

## Environmental Protection Agency

## § 16.3

the EPA Claims Officer determines that the employee intentionally has materially misrepresented the costs, conditions or nature of repairs of the claim, he will refer it to appropriate officials (e.g., Inspector General, the employee's supervisor, etc.) for action.

### § 14.14 Computation of award.

(a) The amount awarded on any item may not exceed its adjusted cost. Adjusted cost is either the purchase price of the item or its value at the time of acquisition, less appropriate depreciation. The amount normally payable for property damaged beyond economical repair is its depreciated value immediately before the loss or damage, less any salvage value. If the cost of repair is less than the depreciated value, it will be considered to be economically repairable and only the cost of repair will be allowable.

(b) Notwithstanding a contract to the contrary, the representative of an employee is limited by 31 U.S.C. 3721(i) to receipt of not more than 10 percent of the amount of an award under this part for services related to the claim. A person violating this paragraph is subject to a fine of not more than \$1,000. 31 U.S.C. 3721(i).

## PART 16—IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

### Sec.

- 16.1 Purpose and scope.
- 16.2 Definitions.
- 16.3 Procedures for accessing, correcting, or amending personal records.
- 16.4 Times, places, and requirements for identification of individuals making requests.
- 16.5 Request for correction or amendment of record.
- 16.6 Initial decision on request for access to, or correction or amendment of, records.
- 16.7 The appeal process.
- 16.8 Special procedures: Medical Records.
- 16.9 Fees.
- 16.10 Penalties.
- 16.11 General exemptions.
- 16.12 Specific exemptions.

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301, 552a (as revised).

SOURCE: 71 FR 234, Jan. 4, 2006, unless otherwise noted.

### § 16.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) This part implements the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a) (PA or Act) by establishing Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or Agency) policies and procedures that permit individuals to obtain access to and request amendment or correction of information about themselves that is maintained in Agency systems of records. This part also establishes policies and procedures for administrative appeals of requests for access to, or correction or amendment of, records. This part does not expand or restrict any rights granted under the PA.

(b) These procedures apply only to requests by individuals seeking their own records and only to records maintained by EPA. These procedures do not apply to those systems specifically exempt under §§ 16.11 and 16.12 herein or to any government-wide systems maintained by other Federal agencies.

(c) Privacy Act requests made by individuals for records about themselves and which are processed under this Part, will also be treated as FOIA requests and processed as appropriate under 40 CFR Part 2 to ensure full disclosure.

### § 16.2 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) The terms *individual*, *maintain*, *record*, and *system of records* have the same meanings as specified in 5 U.S.C. 552a.

(b) *EPA* means the Environmental Protection Agency.

(c) *Working days* means calendar days excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

### § 16.3 Procedures for accessing, correcting, or amending personal records.

(a) Any individual who—

(1) Wishes to be informed whether a system of records maintained by EPA contains any record pertaining to him or her,

(2) Seeks access to an EPA record about him or her that is maintained in an EPA PA system of records, including an accounting of any disclosures of that record; or

## § 16.4

## 40 CFR Ch. I (7–1–23 Edition)

(3) Seeks to amend or correct a record about him or her that is maintained in a system of records, may submit a written request to the EPA Privacy Act Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, Headquarters Freedom of Information Office, Office of Environmental Information (MC-2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20460 or via the Agency's Privacy Act Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/privacy> or by fax, (202) 566-1639.

(b) All requests for access to, or the correction or amendment of personal records should cite the Privacy Act of 1974 and reference the type of request being made (*i.e.*, access, correction or amendment). Requests must include:

(1) The name and signature of the individual making the request;

(2) The name of the PA system of records (as set forth in EPA's FEDERAL REGISTER PA systems of records notices) to which the request relates; and

(3) A statement whether a personal inspection of the records or a copy of them by mail is desired.

(c) A statement declaring his or her identity and stipulating that he or she understands it is a misdemeanor punishable by fine up to \$5,000 to knowingly and willfully seek or obtain access to records about another individual under false pretenses.

(d) A requester who cannot determine which PA system of records to request may ask for assistance by writing to the Headquarters Freedom of Information Office, Attention: Privacy Act Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, (MC-2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20460 or via e-mail to <http://www.epa.gov/privacy> or by fax, (202) 566-1639.

