

(e) Neither the holding of a compliance conference under this section nor any opinion given by the authorized representative at such a conference shall affect:

(1) Any rights or obligations of the regulatory authority or of the permittee with respect to any inspection, notice of violation or cessation order, whether prior or subsequent to such compliance conference; or

(2) The validity of any notice of violation or cessation order issued with respect to any condition or practice reviewed at the compliance conference.

PART 842—FEDERAL INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING

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AUTHORITY: 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*

SOURCE: 47 FR 35635, Aug. 16, 1982, unless otherwise noted.

§ 842.1 Scope.

This part sets forth general procedures governing Federal inspections under the permanent regulatory program.

§ 842.11 Federal inspections and monitoring.

(a) Authorized representatives of the Secretary shall conduct inspections of surface coal mining and reclamation operations as necessary—

(1) To monitor and evaluate the administration of approved State programs. Such monitoring and evaluation inspections shall be conducted jointly with the State regulatory authority where practical and where the State so requests;

(2) To develop or enforce Federal programs and Federal lands programs;

(3) To enforce those requirements and permit conditions imposed under a State program not being enforced by a State, under section 504(b) or section

521(b) of the Act, part 733 of this chapter, or as provided in this section; and

(4) To determine whether any notice of violation or cessation order issued during an inspection authorized under this section has been complied with.

(b)(1) An authorized representative of the Secretary must immediately conduct a Federal inspection:

(i) When the authorized representative has reason to believe on the basis of any information readily available to him or her, from any source, including any information a citizen complainant or the relevant State regulatory authority submits (other than information resulting from a previous Federal inspection), that there exists a violation of the Act, this chapter, the State regulatory program, or any condition of a permit or an exploration approval, or that there exists any condition, practice, or violation that creates an imminent danger to the health or safety of the public or is causing or could reasonably be expected to cause a significant, imminent environmental harm to land, air, or water resources; and

(ii)(A) There is no State regulatory authority or the Office is enforcing the State regulatory program under section 504(b) or 521(b) of the Act and part 733 of this chapter; or

(B)(1) The authorized representative has notified the State regulatory authority of the possible violation and more than ten days have passed since notification, and the State regulatory authority has not taken appropriate action to cause the violation to be corrected or to show good cause for not doing so, or the State regulatory authority has not provided the authorized representative with a response. After receiving a response from the State regulatory authority, but before a Federal inspection, the authorized representative will determine in writing whether the standards for appropriate action or good cause have been satisfied. A State regulatory authority's failure to respond within ten days does not prevent the authorized representative from making a determination, and will constitute a waiver of the State regulatory authority's right to request review under paragraph (b)(1)(iii) of this section.

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(2) For purposes of this subchapter, an action or response by a State regulatory authority that is not arbitrary, capricious, or an abuse of discretion under the state program shall be considered “appropriate action” to cause a violation to be corrected or “good cause” for failure to do so.

(3) Appropriate action includes enforcement or other action authorized under the approved State program to cause the violation to be corrected. Appropriate action may include OSMRE and the State regulatory authority immediately and jointly initiating steps to implement corrective action to resolve any issue that the authorized representative and applicable Field Office Director identify as a State regulatory program issue, as defined in 30 CFR part 733.

(4) Good cause includes:

(i) The possible violation does not exist under the State regulatory program;

(ii) The State regulatory authority has initiated an investigation into a possible violation and as a result has determined that it requires a reasonable, specified additional amount of time to determine whether a violation exists. When analyzing the State regulatory authority’s response for good cause, the authorized representative has discretion to determine how long the State regulatory authority should reasonably be given to complete its investigation of the possible violation and will communicate to the State regulatory authority the date by which the investigation must be completed. At the conclusion of the specified additional time, the authorized representative will re-evaluate the State regulatory authority’s response including any additional information provided;

(iii) The State regulatory authority demonstrates that it lacks jurisdiction over the possible violation under the State regulatory program;

(iv) The State regulatory authority demonstrates that it is precluded from taking action on the possible violation because an administrative review body or court of competent jurisdiction has issued an order concluding that the possible violation does not exist or that the temporary relief standards of the State regulatory program counter-

parts to section 525(c) or 526(c) of the Act have been satisfied; or

(v) Regarding abandoned sites, as defined in 30 CFR 840.11(g), the State regulatory authority is diligently pursuing or has exhausted all appropriate enforcement provisions of the State regulatory program.

