

(d) *Prefiling notice required.* Any person intending to file a complaint under this section must first notify the potential defendant in writing that it intends to file a complaint with the Commission based on actions alleged to violate one or more of the provisions contained in this part. The notice must be sufficiently detailed so that its recipient(s) can determine the specific nature of the potential complaint. The potential complainant must allow a minimum of ten (10) days for the potential defendant(s) to respond before filing a complaint with the Commission.

(e) *Frivolous pleadings.* It shall be unlawful for any party to file a frivolous pleading with the Commission. Any violation of this paragraph shall constitute an abuse of process subject to appropriate sanctions.

[76 FR 59232, Sept. 23, 2011, as amended at 80 FR 19848, Apr. 13, 2015]

§ 8.14 General formal complaint procedures.

(a) *Complaints.* In addition to the general pleading requirements, complaints must adhere to the following requirements:

(1) *Certificate of service.* Complaints shall be accompanied by a certificate of service on any defendant.

(2) *Statement of relief requested—(i) The complaint shall state the relief requested.* It shall state fully and precisely all pertinent facts and considerations relied on to demonstrate the need for the relief requested and to support a determination that a grant of such relief would serve the public interest.

(ii) The complaint shall set forth all steps taken by the parties to resolve the problem.

(iii) A complaint may, on request of the filing party, be dismissed without prejudice as a matter of right prior to the adoption date of any final action taken by the Commission with respect to the petition or complaint. A request for the return of an initiating document will be regarded as a request for dismissal.

(3) *Failure to prosecute.* Failure to prosecute a complaint, or failure to respond to official correspondence or request for additional information, will be cause for dismissal. Such dismissal

will be without prejudice if it occurs prior to the adoption date of any final action taken by the Commission with respect to the initiating pleading.

(b) *Answers to complaints.* Unless otherwise directed by the Commission, any party who is served with a complaint shall file an answer in accordance with the following requirements:

(1) The answer shall be filed within 20 days of service of the complaint.

(2) The answer shall advise the parties and the Commission fully and completely of the nature of any and all defenses, and shall respond specifically to all material allegations of the complaint. Collateral or immaterial issues shall be avoided in answers and every effort should be made to narrow the issues. Any party against whom a complaint is filed failing to file and serve an answer within the time and in the manner prescribed by these rules may be deemed in default and an order may be entered against defendant in accordance with the allegations contained in the complaint.

(3) Facts must be supported by relevant documentation or affidavit.

(4) The answer shall admit or deny the averments on which the adverse party relies. If the defendant is without knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of an averment, the defendant shall so state and this has the effect of a denial. When a defendant intends in good faith to deny only part of an averment, the answer shall specify so much of it as is true and shall deny only the remainder, and state in detail the basis of that denial.

(5) Averments in a complaint are deemed to be admitted when not denied in the answer.

(c) *Reply.* In addition to the general pleading requirements, replies must adhere to the following requirements:

(1) The complainant may file a reply to a responsive pleading that shall be served on the defendant and shall also contain a detailed full showing, supported by affidavit, of any additional facts or considerations relied on. Unless expressly permitted by the Commission, replies shall not contain new matters.

(2) Failure to reply will not be deemed an admission of any allegations contained in the responsive

pleading, except with respect to any affirmative defense set forth therein.

(3) Unless otherwise directed by the Commission, replies must be filed within ten (10) days after submission of the responsive pleading.

(d) *Motions*. Except as provided in this section, or upon a showing of extraordinary circumstances, additional motions or pleadings by any party will not be accepted.

(e) *Additional procedures and written submissions*. (1) The Commission may specify other procedures, such as oral argument or evidentiary hearing directed to particular aspects, as it deems appropriate. In the event that an evidentiary hearing is required, the Commission will determine, on the basis of the pleadings and such other procedures as it may specify, whether temporary relief should be afforded any party pending the hearing and the nature of any such temporary relief.

(2) The Commission may require the parties to submit any additional information it deems appropriate for a full, fair, and expeditious resolution of the proceeding, including copies of all contracts and documents reflecting arrangements and understandings alleged to violate the requirements set forth in the Communications Act and in this part, as well as affidavits and exhibits.

(3) The Commission may, in its discretion, require the parties to file briefs summarizing the facts and issues presented in the pleadings and other record evidence.

(i) These briefs shall contain the findings of fact and conclusions of law which that party is urging the Commission to adopt, with specific citations to the record, and supported by relevant authority and analysis.

(ii) The schedule for filing any briefs shall be at the discretion of the Commission. Unless ordered otherwise by the Commission, such briefs shall not exceed fifty (50) pages.

(iii) Reply briefs may be submitted at the discretion of the Commission. Unless ordered otherwise by the Commission, reply briefs shall not exceed thirty (30) pages.