### § 16.4 Times, places, and requirements for identification of individuals making requests.

(a) If an individual requesting access under § 16.3 asks for personal inspection of records, and if EPA grants the request, the individual may appear at the time and place specified in EPA's response or arrange another time with the appropriate Agency official.

(b) Before conducting a personal inspection of his or her records, an individual must present sufficient identi-

fication (e.g., driver's license, employee identification card, social security card, or credit card) to establish that he or she is the subject of the records. EPA reserves the right to determine the adequacy of the identification. An individual who is unable to provide such identification described under paragraph (b) of this section will complete and sign, in the presence of an agency official, a statement declaring his or her identity and stipulating that he or she understands it is a misdemeanor punishable by fine up to \$5,000 to knowingly and willfully seek or obtain access to records about another individual under false pretenses.

(c) An individual may have another person accompany him or her during inspection of the records, and the system manager may require the requesting individual to sign a statement authorizing disclosure of the record in the presence of that other person.

(d) An individual may request a copy of the requested record.

(e) No verification of identity will be required where the records sought have been determined to be publicly available under the Freedom of Information Act.

### § 16.5 Request for correction or amendment of record.

An individual may request correction or amendment of any record pertaining to him or her in a system of records maintained by EPA by submitting a request in writing to the Freedom of Information Office, or via the Agency's Privacy Act Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/privacy> or by fax, (202) 566-1639. The following information must be provided:

(a) The name and signature of the individual making the request;

(b) The name of the system of records;

(c) A description of the information sought to be corrected or amended and the specific reasons for the correction or amendment; and

(d) Sufficient documentation of identity as described under § 16.4(b). (An individual who is unable to provide the identification under § 16.4(b) or is submitting a request on line, must provide

## Environmental Protection Agency

## § 16.7

a statement declaring his or her identity and stipulating that he or she understands it is a misdemeanor punishable by fine up to \$5,000 to knowingly and willfully seek or obtain access to records about another individual under false pretenses).

### **§ 16.6 Initial decision on request for access to, or correction or amendment of, records.**

(a) Within 10 working days of receipt of a request, the Agency Privacy Act Officer will send a letter to the requester acknowledging receipt of the request and promptly forward it to the manager of the system of records where the requested record is located with instructions to:

(1) Make a determination whether to permit access to the record, or to make the requested correction or amendment;

(2) Inform the requester of that determination and, if the determination is to deny access to the record, or to not correct or amend it, the reason for that decision and the procedures for appeal.

(b) If the system manager is unable to decide whether to grant a request of access to, or amendment or correction of a record within 20 working days of the Agency's receipt of the request, he or she will inform the requester reasons for the delay, and an estimate of when a decision will be made.

(c) In reviewing a request for the correction or amendment of a record, the system manager will be guided by the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) and (e)(5).

(d) A system manager who decides to grant all or any portion of a request to correct or amend a record will inform any person or entity outside EPA that was provided the record of the correction or amendment, and, where there is an accounting of that disclosure, make a note of the action taken in the accounting.

(e) If a request pursuant to § 16.3 for access to a record is in a system of records which is exempted, the records system manager or designee will decide whether any information will nonetheless be made available. If the decision is to deny access, the reason for denial

and the appeal procedure will be given to the requester.

(f) A person whose request for access is initially denied may appeal that denial to EPA's Privacy Act Officer. EPA's General Counsel will decide the appeal within 30 working days. If an appeal concerns a system of records maintained by the Office of Inspector General, the Privacy Act Officer will forward the appeal to the Counsel to the Inspector General who will decide on the appeal in accordance with § 16.7. The Counsel to the Inspector General will carry out all responsibilities with respect to the appeal that are otherwise assigned to EPA's General Counsel under § 16.7.

(g) If the appeal under § 16.7(e)(6) is denied, the requester will be notified of the right to seek judicial review in accordance with subsection (g) of the Privacy Act.

### **§ 16.7 The appeal process.**

(a) An individual whose request for access to, or correction or amendment of a record is initially denied and who wishes to appeal that denial may do so by sending a letter to EPA's Privacy Act Officer within 30 days of the receipt of the initial denial. The appeal must identify and restate the initial request. If an appeal concerns an adverse decision by the Office of Inspector General, the Privacy Act Officer will forward it to the Counsel to the Inspector General, or his or her designee, who will then act on the appeal. The Counsel to the Inspector General, or his or her designee, will carry out all responsibilities with respect to PA appeals that are otherwise assigned to EPA's General Counsel under this section; however, if the Counsel to the Inspector General has signed the initial adverse determination, the General Counsel, or his or her designee, will act on the appeal.