(C) The person supplying the information supplies adequate proof that an imminent danger to the public health and safety or a significant, imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources exists and that the State regulatory authority has failed to take appropriate action.

(iii)(A) The authorized representative shall immediately notify the state regulatory authority in writing when in response to a ten-day notice the state regulatory authority fails to take appropriate action to cause a violation to be corrected or to show good cause for such failure. If the State regulatory authority disagrees with the authorized representative’s written determination, it may file a request, in writing, for informal review of that written determination by the Deputy Director. Such a request for informal review may be submitted to the appropriate OSMRE field office or to the office of the Deputy Director in Washington, DC. The request must be received by OSMRE within 5 days from receipt of OSMRE’s written determination.

(B) Unless a cessation order is required under §843.11, or unless the state regulatory authority has failed to respond to the ten-day notice, no Federal inspection action shall be taken or notice of violation issued regarding the ten-day notice until the time to request informal review as provided in §842.11(b)(1)(iii)(A) has expired or, if informal review has been requested, until the Deputy Director has completed such review.

(C) After reviewing the written determination of the authorized representative and the request for informal review submitted by the State regulatory authority, the Deputy Director shall, within 15 days, render a decision on the request for informal review. He shall affirm, reverse, or modify the written determination of the authorized representative. Should the Deputy Director decide that the State regulatory

authority did not take appropriate action or show good cause, he shall immediately order a Federal inspection or reinspection. The Deputy Director shall provide to the State regulatory authority and to the permittee a written explanation of his decision, and if the ten-day notice resulted from a request for a Federal inspection under § 842.12 of this part, he shall send written notification of his decision to the person who made the request.

(2) An authorized representative will have reason to believe that a violation, condition, or practice referred to in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section exists if the facts that a complainant alleges, or facts that are otherwise known to the authorized representative, constitute simple and effective documentation of the alleged violation, condition, or practice. In making this determination, the authorized representative will consider any information readily available to him or her, from any source, including any information a citizen complainant or the relevant State regulatory authority submits to the authorized representative.

(c) The Office, when acting as the regulatory authority under a Federal program or a Federal lands program and when enforcing a State program, in whole or in part, pursuant to section 504(b) of section 521(b) of the Act and part 733 of this chapter, shall conduct inspections of all coal exploration and surface coal mining and reclamation operations under its jurisdiction. The Office shall—

(1) With respect to active surface coal mining and reclamation operations:

(i) Conduct an average of at least one partial inspection per month of each active surface coal mining and reclamation operation. A partial inspection is an on-site or aerial review of a person's compliance with some of the permit requirements and conditions imposed under an applicable program.

(A) Aerial inspections shall be conducted in a manner which reasonably ensures the identification and documentation of conditions at each surface coal mining and reclamation site inspected.

(B) Any potential violation observed during an aerial inspection shall be in-

vestigated on site within three calendar days: *Provided*, That any indication of a condition, practice or violation constituting cause for issuance of a cessation order under section 521(a)(2) shall be investigated on site immediately, *And provided further*, That an on-site investigation of a potential violation observed during an aerial inspection shall not be considered to be an additional partial or complete inspection for the purposes of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

(ii) Conduct an average of at least one complete inspection per calendar quarter of each active surface coal mining and reclamation operation. A complete inspection is an on-site review of a person's compliance with all permit conditions and requirements imposed under the applicable program within the entire area disturbed or affected by surface coal mining and reclamation operations.

(2) With respect to inactive surface coal mining and reclamation operations:

(i) Conduct an average of at least one complete inspection per calendar quarter of each inactive surface coal mining and reclamation operation; and

(ii) Conduct such partial inspections of each inactive surface coal mining and reclamation operation as are necessary to ensure effective enforcement of the regulatory program and the Act.

