

year and the period of severance equals or exceeds the prior period of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. The plan may in computing such aggregate number of years of service prior to such break disregard any years of service which could have been disregarded under this subparagraph by reason of any prior break in service.

(ii) *Examples.* The rules of this subparagraph are illustrated by the following example:

Example. In 1980, A, who was hired at age 35, separates from the service of X Corporation after completing 4 years of service. At this time A had no vested benefits. In 1985, after incurring 5 consecutive one-year breaks in service, A was reemployed. Under section 410(a)(5)(D), A's 4 years of service may be disregarded because they are exceeded by the number of years of consecutive one-year breaks (5) after such service.

(d) *Special continuity rule for certain plans.* For special rules for computing years of service in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, see regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Labor under 29 CFR Part 2530, relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47196, Sept. 20, 1977; T.D. 7508, 42 FR 57123, Nov. 1, 1977, as amended by T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980]

§ 1.410(a)-6 Amendment of break in service rules; Transition period.

(a) *In general.* Under section 1017(f) (1) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, a plan is not a qualified plan (and a trust forming a part of such plan is not a qualified trust) if the rules of the plan relating to breaks in service are amended, and—

(1) Such amendment is effective after January 1, 1974, and before the date on which section 410 becomes applicable to the plan, and

(2) Under such amendment, any employee's participation in the plan commences at any date later than the later of—

(i) The date on which his participation would commence under the break in service rules of section 410(a)(5), or

(ii) The earliest date on which his participation would commence under

the plan as in effect on or after January 1, 1974.

(b) *Break in service rules.* For purposes of paragraph (a), the term "break in service rules" means the rules provided by a plan relating to circumstances under which a period of an employee's service or plan participation is disregarded for purposes of determining his rights to participate in the plan, if under such rules such service is disregarded by reason of the employee's failure to complete a required period of service within a specified period of time.

(Sec. 410 (88 Stat. 898; 26 U.S.C. 410))

[T.D. 7508, 42 FR 47197, Sept. 20, 1977; 43 FR 2721, Jan. 19, 1978]

§ 1.410(a)-7 Elapsed time.

(a) *In general—*(1) *Introduction to elapsed time method of crediting service.*

(i) 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 sets forth the general method of crediting service for an employee. The general method is based upon the actual counting of hours of service during the applicable 12-consecutive-month computation period. The equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-3 are also methods for crediting hours of service during computation periods. Under the general method and the equivalencies an employee receives a year's credit (in units of years of service or years of participation) for a computation period during which the employee is credited with a specified number of hours of service. In general, an employee's statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual is determined by totalling the number of years' credit to which an employee is entitled.

(ii) Under the alternative method set forth in this section, by contrast, an employee's statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual is not based upon the actual completion of a specified number of hours of service during a 12-consecutive-month period. Instead, such entitlement is determined generally with reference to the total period of time which elapses while the employee is employed (i.e., while the employment relationship exists) with

the employer or employers maintaining the plan. The alternative method set forth in this section is designed to enable a plan to lessen the administrative burdens associated with the maintenance of records of an employee's hours of service by permitting each employee to be credited with his or her total period of service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan, irrespective of the actual hours of service completed in any 12-consecutive-month period.

(2) *Overview of the operation of the elapsed time method.* (i) Under the elapsed time method of crediting service, a plan is generally required to take into account the period of time which elapses while the employee is employed (*i.e.*, while the employment relationship exists) with the employer or employers maintaining the plan, regardless of the actual number of hours he or she completes during such period. Under this alternative method of crediting service, an employee's service is required to be taken into account for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting as of the date he or she first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 (a) (1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan. Service is required to be taken into account for the period of time from the date the employee first performs such an hour of service until the date he or she severs from service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(ii) The date the employee severs from service is the earlier of the date the employee quits, is discharged, retires or dies, or the first anniversary of the date the employee is absent from service for any other reason (*e.g.*, disability, vacation, leave of absence, layoff, etc.). Thus, for example, if an employee quits, the severance from service date is the date the employee quits. On the other hand, if an employee is granted a leave of absence (and if no intervening event occurs), the severance from service date will occur one year after the date the employee was first absent on leave, and this one year of absence is required to be taken into account as service for the employer or employers maintaining the plan. Because the severance from service date

occurs on the earlier of two possible dates (*i.e.*, quit, discharge, retirement or death or the first anniversary of an absence from service for any other reason), a quit, discharge, retirement or death within the year after the beginning of an absence for any other reason results in an immediate severance from service. Thus, for example, if an employee dies at the end of a four-week absence resulting from illness, the severance from service date is the date of death, rather than the first anniversary date of the first day of absence for illness.

(iii) In addition, for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting under the elapsed time method of crediting service, an employee who has severed from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement may be entitled to have a period of time of 12 months or less taken into account by the employer or employers maintaining the plan if the employee returns to service within a certain period of time and performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 (a) (1). In general, the period of time during which the employee must return to service begins on the date the employee severs from service as a result of a quit, discharge or retirement and ends on the first anniversary of such date. However, if the employee is absent for any other reason (*e.g.*, layoff) and then quits, is discharged or retires, the period of time during which the employee may return and receive credit begins on the severance from service date and ends one year after the first day of absence (*e.g.*, first day of layoff). As a result of the operation of these rules, a severance from service (*e.g.*, a quit), or an absence (*e.g.*, layoff) followed by a severance from service, never results in a period of time of more than one year being required to be taken into account after an employee severs from service or is absent from service.

(iv) For purposes of benefit accrual under the elapsed time method of crediting service, an employee is entitled to have his or her service taken into account from the date he or she begins to participate in the plan until the severance from service date. Periods of severance under any circumstances are

not required to be taken into account. For example, a participant who is discharged on December 14, 1980 and re-hired on October 14, 1981 is not required to be credited with the 10 month period of severance for benefit accrual purposes.

(3) *Overview of certain concepts relating to the elapsed time method*—(i) *In general.* The rules with respect to the elapsed time method of crediting service are based on certain concepts which are defined in paragraph (b) of this section. These concepts are applied in the substantive rules contained in paragraphs (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g) of this section. The purpose of this subparagraph is to summarize these concepts.

(ii) *Employment commencement date.* (A) A concept which is necessary in order to credit service accurately under any service crediting method is the establishment of a starting point for crediting service. The employment commencement date, which is the date on which an employee first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 (a) (1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan, is used to establish the date upon which an employee must begin to receive credit for certain purposes (e.g., eligibility to participate and vesting).

(B) In order to credit accurately an employee's total service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan, a plan also may provide for an "adjusted" employment commencement date (*i.e.*, a recalculation of the employment commencement date to reflect noncreditable periods of severance) or a reemployment commencement date as defined in paragraph (b) (3) of this section. Fundamentally, all three concepts rely upon the performance of an hour of service to provide a starting point for crediting service. One purpose of these three concepts is to enable plans to satisfy the requirements of this section in a variety of ways.

(C) The fundamental rule with respect to these concepts is that any plan provision is permissible so long as it satisfies the minimum standards. Thus, for example, although the rules of this section provide that credit must begin on the employment commencement date, a plan is permitted to "adjust"

the employment commencement date to reflect periods of time for which service is not required to be credited. Similarly, a plan may wish to credit service under the elapsed time method as discrete periods of service and provide for a reemployment commencement date. Certain plans may wish to provide for both concepts, although it is not a requirement of this section that plans so provide.

(iii) *Severance from service date.* Another fundamental concept of the elapsed time method of crediting service is the severance from service date, which is defined as the earlier of the date on which an employee quits, retires, is discharged or dies, or the first anniversary of the first date of absence for any other reason. One purpose of the severance from service date is to provide the endpoint for crediting service under the elapsed time method. As a general proposition, service is credited from the employment commencement date (*i.e.*, the starting point) until the severance from service date (*i.e.*, the endpoint). A complementary purpose of the severance from service date is to establish the starting point for measuring a period of severance from service in order to determine a "break in service" (see paragraph (a)(3)(v) of this section). A third purpose of such date is to establish the starting point for measuring the period of time which may be required to be taken into account under the service spanning rules (see paragraph (a)(3)(vi) of this section).

(iv) *Period of service.* A third elapsed time concept is the use of the "period of service" rather than the "year of service" in determining service to be taken into account for purposes of eligibility to participate, vesting and benefit accrual. For purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting, the period of service runs from the employment commencement date or reemployment commencement date until the severance from service date. For purposes of benefit accrual, a period of service runs from the date that a participant commences participation under the plan until the severance from service date. Because the endpoint of the period of service is marked by the severance

from service date, an employee is credited with the period of time which runs during any absence from service (other than for reason of a quit, retirement, discharge or death) which is 12 months or less. Thus, for example, a three week absence for vacation is taken into account as part of a period of service and does not trigger a severance from service date.

(v) *Period of severance.* A period of severance begins on the severance from service date and ends when an employee returns to service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan. The purpose of the period of severance is to apply the statutory “break in service” rules to an elapsed time method of crediting service.

(vi) *Service spanning.* Under the elapsed time method of crediting service, a plan is required to credit periods of service and, under the service spanning rules, certain periods of severance of 12 months or less for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting. Under the first service spanning rule, if an employee severs from service as a result of quit, discharge or retirement and then returns to service within 12 months, the period of severance is required to be taken into account. Also, a situation may arise in which an employee is absent from service for any reason other than quit, discharge, retirement or death and during the absence a quit, discharge or retirement occurs. The second service spanning rule provides in that set of circumstances that a plan is required to take into account the period of time between the severance from service date (*i.e.*, the date of quit, discharge or retirement) and the first anniversary of the date on which the employee was first absent, if the employee returns to service on or before such first anniversary date.

(4) *Organization and applicability.* (i) The substantive rules for crediting service under the elapsed time method with respect to eligibility to participate are contained in paragraph (c), the rules with respect to vesting are contained in subparagraph (d), and the rules with respect to benefit accrual are contained in paragraph (e). The format of the rules is designed to enable a plan to use the elapsed time method of

crediting service either for all purposes or for any one or combination of purposes under sections 410 and 411. Thus, for example, a plan may credit service for eligibility to participate purposes by the use of the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 or by the use of any of the equivalences set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-3, while the plan may credit service for vesting and benefit accrual purposes by the use of the elapsed time method of crediting service.

(ii) A plan using the elapsed time method of crediting service for one or more classifications of employees covered under the plan may use the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 or any of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-3 for other classifications of employees, provided that such classifications are reasonable and are consistently applied. Thus, for example, a plan may provide that part-time employees are credited under the general method of crediting service set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 and full-time employees are credited under the elapsed time method. A classification, however, will not be deemed to be reasonable or consistently applied if such classification is designed with an intent to preclude an employee or employees from attaining his or her statutory entitlement with respect to eligibility to participate, vesting or benefit accrual. For example, a classification applied so that any full-time employee credited with less than 1,000 hours of service during a given 12-consecutive-month period would be considered part-time and subject to the general method of crediting service rather than the elapsed time method would not be reasonable.

(iii) Notwithstanding paragraph (a) (4) (i) and (ii) of this section, the use of the elapsed time method for some purposes or the use of the elapsed time method for some employees may, under certain circumstances, result in discrimination prohibited under section 401(a)(4), even though the use of the elapsed time method for such purposes, and for such employees, is permitted under this section.

(5) *More than one employer plans.* For special rules for computing years of

service in the case of a plan maintained by more than one employer, see 29 CFR Part 2530 (Department of Labor regulations relating to minimum standards for employee pension benefit plans).

(b) *Definitions*—(1) *Employment commencement date*. For purposes of this section, the term “employment commencement date” shall mean the date on which the employee first performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 (a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(2) *Severance from service date*. For purposes of this section, a “severance from service” shall occur on the earlier of—

(i) The date on which an employee quits, retires, is discharged or dies; or

(ii) The first anniversary of the first date of a period in which an employee remains absent from service (with or without pay) with the employer or employers maintaining the plan for any reason other than quit, retirement, discharge or death, such as vacation, holiday, sickness, disability, leave of absence or layoff.