(b) EPA's General Counsel, or his or her designee, will make final decisions on PA appeals within 30 working days from the date on which the appeal is properly received in the Office of General Counsel, unless, for good cause shown, the 30-day period is extended and the requester is notified of the extension in writing. Such extensions

## § 16.8

## 40 CFR Ch. I (7–1–23 Edition)

will be utilized only in exceptional circumstances.

(c) In conducting PA appeals, the General Counsel, or his or her designee, will be guided by the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) and (e)(5).

(d) If an appeal is granted in whole or in part, the requester will be notified, in writing, and access to the record will be granted, or the correction or amendment of the record will be made. In all such cases, the Privacy Act Officer will ensure that § 16.7(d) is complied with.

(e) If the General Counsel or the Counsel to the Inspector General decides not to grant all or any portion of an appeal, the requester will be informed:

- (1) Of the decision and its basis;
- (2) Of the requester's right to file a concise statement of reasons for disagreeing with EPA's decision;
- (3) Of the procedures for filing such statement of disagreement;
- (4) That such statements of disagreements will be made available in subsequent disclosures of the record, together with an agency statement (if deemed appropriate) summarizing its refusal;
- (5) That prior recipients of the disputed record will be provided with statements as in paragraph (e)(4) of this section, to the extent that an accounting of disclosures is maintained under 5 U.S.C. 552a(c); and
- (6) Of the requester's right to seek judicial review under 5 U.S.C. 552a(g).

### § 16.8 Special procedures: Medical Records.

Should EPA receive a request for access to medical records (including psychological records) disclosure of which the system manager decides would be harmful to the individual to whom they relate, EPA may refuse to disclose the records directly to the individual and instead offer to transmit them to a physician designated by the individual.

### § 16.9 Fees.

No fees will be charged for providing the first copy of a record or any portion of a record to an individual to whom the record pertains. The fee schedule for reproducing other records

is the same as that set forth in 40 CFR 21.07.

### § 16.10 Penalties.

The Act provides, in pertinent part: "Any person who knowingly and willfully requests or obtains any record concerning an individual from an agency under false pretenses shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than \$5,000." (5 U.S.C. 552a(i)(3))

### § 16.11 General exemptions.

(a) *Systems of records affected.* (1) EPA-17 OCEFT Criminal Investigative Index and Files.

(2) EPA-40 Inspector General's Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Investigative Files.

(3) EPA-63 eDiscovery Enterprise Tool Suite.

(4) EPA-79 NEIC Master Tracking System.

(b) *Authority.* Under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2), the head of any Federal agency may by rule exempt any PA system of records within the agency from certain provisions of the Act, if the system of records is maintained by an agency or component thereof which performs as its principal function any activity pertaining to the enforcement of criminal laws and which consists of:

(1) Information compiled for the purpose of identifying individual criminal offenders and alleged offenders and consisting only of identifying data and notations of arrests, the nature and disposition of criminal charges, sentencing, confinement, release, and parole and probation status;

(2) Information compiled for the purpose of a criminal investigation, including reports of informants and investigators, and associated with an identifiable individual; or

(3) Reports identifiable to an individual compiled at any stage of the process of enforcement of the criminal laws from arrest or indictment through release from supervision.

(c) *Qualification for exemption.* (1) The Agency's system of records, EPA-17 system of records is maintained by the Criminal Investigation Division, Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics, and Training, a component of EPA

## Environmental Protection Agency

## § 16.11

which performs as its principal function activities pertaining to the enforcement of criminal laws. Authority for the Division's criminal law enforcement activities comes from Powers of Environmental Protection Agency, 18 U.S.C. 3063; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9603; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. 6928; Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. 1319, 1321; Toxic Substances Control Act, 15 U.S.C. 2614, 2615; Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. 7413; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, 7 U.S.C. 136j, 136l; Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300h-2, 300i-1; Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. 4912; Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act of 1986, 42 U.S.C. 11045; and the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 33 U.S.C. 1415.

