or suspension or termination of collection activity.

§ 900.7 Required administrative proceedings.

Agencies are not required to omit, foreclose, or duplicate administrative proceedings required by contract or other laws or regulations.

§ 900.8 No private rights created.

The standards in this chapter do not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any other person, nor shall the failure of an agency to comply with any of the provisions of parts 900–904 of this chapter be available to any debtor as a defense.

PART 901—STANDARDS FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE COLLECTION OF CLAIMS

Sec.

AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 3701, 3711, 3716, 3717, 3718, and 3720B.

SOURCE: 65 FR 70396, Nov. 22, 2000, unless otherwise noted.

§ 901.1 Aggressive agency collection activity.

(a) Federal agencies shall aggressively collect all debts arising out of activities of, or referred or transferred for collection services to, that agency. Collection activities shall be undertaken promptly with follow-up action taken as necessary. Nothing contained in parts 900–904 of this chapter requires the Department of Justice, Treasury, or other Treasury-designated debt collection centers, to duplicate collection activities previously undertaken by other agencies or to perform collection activities that other agencies should have undertaken.

(b) Debts referred or transferred to Treasury, or Treasury-designated debt collection centers under the authority of 31 U.S.C. 3711(g), shall be serviced, collected, or compromised, or the collection action will be suspended or terminated, in accordance with the statutory requirements and authorities applicable to the collection of such debts.

(c) Agencies shall cooperate with one another in their debt collection activities.

(d) Agencies should consider referring debts that are less than 180 days delinquent to Treasury or to Treasury-designated ''debt collection centers'' to accomplish efficient, cost effective debt collection. Treasury is a debt collection center, is authorized to designate other Federal agencies as debt collection centers based on their performance in collecting delinquent debts, and may withdraw such designations. Referrals to debt collection centers shall be at the discretion of, and for a time period acceptable to, the Secretary. Referrals may be for servicing, collection, compromise, suspension, or termination of collection action.

(e) Agencies shall transfer to the Secretary any debt that has been delinquent for a period of 180 days or more so that the Secretary may take appropriate action to collect the debt or terminate collection action. See 31 CFR 285.12 (Transfer of Debts to Treasury for Collection). This requirement does not apply to any debt that:

(1) Is in litigation or foreclosure;

(2) Will be disposed of under an approved asset sale program;

(3) Has been referred to a private collection contractor for a period of time acceptable to the Secretary;

(4) Is at a debt collection center for a period of time acceptable to the Secretary (see paragraph (d) of this section);

(5) Will be collected under internal offset procedures within three years after the debt first became delinquent; or

(6) Is exempt from this requirement based on a determination by the Secretary that exemption for a certain class of debt is in the best interest of the United States. Agencies may request that the Secretary exempt specific classes of debts.

(f) Agencies operating Treasury-designated debt collection centers are authorized to charge a fee for services rendered regarding referred or transferred debts. The fee may be paid out of amounts collected and may be added to the debt as an administrative cost (see § 901.10).

§ 901.2 Demand for payment.

(a) Written demand as described in paragraph (b) of this section shall be made promptly upon a debtor of the United States in terms that inform the debtor of the consequences of failing to cooperate with the agency to resolve the debt. The specific content, timing, and number of demand letters shall depend upon the type and amount of the debt and the debtor's response, if any, to the agency's letters or telephone calls. Generally, one demand letter should suffice. In determining the timing of the demand letter(s), agencies should give due regard to the need to refer debts promptly to the Department of Justice for litigation, in accordance with § 904.1 of this chapter or otherwise. When necessary to protect the Government's interest (for example, to prevent the running of a statute of limitations), written demand may be preceded by other appropriate actions under parts 900–904 of this chapter, including immediate referral for litigation.

