

## § 1981.103

## 29 CFR Ch. XVII (7–1–10 Edition)

request, engaged in any of the activities specified in paragraphs (b)(1) through (5) of this section.

(b) It is a violation of the Act for any employer to intimidate, threaten, restrain, coerce, blacklist, discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because the employee has:

(1) Provided, caused to be provided, or is about to provide or cause to be provided to the employer or the Federal Government, information relating to any violation or alleged violation of any order, regulation, or standard under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety;

(2) Refused to engage in any practice made unlawful by chapter 601, in subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety, if the employee has identified the alleged illegality to the employer;

(3) Provided, caused to be provided, or is about to provide or cause to be provided, testimony before Congress or at any Federal or State proceeding regarding any provision (or proposed provision) of chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety, or testimony in any proceeding under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety, or a proceeding for the administration or enforcement of any requirement imposed under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety;

(4) Commenced, caused to be commenced, or is about to commence or cause to be commenced a proceeding under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety, or a proceeding for the administration or enforcement of any requirement imposed under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety; or

(5) Assisted or participated or is about to assist or participate in any manner in such a proceeding or in any

other action to carry out the purposes of chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law relating to pipeline safety.

(c) This part shall have no application to any employee of an employer who, acting without direction from the employer (or such employer's agent), deliberately causes a violation of any requirement relating to pipeline safety under chapter 601, subtitle VIII of title 49 of the United States Code or any other Federal law.

### § 1981.103 Filing of discrimination complaint.

(a) Who may file. An employee who believes that he or she has been discriminated against by an employer in violation of the Act may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such discrimination.

(b) Nature of filing. No particular form of complaint is required, except that a complaint must be in writing and should include a full statement of the acts and omissions, with pertinent dates, which are believed to constitute the violations.

(c) Place of filing. The complaint should be filed with the OSHA Area Director responsible for enforcement activities in the geographical area where the employee resides or was employed, but may be filed with any OSHA officer or employee. Addresses and telephone numbers for these officials are set forth in local directories and at the following Internet address: <http://www.osha.gov>.

(d) Time for filing. Within 180 days after an alleged violation of the Act occurs (*i.e.*, when the discriminatory decision has been both made and communicated to the complainant), an employee who believes that he or she has been discriminated against in violation of the Act may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such discrimination. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, or e-mail communication will be considered to be the date of filing; if the complaint is filed in person, by hand-delivery or other means, the complaint is filed upon receipt.

(e) Relationship to section 11(c) complaints. A complaint filed under the Pipeline Safety Act that alleges facts which would constitute a violation of section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 29 U.S.C. 660(c), will be deemed to be a complaint filed under both the Pipeline Safety Act and section 11(c). Similarly, a complaint filed under section 11(c) that alleges facts that would constitute a violation of the Pipeline Safety Act will be deemed to be a complaint filed under both the Pipeline Safety Act and section 11(c). Normal procedures and timeliness requirements for investigations under the respective laws and regulations will be followed.

**§ 1981.104 Investigation.**

(a) Upon receipt of a complaint in the investigating office, the Assistant Secretary will notify the named person of the filing of the complaint, of the allegations contained in the complaint, and of the substance of the evidence supporting the complaint (redacted to protect the identity of any confidential informants). The Assistant Secretary will also notify the named person of his or her rights under paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section and paragraph (e) of § 1981.110. A copy of the notice to the named person will also be provided to the Department of Transportation.

(b) A complaint of alleged violation shall be dismissed unless the complainant has made a *prima facie* showing that protected behavior or conduct was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint.

(1) The complaint, supplemented as appropriate by interviews of the complainant, must allege the existence of facts and evidence to make a *prima facie* showing as follows:

(i) The employee engaged in a protected activity or conduct;

(ii) The named person knew or suspected, actually or constructively, that the employee engaged in the protected activity;

(iii) The employee suffered an unfavorable personnel action; and

(iv) The circumstances were sufficient to raise the inference that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the unfavorable action.

(2) For purposes of determining whether to investigate, the complainant will be considered to have met the required burden if the complaint on its face, supplemented as appropriate through interviews of the complainant, alleges the existence of facts and either direct or circumstantial evidence to meet the required showing, *i.e.*, to give rise to an inference that the named person knew or suspected that the employee engaged in protected activity and that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action. Normally the burden is satisfied, for example, if the complaint shows that the adverse personnel action took place shortly after the protected activity, giving rise to the inference that it was a factor in the adverse action. If the required showing has not been made, the complainant will be so advised and the investigation will not commence.

(c) Notwithstanding a finding that a complainant has made a *prima facie* showing, as required by this section, an investigation of the complaint shall not be conducted if the named person, pursuant to the procedures provided in this paragraph, demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of the complainant's protected behavior or conduct. Within 20 days of receipt of the notice of the filing of the complaint, the named person may submit to the Assistant Secretary a written statement and any affidavits or documents substantiating his or her position. Within the same 20 days, the named person may request a meeting with the Assistant Secretary to present his or her position.

(d) If the named person fails to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of the behavior protected by the Act, the Assistant Secretary will conduct an investigation. Investigations will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of any person who provides information on a confidential basis, other than the complainant, in accordance with part 70 of title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations.