

plan all of the computed commissions will be counted as compensation representing commissions even though the amount of commissions may not equal or exceed the guarantee or draw in some workweeks. The exemption will also apply in the case of an employee who is paid a fixed salary plus an additional amount of earned commissions if the amount of commission payments exceeds the total amount of salary payments for the representative period.

(c) A commission rate is not bona fide if the formula for computing the commissions is such that the employee, in fact, always or almost always earns the same fixed amount of compensation for each workweek (as would be the case where the computed commissions seldom or never equal or exceed the amount of the draw or guarantee). Another example of a commission plan which would not be considered as bona fide is one in which the employee receives a regular payment constituting nearly his entire earnings which is expressed in terms of a percentage of the sales which the establishment or department can always be expected to make with only a slight addition to his wages based upon a greatly reduced percentage applied to the sales above the expected quota.

§ 779.417 The “representative period” for testing employee’s compensation.

(a) Whether compensation representing commissions constitutes most of an employee’s pay, so as to satisfy the exemption condition contained in clause (2) or section 7(i), must be determined by testing the employee’s compensation for a “representative period” of not less than 1 month. The Act does not define a representative period, but plainly contemplates a period which can reasonably be accepted by the employer, the employee, and disinterested persons as being truly representative of the compensation aspects of the employee’s employment on which this exemption test depends. A representative period within the meaning of this exemption may be described generally as a period which typifies the total characteristics of an employee’s earning pattern in his current employment situation, with respect to the

fluctuations of the proportion of his commission earnings to his total compensation.

(b) To this end the period must be as recent a period, of sufficient length (see paragraph (c) of this section) to fully and fairly reflect all such factors, as can practicably be used. Thus, as a general rule, if a month is long enough to reflect the necessary factors, the most recent month for which necessary computations can be made prior to the payday for the first workweek in the current month should be chosen. Similarly, if it is necessary to use a period as long as a calendar or fiscal quarter year to fully represent such factors, the quarterly period used should ordinarily be the one ending immediately prior to the quarter in which the current workweek falls. If a period longer than a quarter year is required in order to include all the factors necessary to make it fully and fairly representative of the current period of employment for purposes of section 7(i), the end of such period should likewise be at least as recent as the end of the quarter year immediately preceding the quarter in which the current workweek falls. Thus, in the case of a representative period of 6 months or of 1 year, recomputation each quarter would be required so as to include in it the most recent two quarter-years or four quarter-years, as the case may be. The quarterly recomputation would tend to insure that the period used reflects any gradual changes in the characteristics of the employment which could be important in determining the ratio between compensation representing commissions and other compensation in the current employment situation of the employee.

(c) The representative period for determining whether more than half of an employee’s compensation represents commissions cannot, under the express terms of section 7(i), be less than 1 month. The period chosen should be long enough to stabilize the measure of the balance between the portions of the employee’s compensation which respectively represent commissions and other earnings, against purely seasonal or plainly temporary changes. Although the Act sets no upper limit on the

length of the period, the statutory intent would not appear to be served by any recognition of a period in excess of 1 year as representative for purposes of this exemption. There would seem to be no employment situation in a retail or service establishment in which a period longer than a year would be needed to represent the seasonal and other fluctuations in commission compensation.

(d) Accordingly, for each employee whose exemption is to be tested in any workweek under clause (2) of section 7(i), an appropriate representative period or a formula for establishing such a period must be chosen and must be designated and substantiated in the employer's records (see § 516.16 of this chapter). When the facts change so that the designated period or the period established by the designated formula is no longer representative, a new representative period or formula therefor must be adopted which is appropriate and sufficient for the purpose, and designated and substantiated in the employer's records. Although the period selected and designated must be one which is representative with respect to the particular employee for whom exemption is sought, and the appropriateness of the representative period for that employee will always depend on his individual earning pattern, there may be situations in which the factors affecting the proportionate relationship between total compensation and compensation representing commissions will be substantially identical for a group or groups of employees in a particular occupation or department of a retail or service establishment or in the establishment as a whole. Where this can be demonstrated to be a fact, and is substantiated by pertinent information in the employer's records, the same representative period or formula for establishing such a period may properly be used for each of the similarly situated employees in the group.

§ 779.418 Grace period for computing portion of compensation representing commissions.

Where it is not practicably possible for the employer to compute the commission earnings of the employee for all workweeks ending in a prior rep-

resentative period in time to determine the overtime pay obligations, if any, for the workweek or workweeks immediately following, 1 month of grace may be used by the retail or service establishment. This month of grace will not change the length of the current period in which the prior period is used as representative. It will merely allow an interval of 1 month between the end of the prior period and the beginning of the current period in order to permit necessary computations for the prior period to be made. For example, assume that the representative period used is the quarter-year immediately preceding the current quarter, and commissions for the prior period cannot be computed in time to determine the overtime pay obligations for the workweeks included in the first pay period in the current quarter. By applying a month of grace, the next earlier quarterly period may be used during the first month of the current quarter; and the quarter-year immediately preceding the current quarter will then be used for all workweeks ending in a quarter-year period which begins 1 month after the commencement of the current quarter. Thus, a January 1–March 31 representative period may be used for purposes of section 7(i) in a quarterly period beginning May 1 and ending July 31, allowing the month of April for necessary commission computations for the representative period. Once this method of computation is adopted it must be used for each successive period in like manner. The prior period used as representative must, of course, as in other cases, meet all the requirements of a representative period as previously explained.

§ 779.419 Dependence of the section 7(i) overtime pay exemption upon the level of the employee's "regular rate" of pay.

(a) If more than half of the compensation of an employee of a retail or service establishment for a representative period as previously explained represents commissions on goods or services, one additional condition must be met in order for the employee to be exempt under section 7(i) from the overtime pay requirement of section 7(a) of the Act in a workweek when his hours