(b) Demand letters shall inform the debtor of:

(1) The basis for the indebtedness and the rights, if any, the debtor may have to seek review within the agency;

(2) The applicable standards for imposing any interest, penalties, or administrative costs;

(3) The date by which payment should be made to avoid late charges (i.e. interest, penalties, and administrative costs) and enforced collection, which generally should not be more than 30 days from the date that the demand letter is mailed or hand-delivered; and

(4) The name, address, and phone number of a contact person or office within the agency.

(c) Agencies should exercise care to ensure that demand letters are mailed or hand-delivered on the same day that they are dated. There is no prescribed format for demand letters. Agencies should utilize demand letters and procedures that will lead to the earliest practicable determination of whether the debt can be resolved administratively or must be referred for litigation.

(d) Agencies should include in demand letters such items as the agency's willingness to discuss alternative methods of payment; its policies with respect to the use of credit bureaus, debt collection centers, and collection agencies; the agency's remedies to enforce payment of the debt (including assessment of interest, administrative costs and penalties, administrative garnishment, the use of collection agencies, Federal salary offset, tax refund offset, administrative offset, and litigation); the requirement that any debt delinquent for more than 180 days be transferred to the Department of the Treasury for collection; and, depending on applicable statutory authority, the debtor's entitlement to consideration of a waiver.

(e) Agencies should respond promptly to communications from debtors, within 30 days whenever feasible, and should advise debtors who dispute debts to furnish available evidence to support their contentions.

(f) Prior to the initiation of the demand process or at any time during or after completion of the demand process, if an agency determines to pursue, or is required to pursue, offset, the procedures applicable to offset should be followed (see § 901.3). The availability of funds or money for debt satisfaction by offset and the agency's determination to pursue collection by offset shall release the agency from the necessity of further compliance with paragraphs (a), (b), (c), and (d) of this section.

(g) Prior to referring a debt for litigation, agencies should advise each person determined to be liable for the debt that, unless the debt can be collected administratively, litigation may be initiated. This notification should

comply with Executive Order 12988 (3 CFR, 1996 Comp., pp. 157–163) and may be given as part of a demand letter under paragraph (b) of this section or in a separate document. Litigation counsel for the Government should be advised that this notice has been given.

(h) When an agency learns that a bankruptcy petition has been filed with respect to a debtor, before proceeding with further collection action, the agency should immediately seek legal advice from its agency counsel concerning the impact of the Bankruptcy Code on any pending or contemplated collection activities. Unless the agency determines that the automatic stay imposed at the time of filing pursuant to 11 U.S.C. 362 has been lifted or is no longer in effect, in most cases collection activity against the debtor should stop immediately.

(1) After seeking legal advice, a proof of claim should be filed in most cases with the bankruptcy court or the Trustee. Agencies should refer to the provisions of 11 U.S.C. 106 relating to the consequences on sovereign immunity of filing a proof of claim.

(2) If the agency is a secured creditor, it may seek relief from the automatic stay regarding its security, subject to the provisions and requirements of 11 U.S.C. 362.

(3) Offset is stayed in most cases by the automatic stay. However, agencies should seek legal advice from their agency counsel to determine whether their payments to the debtor and payments of other agencies available for offset may be frozen by the agency until relief from the automatic stay can be obtained from the bankruptcy court. Agencies also should seek legal advice from their agency counsel to determine whether recoupment is available.

§ 901.3 Collection by administrative offset.

(a) *Scope.* (1) The term ''administrative offset'' has the meaning provided in 31 U.S.C. 3701(a)(1).