(iii) For purposes of this section, an inactive surface coal mining and reclamation operation is one for which—

(A) The Office has secured from the permittee the written notice provided for under §§ 816.131(b) or 817.131(b) of this chapter; or,

(B) Reclamation Phase II as defined at § 800.40 of this chapter has been completed.

(3) With respect to coal exploration operations, conduct such inspections as are necessary to ensure compliance with the Act by those coal explorations which substantially disturb the natural land surface.

(d) The inspections required under paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section shall:

(1) Be carried out on an irregular basis, so as to monitor compliance at all operations, including those which operate nights, weekends, or holidays;

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(2) Occur without prior notice to the permittee or any agent or employee of such permittee, except for necessary on-site meetings; and

(3) Include the prompt filing of inspection reports adequate to enforce the requirements of the applicable program.

(e) Abandoned site means a surface coal mining and reclamation operation for which the Office has found in writing that:

(1) All surface and underground coal mining and reclamation activities at the site have ceased;

(2) The Office has issued at least one notice of violation or the initial program equivalent, and either:

(i) Is unable to serve the notice despite diligent efforts to do so; or

(ii) The notice was served and has progressed to a failure-to-abate cessation order or the initial program equivalent;

(3) The Office:

(i) Is taking action to ensure that the permittee and operator, and owners and controllers of the permittee and operator, will be precluded from receiving future permits while violations continue at the site; and

(ii) Is taking action pursuant to sections 518(e), 518(f), 521(a)(4) or 521(c) of the Act or their regulatory program counterparts to ensure that abatement occurs or that there will not be a recurrence of the failure-to-abate, except where after evaluating the circumstances it concludes that further enforcement offers little or no likelihood of successfully compelling abatement or recovering any reclamation costs; and

(4) Where the site is, or was, permitted or bonded:

(i) The permit has either expired or been revoked; and

(ii) The Office has initiated and is diligently pursuing forfeiture of, or has forfeited, any available performance bond.

(f) In lieu of the inspection frequency established in paragraph (c) of this section, the office shall inspect each abandoned site on a set frequency commensurate with the public health and safety and environmental considerations present at each specific site, but in no case shall the inspection frequency be

set at less than one complete inspection per calendar-year.

(1) In selecting an alternate inspection frequency authorized under the paragraph above, the office shall first conduct a complete inspection of the abandoned site and provide public notice under paragraph (f)(2) of this section. Following the inspection and public notice, the office shall prepare and maintain for public review a written finding justifying the alternative inspection frequency selected. This written finding shall justify the new inspection frequency by affirmatively addressing in detail all of the following criteria:

(i) How the site meets each of the criteria under the definition of an abandoned site under paragraph (e) of this section and thereby qualifies for a reduction inspection frequency;

(ii) Whether, and to what extent, there exist on the site impoundments, earthen structures or other conditions that pose, or may reasonably be expected to ripen into, imminent dangers to the health or safety of the public or significant environmental harms to land, air or water resources;

(iii) The extent to which existing impoundments or earthen structures were constructed and certified in accordance with prudent engineering designs approved in the permit;

(iv) The degree to which erosion and sediment control is present and functioning;

(v) The extent to which the site is located near or above urbanized areas, communities, occupied dwellings, schools and other public or commercial buildings and facilities;

(vi) The extent of reclamation completed prior to abandonment and the degree of stability of unreclaimed areas, taking into consideration the physical characteristics of the land mined and the extent of settlement or revegetation that has occurred naturally with time; and

(vii) Based on a review of the complete and partial inspection report record for the site during at least the last two consecutive years, the rate at which adverse environmental or public health and safety conditions have and can be expected to progressively deteriorate.

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(2) The public notice and opportunity to comment required under paragraph (f)(1) of this section shall be provided as follows:

(i) The office shall place a notice in the newspaper with the broadest circulation in the locality of the abandoned site providing the public with a 30-day period in which to submit written comments.

(ii) The public notice shall contain the permittee's name, the permit number, the precise location of the land affected, the inspection frequency proposed, the general reasons for reducing the inspection frequency, the bond status of the permit, the telephone number and address of the office where written comments on the reduced inspection frequency may be submitted, and the closing date of the comment period.