(3) *Reemployment commencement date*. For purposes of this section, the term “reemployment commencement date” shall mean the first date, following a period of severance from service which is not required to be taken into account under the service spanning rules in paragraphs (c)(2)(iii) and (d)(1)(iii) of this section, on which the employee performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(4) *Participation commencement date*. For purposes of this section, the term “participation commencement date” shall mean the date a participant first commences participation under the plan.

(5) *Period of severance*. For purposes of this section, the term “period of severance” shall mean the period of time commencing on the severance from service date and ending on the date on which the employee again performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) for an employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(6) *Period of service*—(i) *General rule*. For purposes of this section, the term “period of service” shall mean a period of service commencing on the employee’s employment commencement date or reemployment commencement date, whichever is applicable, and ending on the severance from service date.

(ii) *Aggregation rule*. Unless a plan provides in some manner for an “adjusted” employment commencement date or similar method of consolidating periods of service, periods of service shall be aggregated unless such periods may be disregarded under section 410(a)(5) or 411(a)(4).

(iii) *Other federal law*. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter, amend, modify, invalidate, impair or supersede any law of the United States or any rule or regulation issued under such law. Thus, for example, nothing in this section shall be construed as denying an employee credit for a “period of service” if credit is required by a separate federal law. Furthermore, the nature and extent of such credit shall be determined under such law.

(c) *Eligibility to participate*—(1) *General rule*. For purposes of section 410(a)(1)(A), a plan generally may not require as a condition of participation in the plan that an employee complete a period of service with the employer or employers maintaining the plan extending beyond the later of—

(i) The date on which the employee attains the age of 25; or

(ii) The date on which the employee completes a one-year period of service. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(2) *Determination of one-year period of service*. (i) For purposes of determining the date on which an employee satisfies the service requirement for initial eligibility to participate under the plan, a plan using the elapsed time method of crediting service shall provide that an employee who completes the 1-year period of service requirement on the first anniversary of his employment commencement date satisfies the minimum service requirement as of such date. In the case of an employee who fails to complete a one-

year period of service on the first anniversary of his employment commencement date, a plan which does not contain a provision permitted by section 410(a)(5)(D) (rule of parity) shall provide for the aggregation of periods of service so that a one-year period of service shall be completed as of the date the employee completes 12 months of service (30 days are deemed to be a month in the case of the aggregation of fractional months) or 365 days of service.

(ii) For purposes of section 410(a)(1)(B)(i), a “3-year period of service” shall be deemed to be “3 years of service.”

(iii) *Service spanning rules.* In determining a 1-year period of service for purposes of initial eligibility to participate and a period of service for purposes of retention of eligibility to participate, in addition to taking into account an employee’s period of service, a plan shall take into account the following periods of severance—

(A) If an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement and the employee then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) within 12 months of the severance from service date, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance; and

(B) Notwithstanding paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, if an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement during an absence from service of 12 months or less for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, and then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) within 12 months of the date on which the employee was first absent from service, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance.

(iv) For purposes of determining an employee’s retention of eligibility to participate in the plan, a plan shall take into account an employee’s entire period of service unless certain periods of service may be disregarded under section 410(a)(5) of the Code.

(v) *Example.* Employee W, age 31, completed 6 months of service and was laid off. After 2 months of layoff, W quit. Five months later, W returned to

service. For purposes of eligibility to participate, W was required to be credited with 13 months of service (8 months of service and 5 months of severance). If, on the other hand, W had not returned to service within the first 10 months of severance (*i.e.*, within 12 months after the first day of layoff), W would be required to be credited with only 8 months of service.

(3) *Entry date requirements—(i) General rule.* For purposes of section 410(a)(4), it is necessary for a plan to provide that any employee who has satisfied the minimum age and service requirements, and who is otherwise entitled to participate in the plan, commences participation in the plan no later than the earlier of—

(A) The first day of the first plan year beginning after the date on which such employee satisfied such requirements, or

(B) The date six months after the date on which he satisfied such requirements, unless such employee was separated from service before the date referred to in subdivision (i) (A) or (B), whichever is applicable. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(ii) *Separation from service—(A) Definition.* For purposes of this section, the term “separated from service” includes a severance from service or an absence from service for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, regardless of the duration of such absence. Accordingly, if an employee is laid off for a period of six weeks, the employee shall be deemed to be “separated from service” during such period for purposes of the entry date requirements.

