, he or she shall submit to the Chief Counsel such written explanations, information, or other materials as respondent may desire in answer to the charges or in mitigation of the proposed disqualification.

(b) The respondent may include in an informal written response a request for a conference. Upon receipt of such a request, the Chief Counsel shall arrange for a conference at a time and place designated by the Chief Counsel.

(c) Written explanations, information, or materials submitted by the respondent and relevant information presented during any conference held under this section shall be considered by the Chief Counsel in reviewing the notice of proposed disqualification, including the question of the respondent's fitness and the conditions of any disqualification that may be imposed.

(d) After consideration of an informal response, including any relevant information presented at a conference, the Chief Counsel shall take one of the following actions:

(1) Dismiss all the charges and terminate the notice of proposed disqualification;

(2) Dismiss some of the charges and mitigate the proposed disqualification;

(3) Mitigate the proposed disqualification; or

(4) Sustain the charges and proposed disqualification.

(e) Should the Chief Counsel sustain, in whole or in part, the charges and proposed disqualification and reach settlement with the respondent, the Chief Counsel shall issue an appropriate disqualification order reflecting the settlement and shall provide a copy of that order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed. The duration of the disqualification period may be less than, but shall be no greater than, the period set forth in the notice. Any settlement reached shall be evidenced by a written agreement, which shall include declarations from the respondent stipulating to the charges contained in the disqualification order, consenting to the imposition of the disqualification under the conditions set forth in the disqualification order, and waiving his or her right to a hearing.

(f) If settlement of the charges against the respondent is not achieved, the Chief Counsel shall terminate settlement discussions no later than 30 days from service of the informal response upon the Chief Counsel by serving respondent written notice of termination of settlement negotiations.

(g) By electing to make an informal response to a notice of proposed disqualification, the respondent does not waive the right to a hearing. However, the respondent must submit the hearing request required by § 209.311(a) within 10 days after receipt of the notice of termination of settlement negotiations from the Chief Counsel. Failure to submit such a request constitutes a waiver of the respondent's right to appear and contest the charges or the proposed disqualification.

(h) The Chief Counsel may extend the period for requesting a hearing for good cause shown, provided the request for extension is served before the expiration of the period provided in paragraph (g) of this section.

209.311

Request for hearing.

(a) If the respondent elects to request a hearing, he or she must submit a written request within the time periods specified in § 209.307(a) or § 209.309(g) to the Chief Counsel referring to the case number that appears on the notice of proposed disqualification. The request must contain the following:

(1) The name, address, and telephone number of the respondent and of the respondent's designated representative, if any;

(2) A specific response admitting, denying, or explaining each allegation of the notice of disqualification order.

(3) A description of the claims and defenses to be raised by the respondent at the hearing; and

(4) The signature of the respondent or the representative, if any.

(b) Upon receipt of a request for a hearing complying with the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, the Chief Counsel shall arrange for the appointment of a presiding officer and transmit the disqualification file to the presiding officer, who shall schedule the hearing for the earliest practicable date within the time period set by § 209.321(a) of this subpart.

(c) Upon assignment of a presiding officer, further matters in the proceeding generally are conducted by and through the presiding officer, except that the Chief Counsel and respondent may settle or voluntarily dismiss the case without order of the presiding officer. The Chief Counsel shall promptly notify the presiding officer of any settlement or dismissal of the case.

209.327

Appeal.

(a) Any party aggrieved by an initial decision issued under § 209.323 may file an appeal. The appeal must be filed within 35 days of issuance of the initial decision with the Federal Railroad Administrator, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. A copy of the appeal shall be served on each party. The appeal shall set forth objections to the initial decision, supported by reference to applicable laws and regulations, and with specific reference to the record. If the Administrator has played any role in investigating, prosecuting, or deciding to prosecute the particular case, the Administrator shall recuse him or herself and delegate his or her authority under this section to a person not so involved.

(b) A party may file a reply to an appeal within 25 days of service of the appeal. If the party relies on evidence contained in the record for the reply, the party shall specifically refer to the pertinent evidence in the record.

(c) The Administrator may extend the period for filing an appeal or a response for good cause shown, provided the written request for extension is served before the expiration of the applicable period provided in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section.

(d) The Administrator has sole discretion to permit oral argument on the appeal. On the Administrator's own initiative or upon written motion by any party, the Administrator may determine that oral argument will contribute substantially to the development of the issues on appeal and may grant the parties an opportunity for oral argument.

(e) The Administrator may affirm, reverse, alter, or modify the decision of the presiding officer, or may remand the case for further proceedings before the presiding officer. The Administrator shall inform the parties and the presiding officer of his or her decision.

(f) The decision of the Administrator is final, constitutes final agency action, and is not subject to further administrative review.

209.331

Enforcement of disqualification order.

(a) A railroad that employs or formerly employed an individual serving under a disqualification order shall inform prospective or actual employers of the terms and conditions of the order upon receiving notice that the disqualified employee is being considered for employment with or is employed by another railroad to perform any of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303.

(b) A railroad that is considering hiring an individual to perform the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 shall ascertain from the individual's previous employer,

if such employer was a railroad, whether the individual is subject to a disqualification order.

(c) An individual subject to a disqualification order shall inform his or her employer of the order and provide a copy thereof within 5 days after receipt of the order. Such an individual shall likewise inform any prospective employer who is considering hiring the individual to perform any of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 of the order and provide a copy thereof within 5 days after receipt of the order or upon application for the position, whichever first occurs.