

Proposed Rules

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains notices to the public of the proposed issuance of rules and regulations. The purpose of these notices is to give interested persons an opportunity to participate in the rule making prior to the adoption of the final rules.

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 890

RIN 3206-AI05

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program: Removal of Minimum Salary Requirement

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is issuing a proposed rule. This rule removes an obsolete provision that prohibits an employee whose annual salary is \$350 or less from enrolling in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before February 5, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Abby L. Block, Chief, Insurance Policy and Information Division, Office of Insurance Programs, Retirement and Insurance Service, Office of Personnel Management, P.O. Box 707, Washington, DC 20044; or deliver to OPM, Room 3425, 1900 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20415; or FAX to 202-606-0633.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kenneth A. Lease, 202-606-0004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Since the FEHB Program began in 1960, FEHB regulations have prohibited an employee earning \$350 or less per year from enrolling in the Program. This provision was based on the fact that employee contributions to premiums could only be made by salary withholding while an employee was in a pay status. (\$350 is the amount which in 1960 was sufficient to cover the appropriate employee contributions for the least costly FEHB plan.) As amended in August 1982, however, the regulations now require enrollee contributions, by direct payment if necessary, for all periods during which coverage continues, even periods during which an employee does not receive pay

(such as a leave without pay situation). Since the previous rationale for the minimum earnings level for FEHB enrollment no longer exists, OPM is proposing to remove this obsolete requirement.

We also propose to amend the reference in the definition of *letter of credit* under § 890.101 to conform to a recent reference change in Chapter 16 of title 48, Code of Federal Regulations (FEHBAR).

Regulatory Flexibility Act

I certify that this regulation will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities because it primarily affects Federal employees.

List of Subjects in 5 CFR Part 890

Administrative practice and procedure, Government employees, Health facilities, Health insurance, Health professions, Hostages, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Retirement.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Janice R. Lachance,
Director.

Accordingly, OPM proposes to amend 5 CFR part 890 as follows:

PART 890—FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

1. The authority citation for part 890 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 8913; § 890.803 also issued under 50 U.S.C. 403p, 22 U.S.C. 4069c and 4069c-1; subpart L also issued under sec. 599C of Pub. L. 101-513, 104 Stat. 2064, as amended, § 890.102 also issued under sections 11202(f), 11232(e), and 11246(b) and (c) of Pub. L. 105-33, 111 Stat. 251.

2. In § 890.101, paragraph (a), the definition of *Letter of Credit* is revised to read as follows:

§ 890.101 Definitions; time computations.

(a) * * *
Letter of credit is defined in 48 CFR subpart 1602.1.

* * * * *

§ 890.102 [Amended]

3. In § 890.102, paragraph (c)(4) is removed and paragraphs (c)(5), (c)(6), (c)(7), and (c)(8) are redesignated as paragraphs (c)(4), (c)(5), (c)(6), and (c)(7) respectively.

4. In § 890.303, paragraph (b) is revised to read as follows:

§ 890.303 Continuation of enrollment.

* * * * *

(b) *Change of enrolled employees to certain excluded positions.* Employees and annuitants enrolled under this part who move, without a break in service or after a separation of 3 days or less, to an employment in which they are excluded by § 890.102(c), continue to be enrolled unless excluded by paragraphs (c) (4), (5), (6), or (7) of § 890.102.

* * * * *

[FR Doc. 98-102 Filed 1-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

7 CFR Part 610

RIN 0578-AA22

Technical Assistance

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

ACTION: Proposed rule; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: This document extends the comment period of a proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on December 4, 1997. This rule sets forth policies and procedures for the use of State Technical Committees by the USDA, and also the responsibilities assigned to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) beyond that of soil conservation. This proposed rule is located at 62 FR 64174-64177.

DATES: Comments must be received by January 23, 1997.

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning this proposed rule should be addressed to: Gary Nordstrom, Director, Conservation Operations Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, D.C. 20013-2890; Attention: State Technical Committee. Fax (202) 720-1838. This rule may also be accessed, and comments submitted, via Internet. Users can access the NRCS **Federal Register** homepage and submit comments at: <http://astro.itc.nrcs.usda.gov:6500>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Denise Coleman, Conservation Operations Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service; phone: (202) 720-9476; Fax: (202) 720-4265; E-mail:

denise_c.coleman@usda.gov,
Attention: State Technical Committee.

Signed in Washington, D.C. on December 30, 1997.