(f) *Discovery*. (1) The Commission may in its discretion order discovery limited to the issues specified by the Commission. Such discovery may include

answers to written interrogatories, depositions, document production, or requests for admissions.

(2) The Commission may in its discretion direct the parties to submit discovery proposals, together with a memorandum in support of the discovery requested. Such discovery requests may include answers to written interrogatories, admissions, document production, or depositions. The Commission may hold a status conference with the parties, pursuant to §8.15, to determine the scope of discovery, or direct the parties regarding the scope of discovery. If the Commission determines that extensive discovery is required or that depositions are warranted, the Commission may advise the parties that the proceeding will be referred to an administrative law judge in accordance with paragraph (g) of this section.

(g) *Request for written opinion from outside technical organization*. (1) After reviewing the pleadings, and at any stage of the proceeding thereafter, the Enforcement Bureau may, in its discretion, request a written opinion from an outside technical organization regarding one or more issues in dispute.

(2)(i) Wherever possible, the opinion shall be requested from an outside technical organization whose members do not include any of the parties to the proceeding.

(ii) If no such outside technical organization exists, or if the Enforcement Bureau in its discretion chooses to request an opinion from an organization that includes among its members a party to the proceeding, the Bureau shall instruct the organization that any representative of a party to the proceeding within the organization may not participate in either the organization's consideration of the issue(s) referred or its drafting of the opinion.

(iii) No outside technical organization shall be required to respond to the Bureau's request.

(3)(i) If an opinion from an outside technical organization is requested and the request is accepted, the Enforcement Bureau shall notify the parties to the dispute of the request within ten (10) days and shall provide them copies of the opinion once it is received.

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(ii) The outside technical organization shall provide its opinion within thirty (30) days of the Enforcement Bureau's request, unless otherwise specified by the Bureau.

(iii) Parties shall be given the opportunity to file briefs in reply to the opinion.

(h) *Referral to administrative law judge.*

(1) After reviewing the pleadings, and at any stage of the proceeding thereafter, the Commission may, in its discretion, designate any proceeding or discrete issues arising out of any proceeding for an adjudicatory hearing before an administrative law judge.

(2) Before designation for hearing, the Commission shall notify, either orally or in writing, the parties to the proceeding of its intent to so designate, and the parties shall be given a period of ten (10) days to elect to resolve the dispute through alternative dispute resolution procedures, or to proceed with an adjudicatory hearing. Such election shall be submitted in writing to the Commission.

(3) Unless otherwise directed by the Commission, or upon motion by the Enforcement Bureau Chief, the Enforcement Bureau Chief shall not be deemed to be a party to a proceeding designated for a hearing before an administrative law judge pursuant to this paragraph (g).

(i) *Commission ruling.* The Commission (or the Enforcement Bureau on delegated authority), after consideration of the pleadings, shall issue an order ruling on the complaint.

[76 FR 59232, Sept. 23, 2011, as amended at 80 FR 19848, Apr. 13, 2015]

§ 8.15 Status conference.

(a) In any proceeding subject to the part 8 rules, the Commission may in its discretion direct the attorneys and/or the parties to appear for a conference to consider:

(1) Simplification or narrowing of the issues;

(2) The necessity for or desirability of amendments to the pleadings, additional pleadings, or other evidentiary submissions;

(3) Obtaining admissions of fact or stipulations between the parties as to any or all of the matters in controversy;

(4) Settlement of the matters in controversy by agreement of the parties;

(5) The necessity for and extent of discovery, including objections to interrogatories or requests for written documents;

(6) The need and schedule for filing briefs, and the date for any further conferences; and

(7) Such other matters that may aid in the disposition of the proceeding.

(b) Any party may request that a conference be held at any time after an initiating document has been filed.

(c) Conferences will be scheduled by the Commission at such time and place as it may designate, to be conducted in person or by telephone conference call.

(d) The failure of any attorney or party, following advance notice with an opportunity to be present, to appear at a scheduled conference will be deemed a waiver and will not preclude the Commission from conferring with those parties or counsel present.

(e) During a status conference, the Commission may issue oral rulings pertaining to a variety of matters relevant to the conduct of the proceeding including, inter alia, procedural matters, discovery, and the submission of briefs or other evidentiary materials. These rulings will be promptly memorialized in writing and served on the parties. When such rulings require a party to take affirmative action, such action will be required within ten (10) days from the date of the written memorialization unless otherwise directed by the Commission.

§ 8.16 Confidentiality of proprietary information.

(a) Any materials generated in the course of a proceeding under this part may be designated as proprietary by either party to the proceeding or a third party if the party believes in good faith that the materials fall within an exemption to disclosure contained in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b) (1) through (9). Any party asserting confidentiality for such materials must:

(1) Clearly mark each page, or portion thereof, for which a proprietary designation is claimed. If a proprietary designation is challenged, the party claiming confidentiality shall have the