(2) This section does not apply to:

(i) Debts arising under the Social Security Act, except as provided in 42 U.S.C. 404;

(ii) Payments made under the Social Security Act, except as provided for in 31 U.S.C. 3716(c) (see 31 CFR 285.4, Federal Benefit Offset);

(iii) Debts arising under, or payments made under, the Internal Revenue Code (see 31 CFR 285.2, Tax Refund Offset) or the tariff laws of the United States;

(iv) Offsets against Federal salaries to the extent these standards are inconsistent with regulations published to implement such offsets under 5 U.S.C. 5514 and 31 U.S.C. 3716 (see 5 CFR part 550, subpart K, and 31 CFR 285.7, Federal Salary Offset);

(v) Offsets under 31 U.S.C. 3728 against a judgment obtained by a debtor against the United States;

(vi) Offsets or recoupments under common law, State law, or Federal statutes specifically prohibiting offsets or recoupments of particular types of debts; or

(vii) Offsets in the course of judicial proceedings, including bankruptcy.

(3) Unless otherwise provided for by contract or law, debts or payments that are not subject to administrative offset under 31 U.S.C. 3716 may be collected by administrative offset under the common law or other applicable statutory authority.

(4) Unless otherwise provided by law, administrative offset of payments under the authority of 31 U.S.C. 3716 to collect a debt may not be conducted more than 10 years after the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, unless facts material to the Government's right to collect the debt were not known and could not reasonably have been known by the official or officials of the Government who were charged with the responsibility to discover and collect such debts. This limitation does not apply to debts reduced to a judgment.

(5) In bankruptcy cases, agencies should seek legal advice from their agency counsel concerning the impact of the Bankruptcy Code, particularly 11 U.S.C. 106, 362, and 553, on pending or contemplated collections by offset.

(b) *Mandatory centralized administrative offset.* (1) Creditor agencies are required to refer past due, legally enforceable nontax debts which are over 180 days delinquent to the Secretary for collection by centralized administrative offset. Debts which are less than 180 days delinquent also may be

referred to the Secretary for this purpose. See § 901.3(b)(5) for debt certification requirements.

(2) The names and taxpayer identifying numbers (TINs) of debtors who owe debts referred to the Secretary as described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section shall be compared to the names and TINs on payments to be made by Federal disbursing officials. Federal disbursing officials include disbursing officials of Treasury, the Department of Defense, the United States Postal Service, other Government corporations, and disbursing officials of the United States designated by the Secretary. When the name and TIN of a debtor match the name and TIN of a payee and all other requirements for offset have been met, the payment will be offset to satisfy the debt.

(3) Federal disbursing officials will notify the debtor/payee in writing that an offset has occurred to satisfy, in part or in full, a past due, legally enforceable delinquent debt. The notice shall include a description of the type and amount of the payment from which the offset was taken, the amount of offset that was taken, the identity of the creditor agency requesting the offset, and a contact point within the creditor agency who will respond to questions regarding the offset.

(4)(i) Before referring a delinquent debt to the Secretary for administrative offset, agencies must have prescribed administrative offset regulations consistent with this section or have adopted this section without change by cross-reference.

(ii) Such regulations shall provide that offsets may be initiated only after the debtor:

(A) Has been sent written notice of the type and amount of the debt, the intention of the agency to use administrative offset to collect the debt, and an explanation of the debtor's rights under 31 U.S.C. 3716; and

(B) The debtor has been given:

(*1*) The opportunity to inspect and copy agency records related to the debt;

(*2*) The opportunity for a review within the agency of the determination of indebtedness; and

(*3*) The opportunity to make a written agreement to repay the debt.

(iii) Agency regulations may provide for the omission of the procedures set forth in paragraph (a)(4)(ii) of this section when:

(A) The offset is in the nature of a recoupment;

(B) The debt arises under a contract as set forth in *Cecile Industries, Inc.* v. *Cheney*, 995 F.2d 1052 (Fed. Cir. 1993) (notice and other procedural protections set forth in 31 U.S.C. 3716(a) do not supplant or restrict established procedures for contractual offsets accommodated by the Contracts Disputes Act); or

(C) In the case of non-centralized administrative offsets conducted under paragraph (c) of this section, the agency first learns of the existence of the amount owed by the debtor when there is insufficient time before payment would be made to the debtor/payee to allow for prior notice and an opportunity for review. When prior notice and an opportunity for review are omitted, the agency shall give the debtor such notice and an opportunity for review as soon as practicable and shall promptly refund any money ultimately found not to have been owed to the Government.