Thomas A. Weber,

Acting Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

[FR Doc. 98-222 Filed 1-5-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-P

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

16 CFR Part 303

Rule and Regulations Under the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act

AGENCY: Federal Trade Commission.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: The Federal Trade Commission ("Commission") solicits comments as to whether to amend Rule 7 of the Rules and Regulations Under the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act (16 CFR 303.7) to designate a new generic fiber name and establish a new generic fiber definition for a fiber manufactured by DuPont Advanced Fiber Systems ("DuPont"), of Wilmington, Delaware. The Commission is proposing the name "fluoropolymer" for the fiber, which DuPont designates by the registered name "Teflon."

DATES: Comments will be accepted through March 23, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be submitted to: Office of the Secretary, Federal Trade Commission, Room 159, Sixth St. & Pennsylvania Ave., NW., Washington, DC, 20580. Comments should be identified as "16 CFR Part 303—Textile Rule 7 Comment—P974227."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James G. Mills, Attorney, Division of Enforcement, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC, 20580; (202) 326-3035, FAX: (202) 326-3259.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Rule 6 of the Rules and Regulations under the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act ("Textile Rules," 16 CFR 303.6) requires manufacturers to use the generic names of the fibers contained in their textile fiber products in making disclosures of the fiber content of the products. Rule 7 (16 CFR 303.7) sets forth the generic names and definitions that the Commission has established for synthetic fibers. Rule 8 (16 CFR 303.8) sets forth the procedures for establishing new generic names.

DuPont submitted its application in this matter to the Commission on March 22, 1996, and has provided the Commission with additional information, which has been placed on the rulemaking record. DuPont stated that it has manufactured a fiber known as "Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fiber" or "Teflon fiber" since the 1950's for industrial applications, but that it expected to begin commercial sales of the fiber in socks beginning in late April, 1996. DuPont explained that it was petitioning the Commission to establish a new name and definition for its fiber in its new use because none of the current generic fiber definitions in Rule 7 of the Textile Rules is appropriate for Teflon fiber.

After an initial analysis, on June 25, 1996, the Commission announced that it has issued DuPont the designation "DP 0001" for temporary use in identifying Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fiber pending a final determination as to the merits of the application for a new generic name and definition.

II. Chemical Composition and Physical and Chemical Properties of Teflon PTFE Fluorocarbon Fiber

DuPont states that the name Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fiber can be used to describe fibers made from the following materials:

PTFE (CF₂-CF₂)_n where "n" is the degree of polymerization, usually around 50,000

FEP (CF₂-CF₂)_n(CF{CF₃}-CF₂)_m

PFA (CF₂-CF₂)_n(CF{ORf}-CF₂)_m in this case, Rf represents a perfluorinated alkyl group bonded to an ether oxygen, which hangs off the chain.

DuPont described Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fiber generally as inherently low friction, water-resistant, flame-resistant, and low modulus (i.e., highly resistant to deformation). DuPont expects the initial market for the fiber to be sports apparel where fabrics from Teflon fiber and blends containing it may reduce the chance of skin irritation and may have other desirable characteristics, such as permanent water- and stain-resistance, softer hand, and improved comfort.

DuPont described the chemical characteristics of Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fibers and the base resins used to make the fibers as follows:

Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon resins and fibers developed by DuPont have unusually high thermo-chemical resistance and display exceptionally low coefficients of friction. The molecular structure of Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon consists of long chains of carbon atoms fully saturated by fluorine atoms. The carbon-fluorine bonds are extremely strong and the carbon-carbon bonds are well-shielded by the fluorine atoms * * *. Molecules of Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon are electrically neutral and therefore lack the strong polar forces that bind together the molecules of other fibers such as nylon or cellulose. However, the extreme regularity of the molecules permits very close packing.

Fibers of Teflon are processed to a higher degree of molecular orientation than their resin counterpart. Thus the stress-strain properties and resistance to cold flow of the fiber are markedly different from those of the resin * * *. Other properties of the fibers and resins are essentially identical.

DuPont summarized the stress-strain and gross properties for unbleached Teflon PTFE fluorocarbon fiber as follows:

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Yarn denier: filaments (dtex: filaments) | 400-60 (440-60) |
| Stress-Strain Properties* | |
| Straight Test: | |
| Tensile strength, psi (MPa) | 52,500 (359). |
| Breaking strength, lbs (N) | 1.7 (7.6), |
| Breaking tenacity, g/den. (cN/tex) | 2.0 (18). |
| Elongation at break, % | 19. |
| Initial modulus, g/den. (cN/tex) | 13.0 (115). |
| Loop Test: | |
| Tensile strength, psi (Mpa) | 31,000 (214). |
| Breaking strength, lbs (N) | 1.8 (8.0). |
| Elongation at break, % | 8.5. |