(B) *Application.* A period of severance which is taken into account under the service spanning rules in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section or an absence of 12 months or less may result in an employee satisfying the plan’s minimum service requirement during such period of time. In addition, once an employee satisfies the plan’s minimum service requirement, either before or during such period of time, such period of time may contain an entry date applicable to such employee. In the case

of an employee whose period of severance is taken into account and such period contains an entry date applicable to the employee, he or she shall be made a participant in the plan (if otherwise eligible) no later than the date on which he or she ended the period of severance. In the case of an employee whose period of absence contains an entry date applicable to such employee, he or she, no later than the date such absence ended, shall be made a participant in the plan (if otherwise eligible) as of the first applicable entry date which occurred during such absence from service.

(iii) *Examples.* For purposes of the following examples, assume that the plan provides for a minimum age requirement of 25 and a minimum service requirement of one year, and provides for semi-annual entry dates.

(A) Employee A, age 35, worked for 10 months in a job classification covered under the plan, became disabled for nine consecutive months and then returned to service. During the period of absence, A completed a 1-year period of service and passed a semi-annual entry date after satisfying the minimum service requirement. Accordingly, the plan is required to make A a participant no later than his return to service effective as of the applicable entry date.

(B) Employee B, after satisfying the minimum age and service requirements, quit work before the next semi-annual entry date, and then returned to service before incurring a 1-year period of severance, but after such semi-annual entry date. Employee B is entitled to become a participant immediately upon his return to service effective as of the date of his return.

(4) *Break in service.* For purposes of applying the break in service rules under section 410(a)(5) (B) and (C), the term "1-year period of severance" shall be substituted for the term "1-year break in service". A 1-year period of severance shall be determined on the basis of a 12-consecutive-month period beginning on the severance from service date and ending on the first anniversary of such date, provided that the employee during such 12-consecutive-month period does not perform an hour of service within the meaning of 29

CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) for the employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(5) *One-year hold-out—(1) General rule.* (A) For purposes of section 410(a)(5)(C), in determining the period of service of an employee who has incurred a 1-year period of severance, a plan may disregard the employee's period of service before such period of severance until the employee completes a 1-year period of service after such period of severance.

(B) *Example.* Assume that a plan provides for a minimum service requirement of 1-year and provides for semi-annual entry dates, but does not contain the provisions permitted by section 410(a)(5)(D) (relating to the rule of parity). Employee G, age 40, completed a seven-month period of service, quit and then returned to service 15 months later, thereby incurring a 1-year period of severance. After working four months, G was laid off for nine months and then returned to work again. Although the plan may hold employee G out from participation in the plan until the completion of a 1-year period of service after the 1-year (or greater) period of severance, once the 1-year hold-out is completed, the plan is required to provide the employee with such statutory entitlement as arose during the 1-year hold-out. Accordingly, employee G satisfied the 1-year hold-out requirement as of the eighth month of layoff, and G is entitled to become a participant in the plan immediately upon his return to service after the nine-month layoff effective as of the first applicable entry date occurring after the date on which he satisfied the 1-year of service requirement (*i.e.*, the first applicable entry date after the first month of layoff). See the regulations under section 410 (a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(6) *Rule of parity—(i) General rule.* For purposes of section 410(a)(5)(D), in the case of a participant who does not have any nonforfeitable right under the plan to his accrued benefit derived from employer contributions and who incurs a 1-year period of severance, a plan, in determining an employee's period of service for purposes of section 410(a)(1), may disregard his period of service if his latest period of severance equals or exceeds his prior periods of service,

whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. See the regulations under section 410(a) (relating to eligibility to participate).

(ii) In determining whether a completely nonvested employee's service may be disregarded under the rule of parity, a plan is not permitted to apply the rule until the employee incurs a 1-year period of severance. Accordingly, a plan may not disregard a period of service of less than one year until an employee has incurred a period of severance of at least one year.