(iv) When an agency previously has given a debtor any of the required notice and review opportunities with respect to a particular debt (see, e.g., § 901.2), the agency need not duplicate such notice and review opportunities before administrative offset may be initiated.

(5) Agencies referring delinquent debts to the Secretary must certify, in a form acceptable to the Secretary, that:

(i) The debt(s) is (are) past due and legally enforceable; and

(ii) The agency has complied with all due process requirements under 31 U.S.C. 3716(a) and the agency's regulations.

(6) Payments that are prohibited by law from being offset are exempt from centralized administrative offset. The Secretary shall exempt payments under means-tested programs from centralized administrative offset when requested in writing by the head of the payment certifying or authorizing agency. Also, the Secretary may exempt other classes of payments from

centralized offset upon the written request of the head of the payment certifying or authorizing agency.

(7) Benefit payments made under the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 301 *et seq.*), part B of the Black Lung Benefits Act (30 U.S.C. 921 *et seq.*), and any law administered by the Railroad Retirement Board (other than tier 2 benefits), may be offset only in accordance with Treasury regulations, issued in consultation with the Social Security Administration, the Railroad Retirement Board, and the Office of Management and Budget. See 31 CFR 285.4.

(8) In accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3716(f), the Secretary may waive the provisions of the Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988 concerning matching agreements and postmatch notification and verification (5 U.S.C. 552a(o) and (p)) for centralized administrative offset upon receipt of a certification from a creditor agency that the due process requirements enumerated in 31 U.S.C. 3716(a) have been met. The certification of a debt in accordance with paragraph (b)(5) of this section will satisfy this requirement. If such a waiver is granted, only the Data Integrity Board of the Department of the Treasury is required to oversee any matching activities, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3716(g). This waiver authority does not apply to offsets conducted under paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section.

(c) *Non-centralized administrative offset.* (1) Generally, non-centralized administrative offsets are *ad hoc* case-by-case offsets that an agency conducts, at the agency's discretion, internally or in cooperation with the agency certifying or authorizing payments to the debtor. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, when centralized administrative offset is not available or appropriate, past due, legally enforceable nontax delinquent debts may be collected through non-centralized administrative offset. In these cases, a creditor agency may make a request directly to a payment authorizing agency to offset a payment due a debtor to collect a delinquent debt. For example, it may be appropriate for a creditor agency to request that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) offset a Federal employee's lump sum payment upon leaving Government service to satisfy an unpaid advance.

(2) Before requesting a payment authorizing agency to conduct a non-centralized administrative offset, agencies must adopt regulations providing that such offsets may occur only after:

(i) The debtor has been provided due process as set forth in paragraph (b)(4) of this section; and

(ii) The payment authorizing agency has received written certification from the creditor agency that the debtor owes the past due, legally enforceable delinquent debt in the amount stated, and that the creditor agency has fully complied with its regulations concerning administrative offset.

(3) Payment authorizing agencies shall comply with offset requests by creditor agencies to collect debts owed to the United States, unless the offset would not be in the best interests of the United States with respect to the program of the payment authorizing agency, or would otherwise be contrary to law. Appropriate use should be made of the cooperative efforts of other agencies in effecting collection by administrative offset.

(4) When collecting multiple debts by non-centralized administrative offset, agencies should apply the recovered amounts to those debts in accordance with the best interests of the United States, as determined by the facts and circumstances of the particular case, particularly the applicable statute of limitations.