(Pub. L. 95–87, 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*)

[47 FR 35635, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 48 FR 44781, Sept. 30, 1983; 53 FR 24882, June 30, 1988; 53 FR 26744, July 14, 1988; 59 FR 60884, Nov. 28, 1994; 75 FR 60276, Sept. 29, 2010; 85 FR 75190, Nov. 24, 2020]

§ 842.12 Requests for Federal inspections.

(a) Any person may request a Federal inspection under § 842.11(b) by providing to an authorized representative a signed, written statement (or an oral report followed by a signed written statement) setting forth information that, along with any other readily available information, may give the authorized representative reason to believe that a violation, condition, or practice referred to in § 842.11(b)(1)(i) exists. The statement must also set forth the fact that the person has notified the State regulatory authority, if any, in writing, of the existence of the possible violation, condition, or practice, and the basis for the person's assertion that the State regulatory authority has not taken action with respect to the possible violation. The statement must set forth a phone number, address, and, if available, an email address where the person can be contacted.

(b) The identity of any person supplying information to the Office relating to a possible violation or imminent danger or harm shall remain confidential

with the Office, if requested by that person, unless that person elects to accompany the inspector on the inspection, or unless disclosure is required under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) or other Federal law.

(c) If a Federal inspection is conducted as a result of information provided to the Office by a person as described in paragraph (a) of this section, the person shall be notified as far in advance as practicable when the inspection is to occur and shall be allowed to accompany the authorized representative of the Secretary during the inspection. Such person has a right of entry to, upon and through the coal exploration or surface coal mining and reclamation operation about which he or she supplied information, but only if he or she is in the presence of and is under the control, direction and supervision of the authorized representative while on the mine property. Such right of entry does not include a right to enter buildings without consent of the person in control of the building or without a search warrant.

(d) Within ten days of the Federal inspection or, if there is no Federal inspection, within 15 days of receipt of the person's written statement, the Office shall send the person the following.

(1) If a Federal inspection was made, a description of the enforcement action taken, which may consist of copies of the Federal inspection report and all notices of violation and cessation orders issued as a result of the inspection, or an explanation of why no enforcement action was taken;

(2) If no Federal inspection was conducted, an explanation of the reason why; and

(3) An explanation of the person's right, if any, to informal review of the action or inaction of the Office under § 842.15.

(e) The Office shall give copies of all materials in paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) of this section within the time limits specified in those paragraphs to the person alleged to be in violation, except that the name of the person supplying information shall be removed unless disclosure of his or her identity

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is permitted under paragraph (b) of this section.

[47 FR 35635, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 85 FR 75191, Nov. 24, 2020]

§ 842.13 Right of entry.

(a) Each authorized representative of the Secretary conducting a Federal inspection under § 842.11:

(1) Shall have a right of entry to, upon, and through any coal exploration or surface coal mining and reclamation operation without advance notice or a search warrant, upon presentation of appropriate credentials;

(2) May, at reasonable times and without delay, have access to and copy any records, and inspect any monitoring equipment or method of exploration or operation required under the applicable program; and,

(3) Shall have a right to gather physical and photographic evidence to document conditions, practices or violations at the site.

(b) No search warrant shall be required with respect to any activity under paragraph (a) of this section, except that a search warrant may be required for entry into a building.

§ 842.14 Review of adequacy and completeness of inspections.

Any person who is or may be adversely affected by a surface coal mining and reclamation operation or a coal exploration operation may notify the Director or his or her designee in writing of any alleged failure on the part of the Office to make adequate and complete or periodic Federal inspections. The notification shall include sufficient information to create a reasonable belief that the regulations of this part are not being complied with and to demonstrate that the person is or may be adversely affected. The Director or his or her designee shall within 15 days of receipt of the notification determine whether adequate and complete or periodic inspections have been made. The Director or his or her designee shall furnish the complainant with a written statement of the reasons for such determination and the actions, if any, taken to remedy the non-compliance.

§ 842.15 Review of decision not to inspect or enforce.