(iii) *Example.* Assume that a plan provides for a minimum service requirement of one year and provides for the rule of parity. An employee works for three months, quits and then is rehired 10 months later. Such employee is entitled to receive 13 months of credit for purposes of eligibility to participate and vesting (see the service spanning rules). Although the period of severance exceeded the period of service, the three months of service may not be disregarded because no 1-year period of severance occurred.

(d) *Vesting—(1) General rule.* (i) For purposes of section 411(a)(2), relating to vesting in accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, a plan which determines service to be taken in account on the basis of elapsed time shall provide that an employee is credited with a number of years of service equal to at least the number of whole years of the employee's period of service, whether or not such periods of service were completed consecutively.

(ii) In order to determine the number of whole years of an employee's period of service, a plan shall provide that non-successive periods of service must be aggregated and that less than whole year periods of service (whether or not consecutive) must be aggregated on the basis that 12 months of service (30 days are deemed to be a month in the case of the aggregation of fractional months) or 365 days of service equal a whole year of service.

(iii) *Service spanning rules.* In determining a participant's period of service for vesting purposes, a plan shall take into account the following periods of severance—

(A) If an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or re-

tirement and the employee then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) within 12 months of the severance from service date, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance; and

(B) Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(1)(iii)(A) of this section, if an employee severs from service by reason of a quit, discharge or retirement during an absence from service of 12 months or less for any reason other than a quit, discharge, retirement or death, and then performs an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) within 12 months of the date on which the employee was first absent from service, the plan is required to take into account the period of severance.

(iv) For purposes of determining an employee's nonforfeitable percentage of accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, a plan, after calculating an employee's period of service in the manner prescribed in this paragraph, may disregard any remaining less than whole year, 12-month or 365-day period of service. Thus, for example, if a plan provides for the statutory five to fifteen year graded vesting, an employee with a period (or periods) of service which yield 5 whole year periods of service and an additional 321-day period of service is twenty-five percent vested in his or her employer-derived accrued benefits (based solely on the 5 whole year periods of service).

(2) *Service which may be disregarded.* (i) For purposes of section 411(a)(4), in determining the nonforfeitable percentage of an employee's right to his or her accrued benefits derived from employer contributions, all of an employee's period or periods of service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan shall be taken into account unless such service may be disregarded under paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section.

(ii) For purposes of paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section, the following periods of service may be disregarded—

(A) The period of service completed by an employee before the date on which he attains age 22;

(B) In the case of a plan which requires mandatory employee contributions, the period of service which falls

within the period of time to which a particular employee contribution relates, if the employee had the opportunity to make a contribution for such period of time and failed to do so;

(C) The period of service during any period for which the employer did not maintain the plan or a predecessor plan;

(D) The period of service which is not required to be taken into account by reason of a period of severance which constitutes a break in service within the meaning of paragraph (d)(4) of this section;

(E) The period of service completed by an employee prior to January 1, 1971, unless the employee completes a period of service of at least 3 years at any time after December 31, 1970; and

(F) The period of service completed before the first plan year for which this section applies to the plan, if such service would have been disregarded under the plan rules relating to breaks in service in effect at that time. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(3) *Seasonal industry.* [Reserved]

(4) *Break in service.* For purposes of applying the break in service rules, the term “1-year period of severance” shall be substituted for the term “1-year break in service”. A 1-year period of severance shall be a 12-consecutive-month period beginning on the severance from service date and ending on the first anniversary of such date, provided that the employee during such 12-consecutive-month period fails to perform an hour of service within the meaning of 29 CFR 2530.200b-2(a)(1) for an employer or employers maintaining the plan.

(5) *One-year hold-out.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(B), in determining the nonforfeitable percentage of the right to accrued benefits derived from employer contributions of an employee who has incurred a 1-year period of severance, the period of service completed before such period of severance is not required to be taken into account until the employee has completed a 1-year period of service after his return to service. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(6) *Vesting in pre-break accruals.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(C), a “1-

year period of severance” shall be deemed to constitute a “1-year break in service.” See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(7) *Rule of parity—(i) General rule.* For purposes of section 411(a)(6)(D), in the case of an employee who is a non-vested participant in employer-derived benefits at the time he incurs a 1-year period of severance, the period of service completed by such participant before such period of severance is not required to be taken into account for purposes of determining the vested percentage of his or her right to employer-derived benefits if at such time the consecutive period of severance equals or exceeds his prior periods of service, whether or not consecutive, completed before such period of severance. See the regulations under section 411(a) (relating to vesting).