(d) *Requests to OPM to offset a debtor's anticipated or future benefit payments under the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund.* Upon providing OPM written certification that a debtor has been afforded the procedures provided in paragraph (b)(4) of this section, creditor agencies may request OPM to offset a debtor's anticipated or future benefit payments under the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (Fund) in accordance with regulations codified at 5 CFR 831.1801–831.1808. Upon receipt of such a request, OPM will identify and ''flag'' a debtor's account in anticipation of the time when the debtor requests, or becomes eligible to receive, payments from the Fund. This will satisfy any requirement that offset be initiated prior to the expiration of

the time limitations referenced in paragraph (a)(4) of this section.

(e) *Review requirements.* (1) For purposes of this section, whenever an agency is required to afford a debtor a review within the agency, the agency shall provide the debtor with a reasonable opportunity for an oral hearing when the debtor requests reconsideration of the debt and the agency determines that the question of the indebtedness cannot be resolved by review of the documentary evidence, for example, when the validity of the debt turns on an issue of credibility or veracity.

(2) Unless otherwise required by law, an oral hearing under this section is not required to be a formal evidentiary hearing, although the agency should carefully document all significant matters discussed at the hearing.

(3) This section does not require an oral hearing with respect to debt collection systems in which a determination of indebtedness rarely involves issues of credibility or veracity and the agency has determined that review of the written record is ordinarily an adequate means to correct prior mistakes.

(4) In those cases when an oral hearing is not required by this section, an agency shall accord the debtor a ''paper hearing,'' that is, a determination of the request for reconsideration based upon a review of the written record.

§ 901.4 Reporting debts.

(a) Agencies shall develop and implement procedures for reporting delinquent debts to credit bureaus and other automated databases. Agencies also may develop procedures to report nondelinquent debts to credit bureaus. See 31 U.S.C. 3711(e).

(1) In developing procedures for reporting debts to credit bureaus, agencies shall comply with the Bankruptcy Code and the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a, as amended. The provisions of the Privacy Act do not apply to credit bureaus.

(2) Agency procedures for reporting delinquent consumer debts to credit bureaus shall be consistent with the due process and other requirements contained in 31 U.S.C. 3711(e). When an agency has given a debtor any of the required notice and review opportunities with respect to a particular debt, the agency need not duplicate such notice and review opportunities before reporting that delinquent consumer debt to credit bureaus.

(b) Agencies should report delinquent debts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Credit Alert Interactive Voice Response System (CAIVRS). For information about the CAIVRS program, agencies should contact the Director of Information Resources Management Policy and Management Division, Office of Information Technology, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20410.

§ 901.5 Contracting with private collection contractors and with entities that locate and recover unclaimed assets.

(a) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (b) of this section, Federal agencies may contract with private collection contractors, as defined in 31 U.S.C. 3701(f), to recover delinquent debts provided that:

(1) Agencies retain the authority to resolve disputes, compromise debts, suspend or terminate collection activity, and refer debts for litigation;

(2) The private collection contractor is not allowed to offer the debtor, as an incentive for payment, the opportunity to pay the debt less the private collection contractor's fee unless the agency has granted such authority prior to the offer;

(3) The contract provides that the private collection contractor is subject to the Privacy Act of 1974 to the extent specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a(m), and to applicable Federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to debt collection practices, including but not limited to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. 1692; and

(4) The private collection contractor is required to account for all amounts collected.

(b) Agencies shall use governmentwide debt collection contracts to obtain debt collection services provided by private collection contractors. However, agencies may refer debts to private collection contractors pursuant to a contract between the agency and the private collection contractor only if

such debts are not subject to the requirement to transfer debts to Treasury for debt collection. See 31 U.S.C. 3711(g); 31 CFR 285.12(e).

(c) Agencies may fund private collection contractor contracts in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3718(d), or as otherwise permitted by law.

(d) Agencies may enter into contracts for locating and recovering assets of the United States, such as unclaimed assets. Agencies must establish procedures that are acceptable to the Secretary before entering into contracts to recover assets of the United States held by a state government or a financial institution.

(e) Agencies may enter into contracts for debtor asset and income search reports. In accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3718(d), such contracts may provide that the fee a contractor charges the agency for such services may be payable from the amounts recovered, unless otherwise prohibited by statute.

