and order of the Commission thirty (30) days after service thereof, except:

(1) The initial decision shall not become the final decision as to a party who shall have timely filed and perfected an appeal thereof to the Commission in accordance with §12.401 of these rules; and

(2) The initial decision shall not become final as to any party to the proceeding if, within thirty (30) days after service of the initial decision, the Commission itself shall have placed the case on its own docket for review or stayed the effective date of the initial decision.

(e) Effect of failure to file and perfect an appeal to the Commission. Unless the Commission takes review on its own motion, the timely filing and perfection of an appeal to the Commission of the initial decision is mandatory as a prerequisite to appellate judicial review of a final decision and order entered pursuant to these rules.

§§ 12.301–12.302 [Reserved]

§ 12.303 Pre-decision conferences.

During the time period permitted for discovery pursuant to §12.30(d), and thereafter, the Administrative Law Judge may, in his discretion, conduct one or more pre-decision conferences to be held in Washington, DC or by telephone, with all parties for the purposes of:

(a) Discussing the advisability of electing the voluntary decisional procedure;

(b) Encouraging a settlement of the entire case, or any part thereof (such discussions may be ex parte with the consent of all parties);

(c) Simplifying or clarifying issues;

(d) Obtaining stipulations, admissions of fact and of authenticity of documents;

(e) Discussing amendments or supplements to the pleadings;

(f) Encouraging an early settlement of disputes relating to discovery; and

(g) Discussing any matters of relevance in the proceeding.

At or following the conclusion of a pre-decision conference, the Administrative Law Judge may serve a pre-decision memorandum and order setting forth the agreements reached by the parties, any procedural determinations made by him, and the issues for resolution not disposed of by admissions or agreements by the parties. Such an order shall control the subsequent course of the proceeding unless modified to prevent injustice.

§ 12.304 Functions and responsibilities of the Administrative Law Judge.

Once he has been assigned the case, the Administrative Law Judge shall be responsible for the fair and orderly conduct of a formal decisional proceeding and shall have the authority:

(a) To issue such orders as are described in §12.34 of these rules;

(b) To issue subpoenas pursuant to §§12.34, 12.36, and 12.313 of these rules;

(c) To take such action as is appropriate pursuant to §12.35 if a party fails to comply with a discovery order, or an order issued pursuant to §12.34 of these rules;