(e) *Benefit accrual.* (1) For purposes of section 411(b), a plan may provide that a participant’s service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan shall be determined on the basis of the participant’s total period of service beginning on the participation commencement date and ending on the severance from service date.

(2) Under section 411(b)(3)(A), a defined benefit pension plan may determine an employee’s service for purposes of benefit accrual on any basis which is reasonable and consistent and which takes into account all service during the employee’s participation in the plan which is included in a period of service required to be taken into account under section 410(a)(5) (relating to service which must be taken into account for purposes of determining an employee’s eligibility to participate). A plan which provides for the determination of an employee’s service with an employer or employers maintaining the plan on the basis permitted under paragraph (e)(1) of this section will be deemed to meet the requirements of section 411(b)(3)(A), provided that the plan meets the requirements of 29 CFR 2530.204-3, relating to plans which determine an employee’s service for purposes of benefit accrual on a basis other than computation periods. Specifically, under 29 CFR 2530.204-3, it must be possible to prove that, despite the fact that benefit accrual under

such a plan is not based on computation periods, the plan's provisions meet at least one of the three benefit accrual rules of section 411(b)(1) under all circumstances. Further, 29 CFR 2530.204-3 prohibits such a plan from disregarding service under section 411(b)(3)(C) (which would otherwise permit a plan to disregard service performed by an employee during a computation period in which the employee is credited with less than 1,000 hours). See the regulations under section 411(b) (relating to benefit accrual).

(f) *Transfers between methods of crediting service*—(1) *Single plan*. A plan may provide that an employee's service for purposes of eligibility to participate, vesting or benefit accrual shall be determined on the basis of computation periods under the general method set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 for certain classes of employees but under the alternative method permitted under this section for other classes of employees if the plan provides as follows—

(i) In the case of an employee who transfers from a class of employees whose service is determined on the basis of computation periods to a class of employees whose service is determined on the alternative basis permitted under this section, the employee shall receive credit for a period of service consisting of—

(A) A number of years equal to the number of years of service credited to the employee before the computation period during which the transfer occurs; and

(B) The greater of (1) the period of service that would be credited to the employee under the elapsed time method for his service during the entire computation period in which the transfer occurs or (2) the service taken into account under the computation periods method as of the date of the transfer.

In addition, the employee shall receive credit for service subsequent to the transfer commencing on the day after the last day of the computation period in which the transfer occurs.

(ii) In the case of an employee who transfers from a class of employees whose service is determined on the alternative basis permitted under this section to a class of employees whose

service is determined on the basis of computation periods—

(A) The employee shall receive credit, as of the date of the transfer, for a number of years of service equal to the number of 1-year periods of service credited to the employee as of the date of the transfer, and

(B) The employee shall receive credit, in the computation period which includes the date of the transfer, for a number of hours of service determined by applying one of the equivalencies set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-3 (e) (1) to any fractional part of a year credited to the employee under this section as of the date of the transfer. Such equivalency shall be set forth in the plan and shall apply to all similarly situated employees.

(2) *More than one plan*. In the case of an employee who transfers from a plan using either the general method of determining service on the basis of computation periods set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200b-2 or the method of determining service permitted under this section to a plan using the other method of determining service, all service required to be credited under the plan to which the employee transfers shall be determined by applying the rules of paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(g) *Amendments to change method of crediting service*. A plan may be amended to change the method of crediting service for any purpose or for any class of employees between the general method set forth in 29 CFR 2530.200-2 and the method permitted under this section, if such amendment contains provisions under which each employee with respect to whom the method of crediting service is changed is treated in the same manner as an employee who transfers from one class of employees to another under paragraph (f)(1) of this section.

(h) *Transitional rule*. For plans in existence on [insert the date of the publication of this document], the provisions of paragraph (f) of this section are effective for plan years beginning after December 31, 1983.

[T.D. 7703, 45 FR 40980, June 17, 1980]