§ 901.6 Suspension or revocation of eligibility for loans and loan guaranties, licenses, permits, or privileges.

(a) Unless waived by the head of the agency, agencies are not permitted to extend financial assistance in the form of a loan, loan guarantee, or loan insurance to any person delinquent on a nontax debt owed to a Federal agency. This prohibition does not apply to disaster loans. The authority to waive the application of this section may be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer and redelegated only to the Deputy Chief Financial Officer of the agency. Agencies may extend credit after the delinquency has been resolved. The Secretary may exempt classes of debts from this prohibition and has prescribed standards defining when a ''delinquency'' is ''resolved'' for purposes of this prohibition. See 31 CFR 285.13 (Barring Delinquent Debtors From Obtaining Federal Loans or Loan Insurance or Guarantees).

(b) In non-bankruptcy cases, agencies seeking the collection of statutory penalties, forfeitures, or other types of claims should consider the suspension or revocation of licenses, permits, or other privileges for any inexcusable or willful failure of a debtor to pay such a debt in accordance with the agency's regulations or governing procedures. The debtor should be advised in the agency's written demand for payment of the agency's ability to suspend or revoke licenses, permits, or privileges. Any agency making, guaranteeing, insuring, acquiring, or participating in, loans should consider suspending or disqualifying any lender, contractor, or broker from doing further business with the agency or engaging in programs sponsored by the agency if such lender, contractor, or broker fails to pay its debts to the Government within a reasonable time or if such lender, contractor, or broker has been suspended, debarred, or disqualified from participation in a program or activity by another Federal agency. The failure of any surety to honor its obligations in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 9305 should be reported to the Treasury. The Treasury will forward to all interested agencies notification that a surety's certificate of authority to do business with the Government has been revoked by the Treasury.

(c) The suspension or revocation of licenses, permits, or privileges also should extend to Federal programs or activities that are administered by the states on behalf of the Federal Government, to the extent that they affect the Federal Government's ability to collect money or funds owed by debtors. Therefore, states that manage Federal activities, pursuant to approval from the agencies, should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to safeguard against issuing licenses, permits, or privileges to debtors who fail to pay their debts to the Federal Government.

(d) In bankruptcy cases, before advising the debtor of an agency's intention to suspend or revoke licenses, permits, or privileges, agencies should seek legal advice from their agency counsel concerning the impact of the Bankruptcy Code, particularly 11 U.S.C. 362 and 525, which may restrict such action.

§ 901.7 Liquidation of collateral.

(a) Agencies should liquidate security or collateral through the exercise of a power of sale in the security instrument or a nonjudicial foreclosure, and apply the proceeds to the applicable debt(s), if the debtor fails to pay

the debt(s) within a reasonable time after demand and if such action is in the best interest of the United States. Collection from other sources, including liquidation of security or collateral, is not a prerequisite to requiring payment by a surety, insurer, or guarantor unless such action is expressly required by statute or contract.

(b) When an agency learns that a bankruptcy petition has been filed with respect to a debtor, the agency should seek legal advice from its agency counsel concerning the impact of the Bankruptcy Code, including, but not limited to, 11 U.S.C. 362, to determine the applicability of the automatic stay and the procedures for obtaining relief from such stay prior to proceeding under paragraph (a) of this section.

§ 901.8 Collection in installments.

(a) Whenever feasible, agencies shall collect the total amount of a debt in one lump sum. If a debtor is financially unable to pay a debt in one lump sum, agencies may accept payment in regular installments. Agencies should obtain financial statements from debtors who represent that they are unable to pay in one lump sum and independently verify such representations whenever possible (see § 902.2(g) of this chapter). Agencies that agree to accept payments in regular installments should obtain a legally enforceable written agreement from the debtor that specifies all of the terms of the arrangement and that contains a provision accelerating the debt in the event of default.

(b) The size and frequency of installment payments should bear a reasonable relation to the size of the debt and the debtor's ability to pay. If possible, the installment payments should be sufficient in size and frequency to liquidate the debt in three years or less.

(c) Security for deferred payments should be obtained in appropriate cases. Agencies may accept installment payments notwithstanding the refusal of the debtor to execute a written agreement or to give security, at the agency's option.

§ 901.9 Interest, penalties, and administrative costs.

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (g), (h), and (i) of this section, agencies shall charge interest, penalties, and administrative costs on debts owed to the United States pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3717. An agency shall mail or hand-deliver a written notice to the debtor, at the debtor's most recent address available to the agency, explaining the agency's requirements concerning these charges except where these requirements are included in a contractual or repayment agreement. These charges shall continue to accrue until the debt is paid in full or otherwise resolved through compromise, termination, or waiver of the charges.

(b) Agencies shall charge interest on debts owed the United States as follows:

(1) Interest shall accrue from the date of delinquency, or as otherwise provided by law.

(2) Unless otherwise established in a contract, repayment agreement, or by statute, the rate of interest charged shall be the rate established annually by the Secretary in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3717. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3717, an agency may charge a higher rate of interest if it reasonably determines that a higher rate is necessary to protect the rights of the United States. The agency should document the reason(s) for its determination that the higher rate is necessary.

(3) The rate of interest, as initially charged, shall remain fixed for the duration of the indebtedness. When a debtor defaults on a repayment agreement and seeks to enter into a new agreement, the agency may require payment of interest at a new rate that reflects the current value of funds to the Treasury at the time the new agreement is executed. Interest shall not be compounded, that is, interest shall not be charged on interest, penalties, or administrative costs required by this section. If, however, a debtor defaults on a previous repayment agreement, charges that accrued but were not collected under the defaulted agreement shall be added to the principal under the new repayment agreement.

(c) Agencies shall assess administrative costs incurred for processing and handling delinquent debts. The calculation of administrative costs should be based on actual costs incurred or upon estimated costs as determined by the assessing agency.

(d) Unless otherwise established in a contract, repayment agreement, or by statute, agencies shall charge a penalty, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3717(e)(2), not to exceed six percent a year on the amount due on a debt that is delinquent for more than 90 days. This charge shall accrue from the date of delinquency.

(e) Agencies may increase an ''administrative debt'' by the cost of living adjustment in lieu of charging interest and penalties under this section. ''Administrative debt'' includes, but is not limited to, a debt based on fines, penalties, and overpayments, but does not include a debt based on the extension of Government credit, such as those arising from loans and loan guaranties. The cost of living adjustment is the percentage by which the Consumer Price Index for the month of June of the calendar year preceding the adjustment exceeds the Consumer Price Index for the month of June of the calendar year in which the debt was determined or last adjusted. Increases to administrative debts shall be computed annually. Agencies should use this alternative only when there is a legitimate reason to do so, such as when calculating interest and penalties on a debt would be extremely difficult because of the age of the debt.

(f) When a debt is paid in partial or installment payments, amounts received by the Government shall be applied first to any contingency fees added to the debt, second to outstanding penalties, third to administrative costs other than contingency fees, fourth to interest, and last to principal. For purposes of this paragraph (f), ''contingency fees'' are administrative costs resulting from fees paid by a Federal agency to other Federal agencies or private collection contractors for collection services rendered when the fees are paid from the amounts collected from a debtor.

(g) Agencies shall waive the collection of interest and administrative costs imposed pursuant to this section on the portion of the debt that is paid within 30 days after the date on which interest began to accrue. Agencies may extend this 30-day period on a case-by-case basis. In addition, agencies may waive interest, penalties, and administrative costs charged under this section, in whole or in part, without regard to the amount of the debt, either under the criteria set forth in these standards for the compromise of debts, or if the agency determines that collection of these charges is against equity and good conscience or is not in the best interest of the United States.

