

**§ 54.4975-1 General rules relating to excise tax on prohibited transactions.**

(a) *Scope.* This section provides general rules for the imposition of the excise taxes on prohibited transactions.

(b) *Initial tax.* Section 4975(a) imposes an initial tax on each prohibited transaction. The initial tax is 5 percent of the amount involved with respect to the prohibited transaction for each year (or part thereof) in the taxable period.

(c) *Additional tax.* Section 4975(b) imposes an excise tax in any case in which an initial tax is imposed under section 4975(a) on a prohibited transaction and the prohibited transaction is not corrected within the taxable period (as defined in paragraph (d) of this section). The additional tax is 100 percent of the amount involved with respect to the prohibited transaction.

(d) *Taxable period*—(1) *In general.* For purposes of any prohibited transaction, the term “taxable period” means the period beginning with the date on which the prohibited transaction occurs and ending on the earliest of:

(i) The date of mailing of a notice of deficiency under section 6212 with respect to the tax imposed by section 4975(a);

(ii) The date on which correction of the prohibited transaction is completed; or

(iii) The date on which the tax imposed by section 4975(a) is assessed.

(2) *Special rule.* Where a notice of deficiency referred to in paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section is not mailed because a waiver of the restrictions on assessment and collection of a deficiency has been accepted or because the deficiency is paid, the date of filing of the waiver or the date of such payment, respectively, shall be treated as the end of the taxable period.

[T.D. 8084, 51 FR 16305, May 2, 1986]

**§ 54.4975-6 Statutory exemptions for office space or services and certain transactions involving financial institutions.**

(a) *Exemption for office space or services*—(1) *In general.* Section 4975(d)(2) exempts from the excise taxes imposed by section 4975 payment by a plan to a disqualified person, including a fiduciary,

for office space or any service (or a combination of services), if (i) such office space or service is necessary for the establishment or operation of the plan; (ii) such office space or service is furnished under a contract or arrangement which is reasonable; and (iii) no more than reasonable compensation is paid for such office space or service. However, section 4975(d)(2) does not contain an exemption for acts described in section 4975(c)(1)(E) (relating to fiduciaries dealing with the income or assets of plans in their own interest or for their own account) or acts described in section 4975(c)(1)(F) (relating to fiduciaries receiving consideration for their own personal account from any party dealing with a plan in connection with a transaction involving the income or assets of the plan). Such acts are separate transactions not described in section 4975(d)(2). See §§ 54.4975-6(a)(5) and 54.4975-6(a)(6) for guidance as to whether transactions relating to the furnishing of office space or services by fiduciaries to plans involve acts described in section 4975(c)(1)(E).

Section 4975(d)(2) does not contain an exemption from other provisions of the Code, such as section 401, or other provisions of law which may impose requirements or restrictions relating to the transactions which are exempt under section 4975(d)(2). See, for example, the general fiduciary responsibility provisions of section 404 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (the Act) (88 Stat. 877). The provisions of section 4975(d)(2) are further limited by the flush language at the end of section 4975(d) (relating to transactions with owner-employees and related persons).

(2) *Necessary service.* A service is necessary for the establishment or operation of a plan within the meaning of section 4975(d)(2) and § 54.4975-6(a)(1)(i) if the service is appropriate and helpful to the plan obtaining the service in carrying out the purposes for which the plan is established or maintained. A person providing such a service to a plan (or a person who is disqualified person solely by reason of a relationship to such a service provider described in section 4975(e)(2) (F), (G), (H), or (I)) may furnish goods which are

necessary for the establishment or operation of the plan in the course of, and incidental to, the furnishing of such service to the plan.

(3) *Reasonable contract or arrangement.* No contract or arrangement is reasonable within the meaning of section 4975(d)(2) and § 54.4975-6(a)(1)(ii) if it does not permit termination by the plan without penalty to the plan on reasonably short notice under the circumstances to prevent the plan from becoming locked into an arrangement that has become disadvantageous. A long-term lease which may be terminated prior to its expiration (without penalty to the plan) on reasonably short notice under the circumstances is not generally an unreasonable arrangement merely because of its long term. A provision in a contract or other arrangement which reasonably compensates the service provider or lessor for loss upon early termination of the contract, arrangement or lease is not a penalty. For example, a minimal fee in a service contract which is charged to allow recoupment of reasonable start-up costs is not a penalty.