(2) The Agency's system of records, EPA-40 system of records is maintained by the Office of Investigations of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), a component of EPA that performs as its principal function activities pertaining to the enforcement of criminal laws. Authority for the criminal law enforcement activities of the OIG's Office of Investigations is the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, 5 U.S.C. app. 3.

(3) [Reserved]

(4) The Agency's system of records, EPA-63 system of records is maintained by the Office of Environmental Information, Office of Enterprise Information Programs, on behalf of the Criminal Investigation Division, Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics, and Training, a component of EPA which performs as its principal function activities pertaining to the enforcement of criminal laws. Authority for the Division's criminal law enforcement activities comes from Powers of Environmental Protection Agency, 18 U.S.C. 3063; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9603; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. 6928; Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. 1319, 1321; Toxic Substances Control Act, 15 U.S.C. 2614, 2615; Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. 7413; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and

Rodenticide Act, 7 U.S.C. 136j, 136l; Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300h-2, 300i-1; Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. 4912; Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act of 1986, 42 U.S.C. 11045; and the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 33 U.S.C. 1415.

(5) The Agency's system of records, EPA-79 system of records is maintained by the National Enforcement and Investigations Center, Office of Criminal Enforcement, Forensics and Training, a component of EPA which performs as its principal function activities pertaining to the enforcement of criminal laws. Authority for the criminal law enforcement activities comes from Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1970 (5 U.S.C. app. 1), effective December 2, 1970; Powers of Environmental Protection Agency, 18 U.S.C. 3063; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9603; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. 6928; Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. 1319, 1321; Toxic Substances Control Act, 15 U.S.C. 2614, 2615; Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. 7413; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, 7 U.S.C. 136j, 136l; Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300h-2, 300i-1; Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act of 1986, 42 U.S.C. 11045; and the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 33 U.S.C. 1415.

(d) *Scope of exemption.* EPA systems of records 17, 40, 63, and 79 are exempted from the following provisions of the PA: 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) and (4); (d); (e)(1), (2), (3), (4)(G), and (H), (5), and (8); (f)(2) through (5); and (g). To the extent that the exemption for EPA systems of records 17, 40, 63 and 79 claimed under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2) of the Act is held to be invalid, then an exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) is claimed for these systems of records from (c)(3), (d), (e)(1), (e)(4)(G) and (H), and (f)(2) through (5). For Agency's system of records, EPA system 40, an exemption is separately claimed under 5 U.S.C. 552(k)(5) from (c)(3), (d), (e)(1), (e)(4)(G), (4)(H), and (f)(2) through (5).

(e) *Reasons for exemption.* EPA systems of records 17, 40, 63, and 79 are exempted from the provisions of the PA

in paragraph (d) of this section for the following reasons:

(1) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires an agency to make the accounting of each disclosure of records available to the individual named in the record upon request. These accountings must state the date, nature, and purpose of each disclosure of a record and the name and address of the recipient. Accounting for each disclosure would alert the subjects of an investigation to the existence of the investigation and the fact that they are subjects of the investigation. The release of such information to the subjects of an investigation would provide them with significant information concerning the nature of the investigation, and could seriously impede or compromise the investigation, endanger the physical safety of confidential sources, witnesses, law enforcement personnel and their families, and lead to the improper influencing of witnesses, the destruction of evidence, or the fabrication of testimony.

(2) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(4) requires an agency to inform any person or other agency about any correction or notation of dispute made by the agency in accordance with subsection (d) of the Act. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, this section is inapplicable and is exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from subsection (d) of the Act.

(3) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d) requires an agency to permit an individual to gain access to records pertaining to him or her, to request amendment to such records, to request a review of an agency decision not to amend such records, and to contest the information contained in such records. Granting access to records in these systems of records could inform the subject of an investigation of an actual or potential criminal violation of the existence of that investigation, of the nature and scope of the information and evidence obtained as to his activities, of the identity of confidential sources, witnesses, and law enforcement personnel, and could provide information to enable the subject to avoid detection or apprehension. Granting access to such information could seriously impede or compromise

an investigation, endanger the physical safety of confidential sources, witnesses, law enforcement personnel and their families, lead to the improper influencing of witnesses, the destruction of evidence, or the fabrication of testimony, and disclose investigative techniques and procedures. In addition, granting access to such information could disclose classified, security-sensitive, or confidential business information and could constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of others.