(h) Agencies shall set forth in their regulations the circumstances under which interest and related charges will not be imposed for periods during which collection activity has been suspended pending agency review.

(i) Agencies are authorized to impose interest and related charges on debts not subject to 31 U.S.C. 3717, in accordance with the common law.

[65 FR 70396, Nov. 22, 2000, as amended at 73 FR 12274, Mar. 7, 2008]

§ 901.10 Analysis of costs.

Agency collection procedures should provide for periodic comparison of costs incurred and amounts collected. Data on costs and corresponding recovery rates for debts of different types and in various dollar ranges should be used to compare the cost effectiveness of alternative collection techniques, establish guidelines with respect to points at which costs of further collection efforts are likely to exceed recoveries, assist in evaluating offers in compromise, and establish minimum debt amounts below which collection efforts need not be taken.

§ 901.11 Use and disclosure of mailing addresses.

(a) When attempting to locate a debtor in order to collect or compromise a debt under parts 900–904 of this chapter or other authority, agencies may send a request to the Secretary (or designee) to obtain a debtor's mailing address from the records of the Internal Revenue Service.

(b) Agencies are authorized to use mailing addresses obtained under paragraph (a) of this section to enforce collection of a delinquent debt and may disclose such mailing addresses to other agencies and to collection agencies for collection purposes.

§ 901.12 Exemptions.

(a) The preceding sections of this part, to the extent they reflect remedies or procedures prescribed by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 and the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, such as administrative offset, use of credit bureaus, contracting for collection agencies, and interest and related charges, do not apply to debts arising under, or payments made under, the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (26 U.S.C. 1 *et seq.*); the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 301 *et seq.*), except to the extent provided under 42 U.S.C. 404 and 31 U.S.C. 3716(c); or the tariff laws of the United States. These remedies and procedures, however, may be authorized with respect to debts that are exempt from the Debt Collection Act of 1982 and the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, to the extent that they are authorized under some other statute or the common law.

(b) This section should not be construed as prohibiting the use of these authorities or requirements when collecting debts owed by persons employed by agencies administering the laws cited in paragraph (a) of this section unless the debt arose under those laws.

PART 902—STANDARDS FOR THE COMPROMISE OF CLAIMS

Sec.

AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 3711.

SOURCE: 65 FR 70402, Nov. 22, 2000, unless otherwise noted.

§ 902.1 Scope and application.

(a) The standards set forth in this part apply to the compromise of debts pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3711. An agency may exercise such compromise authority for debts arising out of activities of, or referred or transferred for collection services to, that agency when the amount of the debt then due, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, does not exceed $100,000 or any higher amount authorized by the Attorney General. Agency heads may designate officials within their respective agencies to exercise the authorities in this section.

(b) Unless otherwise provided by law, when the principal balance of a debt, exclusive of interest, penalties, and administrative costs, exceeds $100,000 or any higher amount authorized by the Attorney General, the authority to accept the compromise rests with the Department of Justice. The agency should evaluate the compromise offer, using the factors set forth in this part. If an offer to compromise any debt in excess of $100,000 is acceptable to the agency, the agency shall refer the debt to the Civil Division or other appropriate litigating division in the Department of Justice using a Claims Collection Litigation Report (CCLR). Agencies may obtain the CCLR from the Department of Justice's National Central Intake Facility. The referral shall include appropriate financial information and a recommendation for the acceptance of the compromise offer. Justice Department approval is not required if the agency rejects a compromise offer.

§ 902.2 Bases for compromise.

(a) Agencies may compromise a debt if the Government cannot collect the full amount because:

(1) The debtor is unable to pay the full amount in a reasonable time, as verified through credit reports or other financial information;

(2) The Government is unable to collect the debt in full within a reasonable time by enforced collection proceedings;

(3) The cost of collecting the debt does not justify the enforced collection of the full amount; or