Similarly, a provision in a lease for a termination fee that covers reasonably foreseeable expenses related to the vacancy and reletting of the office space upon early termination of the lease is not a penalty. Such a provision does not reasonably compensate for loss if it provides for payments in excess of actual loss or if it fails to require mitigation of damages.

(4) *Reasonable compensation.* Section 4975(d)(2) and § 54.4975-6(a)(1)(iii) permit a plan to pay a disqualified person reasonable compensation for the provision of office space or services described in section 4975(d)(2). Paragraph (e) of this section contains regulations relating to what constitutes reasonable compensation for the provision of services.

(5) *Transactions with fiduciaries*—(i) *In general.* If the furnishing of office space or a service involves an act described in section 4975(c)(1) (E) or (F) (relating to acts involving conflicts of interest by fiduciaries), such an act constitutes a separate transaction which is not exempt under section 4975(d)(2). The prohibitions of sections 4975(c)(1) (E) and (F) supplement the other prohibitions of section 4975(c)(1) by imposing on dis-

qualified persons who are fiduciaries a duty of undivided loyalty to the plans for which they act. These prohibitions are imposed upon fiduciaries to deter them from exercising the authority, control, or responsibility which makes such persons fiduciaries when they have interests which may conflict with the interests of the plans for which they act. In such cases, the fiduciaries have interests in the transactions which may affect the exercise of their best judgment as fiduciaries. Thus, a fiduciary may not use the authority, control, or responsibility which makes such person a fiduciary to cause a plan to pay an additional fee to such fiduciary (or to a person in which such fiduciary has an interest which may affect the exercise of such fiduciary's best judgment as a fiduciary) to provide a service. Nor may a fiduciary use such authority, control, or responsibility to cause a plan to enter into a transaction involving plan assets whereby such fiduciary (or a person in which such fiduciary has an interest which may affect the exercise of such fiduciary's best judgment as a fiduciary) will receive consideration from a third party in connection with such transaction.

A person in which a fiduciary has an interest which may affect the exercise of such fiduciary's best judgment as a fiduciary includes, for example, a person who is a disqualified person by reason of a relationship to such fiduciary described in section 4975(e)(2) (E), (F), (G), (H), or (I).

(ii) *Transactions not described in section 4975(c)(1)(E).* A fiduciary does not engage in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E) if the fiduciary does not use any of the authority, control or responsibility which makes such person a fiduciary to cause a plan to pay additional fees for a service furnished by such fiduciary or to pay a fee for a service furnished by a person in which such fiduciary has an interest which may affect the exercise of such fiduciary's best judgment as a fiduciary. This may occur, for example, when one fiduciary is retained on behalf of a plan

by a second fiduciary to provide a service for an additional fee. However, because the authority, control or responsibility which makes a person a fiduciary may be exercised “in effect” as well as in form, mere approval of the transaction by a second fiduciary does not mean that the first fiduciary has not used any of the authority, control or responsibility which makes such person a fiduciary to cause the plan to pay the first fiduciary an additional fee for a service.

(iii) *Services without compensation.* If a fiduciary provides services to a plan without the receipt of compensation or other consideration (other than reimbursement of direct expenses properly and actually incurred in the performance of such services within the meaning of paragraph (e)(4) of this section), the provision of such services does not, in and of itself, constitute an act described in section 4975(c)(1) (E) or (F). The allowance of a deduction to an employer under section 162 or 212 for the expense incurred in furnishing office space or services to a plan established or maintained by such employer does not constitute compensation or other consideration.

(6) *Examples.* The provisions of § 54.4975-6(a)(5) may be illustrated by the following examples:

*Example 1.* E, an employer whose employees are covered by plan P, is a fiduciary or P. I is a professional investment adviser in which E has no interest which may affect the exercise of E's best judgment as a fiduciary. E causes P to retain I to provide certain kinds of investment advisory services of a type which causes I to be a fiduciary of P under section 4975(e)(3)(B). Thereafter, I proposes to perform for additional fees portfolio evaluation services in addition to the services currently provided. The provision of such services is arranged by I and approved on behalf of the plan by E. I has not engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E), because I did not use any of the authority, control or responsibility which makes I a fiduciary (the provision of investment advisory services) to cause the plan to pay I additional fees for the provision of the portfolio evaluation services. E has not engaged in an act which is described in section 4975(c)(1)(E). E, as the fiduciary who has the responsibility to be prudent in his selection and retention of I and the other investments advisers of the plan, has an interest in the purchase by the plan of portfolio evaluation services. However, such an interest is not an interest

which may affect the exercise of E's best judgment as a fiduciary.