(a) Any person who is or may be adversely affected by a coal exploration or surface coal mining and reclamation operation may ask the Director or his or her designee to review informally an authorized representative's decision not to inspect or take appropriate enforcement action with respect to any violation alleged by that person in a request for Federal inspection under § 842.12. The request for review shall be in writing and include a statement of how the person is or may be adversely affected and why the decision merits review.

(b) The Director or his or her designee shall conduct the review and inform the person, in writing, of the results of the review within 30 days of his or her receipt of the request. The person alleged to be in violation shall also be given a copy of the results of the review, except that the name of the person who is or may be adversely affected shall not be disclosed unless confidentiality has been waived or disclosure is required under the Freedom of Information Act or other Federal law.

(c) Informal review under this section shall not affect any right to formal review under section 525 of the Act or to a citizen's suit under section 520 of the Act.

(d) Any determination made under paragraph (b) of this section shall constitute a decision of OSM within the meaning of 43 CFR 4.1281 and shall contain a right of appeal to the Office of Hearings and Appeals in accordance with 43 CFR part 4.

§ 842.16 Availability of records.

(a) Copies of all records, reports, inspection materials, or information obtained by the Office under Title V of the Act, this chapter, a Federal program or Federal lands program, and a State program being enforced by the Office under section 504(b) or 521(b) of the Act and part 733 of this chapter or §§ 842.11 or 842.12 shall be made immediately available to the public in the area of mining until at least five years after expiration of the period during which the subject operation is active or

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is covered by any portion of a reclamation bond so that they are conveniently available to residents of that area, except—

(1) As otherwise provided by Federal law; and

(2) For information not required to be made available under § 772.15, § 773.6(d), or § 840.14(d) of this chapter.

(b) The Office shall ensure compliance with paragraph (a) of this section by either:

(1) Making copies of all such records, reports, inspection materials, and other information available for public inspection at a Federal, State or local government office in the county where the mining is occurring or is proposed to occur; or

(2) At the Office's option and expense, providing copies of such information promptly by mail at the request of any resident of the area where the mining is occurring or is proposed to occur, provided that the Office shall maintain for public inspection at a Federal, State, or local government office in the county where the mining is occurring or is proposed to occur a description of the information available for mailing and the procedure for obtaining such information.

(c) Copies of documents and information required to be made available under paragraph (a) of this section shall be provided to the State regulatory authority, if any.

(Pub. L. 95–87, 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*)

[47 FR 35635, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 48 FR 44781, Sept. 30, 1983; 65 FR 79670, Dec. 19, 2000]

PART 843—FEDERAL ENFORCEMENT

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AUTHORITY: 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*

SOURCE: 47 FR 35637, Aug. 16, 1982, unless otherwise noted.

§ 843.1 Scope.

This part sets forth general rules regarding enforcement by the Office of the Act, this chapter, any Federal program, the Federal lands program, State programs being enforced by the Office in whole or in part under section 504(b) or 521(b) of the Act and part 733 of this chapter and (in limited circumstances) under § 842.11 or § 842.12 of this chapter, and all conditions of permits and coal exploration approvals or permits imposed under any of these programs, the Act, or this chapter.

§ 843.5 Definitions.

As used in this part, the following terms have the specified meanings:

Unwarranted failure to comply means the failure of a permittee to prevent the occurrence of any violation of his or her permit or any requirement of the Act due to indifference, lack of diligence, or lack of reasonable care, or the failure to abate any violation of such permit of the Act due to indifference, lack of diligence, or lack of reasonable care.

[47 FR 35637, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 65 FR 79670, Dec. 19, 2000]

§ 843.11 Cessation orders.

(a)(1) An authorized representative of the Secretary shall immediately order a cessation of surface coal mining and reclamation operations or of the relevant portion thereof, if he or she finds, on the basis of any Federal inspection, any condition or practice, or any violation of the Act, this chapter, any applicable program, or any condition of an exploration approval or permit imposed under any such program, the Act, or this chapter which:

(i) Creates an imminent danger to the health or safety of the public; or

(ii) Is causing or can reasonably be expected to cause significant, imminent environmental harm to land, air, or water resources.