*Example 2.* D, a trustee of plan P with discretion over the management and disposition of plan assets, relies on the advice of C, a consultant to P, as to the investment of plan assets, thereby making C a fiduciary of the plan. On January 1, 1978, C recommends to D that the plan purchase an insurance policy from U, an insurance company which is not a disqualified person with respect to P. C thoroughly explains the reasons for the recommendation and makes a full disclosure concerning the fact that C will receive a commission from U upon the purchase of the policy by P. D considers the recommendation and approves the purchase of the policy by P. C receives a commission. Under such circumstances, C has engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E) (as well as section 4975(c)(1)(F)), because C is in fact exercising the authority, control or responsibility which makes C a fiduciary to cause the plan to purchase the policy. However, the transaction is exempt from the prohibited transaction provisions of section 4975(c)(1) if the requirements of Prohibited Transaction Exemption 77-9 are met.

*Example 3.* Assume the same facts as in Example (2) except that the nature of C's relationship with the plan is not such that C is a fiduciary of P. The purchase of the insurance policy does not involve an act described in section 4975(c)(1) (E) or (F), because such sections only apply to acts by fiduciaries.

*Example 4.* E, an employer whose employees are covered by plan P, is a fiduciary with respect to P. A, who is not a disqualified person with respect to P, persuades E that the plan needs the services of a professional investment adviser and that A should be hired to provide the investment advice. Accordingly, E causes P to hire A to provide investment advice of the type which makes A a fiduciary under § 54.4975-9(c)(1)(ii)(B). Prior to the expiration of A's first contract with P, A persuades E to cause P to renew A's contract with P to provide the same services for additional fees in view of the increased costs in providing such services. During the period of A's second contract, A provides additional investment advice services for which no additional charge is made. Prior to the expiration of A's second contract, A persuades E to cause P to renew his contract for additional fees in view of the additional services A is providing. A has not engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E), because A has not used any of the authority, control or responsibility which makes A a fiduciary (the provision of investment advice) to cause the plan to pay additional fees for A's services.

*Example 5.* F, a trustee of plan P with discretion over the management and disposition of plan assets, retains C to provide administrative services to P of the type which makes C a fiduciary under section

4975(e)(3)(C). Thereafter, C retains F to provide, for additional fees, actuarial and various kinds of administrative services in addition to the services F is currently providing to P. Both F and C have engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E). F, regardless of any intent which he may have had at the time he retained C, has engaged in such an act because F has, in effect, exercised the authority, control or responsibility which makes F a fiduciary to cause the plan to pay F additional fees for the services. C, whose continued employment by P depends on F, has also engaged in such an act, because C has an interest in the transaction which might affect the exercise of C's best judgment as a fiduciary. As a result, C has dealt with plan assets in his own interest under section 4975(c)(1)(E).

*Example 6.* F, a fiduciary of plan P with discretionary authority respecting the management of P, retains S, the son of F, to provide for a fee various kinds of administrative services necessary for the operation of the plan. F has engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E), because S is a person in whom F has an interest which may affect the exercise of F's best judgment as a fiduciary. Such act is not exempt under section 4975(d)(2) irrespective of whether the provision of the services by S is exempt.

*Example 7.* T, one of the trustees of plan P, is president of bank B. The bank proposes to provide administrative services to P for a fee. T physically absents himself from all consideration of B's proposal and does not otherwise exercise any of the authority, control or responsibility which makes T a fiduciary to cause the plan to retain B. The other trustees decide to retain B. T has not engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E). Further, the other trustees have not engaged in an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E) merely because T is on the board of trustees of P. This fact alone would not make them have an interest in the transaction which might affect the exercise of their best judgment as fiduciaries.

(b) *Exemption for bank deposits*—(1) *In general.* Section 4975(d)(4) exempts from the excise taxes imposed by section 4975 investment of all or a part of a plan's assets in deposits bearing a reasonable rate of interest in a bank or similar financial institution supervised by the United States or a State, even though such bank or similar financial institution is a fiduciary or other disqualified person with respect to the plan, if the conditions of either § 54.4975-6(b)(2) or § 54.4975-6(b)(3) are met. Section 4975(d)(4) provides an exemption from section 4975(c)(1)(E) relating to fiduciaries dealing with the

income or assets of plans in their own interest or for their own account), as well as sections 4975(c)(1) (A) through (D), because section 4975(d)(4) contemplates a bank or similar financial institution causing a plan for which it acts as a fiduciary to invest plan assets in its own deposits if the requirements of section 4975(d)(4) are met. However, it does not provide an exemption from section 4975(c)(1)(F) (relating to fiduciaries receiving consideration for their own personal account from any party dealing with a plan in connection with a transaction involving the income or assets of the plan). The receipt of such consideration is a separate transaction not described in the exemption. Section 4975(d)(4) does not contain an exemption from other provisions of the Code, such as section 401, or other provisions of law which may impose requirements or restrictions relating to the transactions which are exempt under section 4975(d)(4). See, for example, the general fiduciary responsibility provisions of section 404 of the Act. The provisions of section 4975(d)(4) are further limited by the flush language at the end of section 4975(d) (relating to transactions with owner-employees and related persons).

(2) *Plan covering own employees.* Such investment may be made if the plan is one which covers only the employees of the bank or similar financial institution, the employees of any of its affiliates, or the employees of both.

(3) *Other plans*—(i) *General rule.* Such investment may be made if the investment is expressly authorized by a provision of the plan or trust instrument or if the investment is expressly authorized (or made) by a fiduciary of the plan (other than the bank or similar financial institution or any of its affiliates) who has authority to make such investments, or to instruct the trustee or other fiduciary with respect to investments, and who has no interest in the transaction which may affect the exercise of such authorizing fiduciary's best judgment as a fiduciary so as to cause such authorization to constitute an act described in section 4975(c)(1) (E) or (F). Any authorization to make investments contained in a plan or trust

instrument will satisfy the requirement of express authorization for investments made prior to November 1, 1977.

Effective November 1, 1977, in the case of a bank or similar financial institution that invests plan assets in deposits in itself or its affiliates under an authorization contained in a plan or trust instrument, such authorization must name such bank or similar financial institution and must state that such bank or similar financial institution may make investments in deposits which bear a reasonable rate of interest in itself (or in an affiliate.)

(ii) *Example.* B, a bank, is the trustee of plan P's assets. The trust instruments give the trustee the right to invest plan assets in its discretion. B invests in the certificates of deposit of bank C, which is a fiduciary of the plan by virtue of performing certain custodial and administrative services. The authorization is sufficient for the plan to make such investment under section 4975(d)(4). Further, such authorization would suffice to allow B to make investments in deposits in itself prior to November 1, 1977. However, subsequent to October 31, 1977, B may not invest in deposits in itself, unless the plan or trust instrument specifically authorizes it to invest in deposits of B.

(4) *Definitions.* (i) The term "bank or similar financial institution" includes a bank (as defined in section 581), a domestic building and loan association (as defined in section 7701(a)(19)), and a credit union (as defined in section 101 (6) of the Federal Credit Union Act).

(ii) A person is an affiliate of a bank or similar financial institution if such person and such bank or similar financial institution would be treated as members of the same controlled group of corporations or as members of two or more trades or businesses under common control within the meaning of section 414 (b) or (c) and the regulations thereunder.

(iii) The term "deposits" includes any account, temporary or otherwise, upon which a reasonable rate of interest is paid, including a certificate of deposit issued by a bank or similar financial institution.

(c) *Exemption for ancillary bank services—(1) In general.* Section 4975(d)(6)

exempts from the excise taxes imposed by section 4975 the provision of certain ancillary services by a bank or similar financial institution (as defined in § 54.4975-6(b)(4)(i)) supervised by the United States or a State to a plan for which it acts as a fiduciary if the conditions in § 54.4975-6(c)(2) are met. Such ancillary services include services which do not meet the requirements of section 4975(d)(2), because the provision of such services involves an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(E) (relating to fiduciaries dealing with the income or assets of plans in their own interest or for their own account) by the fiduciary bank or similar financial institution. Section 4975(d)(6) provides an exemption from section 4975(c)(1)(E), because section 4975 (d)(6) contemplates the provision of such ancillary services without the approval of a second fiduciary (as described in § 54.4975-6(a)(5)(ii)) if the conditions of § 54.4975-6(c)(2) are met. Thus, for example, plan assets held by a fiduciary bank which are reasonably expected to be needed to satisfy current plan expenses may be placed by the bank in a non-interest-bearing checking account in the bank if the conditions of § 54.4975-6(c)(2) are met, notwithstanding the provisions of section 4975(d)(4) (relating to investments in bank deposits). However, section 4975(d)(6) does not provide an exemption for an act described in section 4975(c)(1)(F) (relating to fiduciaries receiving consideration for their own personal account from any party dealing with a plan in connection with a transaction involving the income or assets of the plan). The receipt of such consideration is a separate transaction not described in section 4975(d)(6).

Section 4975(d)(6) does not contain an exemption from other provisions of the Code, such as section 401, or other provisions of law which may impose requirements or restrictions relating to the transactions which are exempt under section 4975(d)(6). See, for example, the general fiduciary responsibility provisions of section 404 of the Act. The provisions of section 4975(d)(6) are further limited by the flush language at the end of section 4975(d) (relating to transactions with owner-employees and related persons).

## Internal Revenue Service, Treasury

## § 54.4975-7

(2) *Conditions.* Such service must be provided:

(i) At not more than reasonable compensation;

(ii) Under adequate internal safeguards which assure that the provision of such service is consistent with sound banking and financial practice, as determined by Federal or State supervisory authority; and

(iii) Only to the extent that such service is subject to specific guidelines issued by the bank or similar financial institution which meet the requirements of § 54.4975-6(c)(3).

(3) *Specific guidelines.* [Reserved]

(d) *Exemption for services as a fiduciary.* [Reserved]

(e) *Compensation for services—(1) In general.* Section 4975(d)(2) refers to the payment of reasonable compensation by a plan to a disqualified person for services rendered to the plan. Section 4975(d)(10) and §§ 54.4975-6(e)(2) through 54.4975-6(e)(5) clarify what constitutes reasonable compensation for such services.

(2) *General rule.* Generally, whether compensation is “reasonable” under sections 4975(d) (2) and (10) depends on the particular facts and circumstances of each case.

(3) *Payments to certain fiduciaries.* Under sections 4975(d) (2) and (10), the term “reasonable compensation” does not include any compensation to a fiduciary who is already receiving full-time pay from an employer or association of employers (any of whose employees are participants in the plan) or from an employee organization (any of whose members are participants in the plan), except for the reimbursement of direct expenses properly and actually incurred and not otherwise reimbursed. The restrictions of this paragraph (e)(3) do not apply to a disqualified person who is not a fiduciary.

(4) *Certain expenses not direct expenses.* An expense is not a direct expense to the extent it would have been sustained had the service not been provided or if it represents an allocable portion of overhead costs.

(5) *Expense advances.* Under sections 4975(d) (2) and (10), the term “reasonable compensation”, as applied to a fiduciary or an employee of a plan, includes an advance to such a fiduciary

or employee by the plan to cover direct expenses to be properly and actually incurred by such person in the performance of such person’s duties with the plan if:

(i) The amount of such advance is reasonable with respect to the amount of the direct expense which is likely to be properly and actually incurred in the immediate future (such as during the next month); and

(ii) The fiduciary or employee accounts to the plan at the end of the period covered by the advance for the expenses properly and actually incurred.

(6) *Excessive compensation.* Under sections 4975(d) (2) and (10), any compensation which would be considered excessive under § 1.162-7 (relating to compensation for personal services which constitutes an ordinary and necessary trade or business expense) will not be “reasonable compensation”. Depending upon the facts and circumstances of the particular situation, compensation which is not excessive under § 1.162-7 may, nevertheless, not be “reasonable compensation” within the meaning of sections 4975(d) (2) and (10).

[T.D. 7491, 42 FR 32385, June 24, 1977; 42 FR 37810, July 25, 1977; 43 FR 4604, Feb. 3, 1978]

### § 54.4975-7 Other statutory exemptions.

(a) [Reserved]

(b) *Loans to employee stock ownership plans—(1) Definitions.* When used in this paragraph (b) and § 54.4975-11, the terms listed below have the following meanings:

(i) *ESOP.* The term “ESOP” refers to an employee stock ownership plan that meets the requirements of section 4975(e)(7) and § 54.4975-11. It is not synonymous with “stock bonus plan.” A stock bonus plan must, however, be an ESOP to engage in an exempt loan. The qualification of an ESOP under section 401(a) and § 54.4975-11 will not be adversely affected merely because it engages in a non-exempt loan.

(ii) *Loan.* The term “loan” refers to a loan made to an ESOP by a disqualified person or a loan to an ESOP which is guaranteed by a disqualified person. It includes a direct loan of cash, a purchase-money transaction, and an assumption of the obligation of an ESOP. “Guarantee” includes an unsecured