(4) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual as is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or by Executive order of the President. The application of this provision could impair investigations and law enforcement, because it is not always possible to detect the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of an investigation. Relevance and necessity are often questions of judgment and timing, and it is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established. In addition, during the course of the investigation, the investigator may obtain information which is incidental to the main purpose of the investigation but which may relate to matters under the investigative jurisdiction of another agency. Such information cannot readily be segregated. Furthermore, during the course of the investigation, the investigator may obtain information concerning the violation of laws other than those which are within the scope of his jurisdiction. In the interest of effective law enforcement, the EPA investigators should retain this information, since it can aid in establishing patterns of criminal activity and can provide valuable leads for other law enforcement agencies.

(5) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(2) requires an agency to collect information to the greatest extent practicable directly from the subject individual when the information may result in adverse determinations about an individual's rights, benefits, and privileges under Federal programs. The application of

this provision could impair investigations and law enforcement by alerting the subject of an investigation of the existence of the investigation, enabling the subject to avoid detection or apprehension, to influence witnesses improperly, to destroy evidence, or to fabricate testimony. Moreover, in certain circumstances, the subject of an investigation cannot be required to provide information to investigators, and information must be collected from other sources. Furthermore, it is often necessary to collect information from sources other than the subject of the investigation to verify the accuracy of the evidence collected.

(6) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(3) requires an agency to inform each person whom it asks to supply information, on a form that can be retained by the person, of the authority under which the information is sought and whether disclosure is mandatory or voluntary; of the principal purposes for which the information is intended to be used; of the routine uses which may be made of the information; and of the effects on the person, if any, of not providing all or any part of the requested information. The application of this provision could provide the subject of an investigation with substantial information about the nature of that investigation, which could interfere with the investigation. Moreover, providing such a notice to the subject of an investigation could seriously impede or compromise an undercover investigation by revealing its existence and could endanger the physical safety of confidential sources, witnesses, and investigators by revealing their identities.

(7) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4) (G) and (H) require an agency to publish a FEDERAL REGISTER notice concerning its procedures for notifying an individual at his request if the system of records contains a record pertaining to him or her, how to gain access to such a record, and how to contest its content. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempted from parts of subsection (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules, and subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, these requirements are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records

are exempted from subsections (f) and (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from these requirements, the Agency has published such a notice concerning its notification, access, and contest procedures because, under certain circumstances, EPA might decide it is appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of the individual's records in these systems of records.

(8) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(5) requires an agency to maintain its records with such accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and completeness as is reasonably necessary to assure fairness to the individual in making any determination about the individual. Since the Act defines *maintain* to include the collection of information, complying with this provision would prevent the collection of any data not shown to be accurate, relevant, timely, and complete at the moment it is collected. In collecting information for criminal law enforcement purposes, it is not possible to determine in advance what information is accurate, relevant, timely, and complete. Facts are first gathered and then placed into a logical order to prove or disprove objectively the criminal behavior of an individual. Material that may seem unrelated, irrelevant, or incomplete when collected may take on added meaning or significance as the investigation progresses. The restrictions of this provision could interfere with the preparation of a complete investigative report, thereby impeding effective law enforcement.

(9) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(8) requires an agency to make reasonable efforts to serve notice on an individual when any record on such individual is made available to any person under compulsory legal process when such process becomes a matter of public record. Complying with this provision could prematurely reveal an ongoing criminal investigation to the subject of the investigation.

(10) 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(1) requires an agency to promulgate rules which shall establish procedures whereby an individual can be notified in response to his request if any system of records named by the individual contains a record pertaining to him or her. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of

records are exempt from subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, the requirements of subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules for obtaining access to such records, are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from subsection (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from the requirements of subsection (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, EPA has promulgated rules which establish Agency procedures because, under certain circumstances, it might be appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in these systems of records. These procedures are described elsewhere in this part.

(11) 5 U.S.C. 552a(g) provides for civil remedies if an agency fails to comply with the requirements concerning access to records under subsections (d)(1) and (3) of the Act; maintenance of records under subsection (e)(5) of the Act; and any other provision of the Act, or any rule promulgated thereunder, in such a way as to have an adverse effect on an individual. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsections (c)(3) and (4), (d), (e)(1), (2), (3), (4)(G), (H), and (I), (5), and (8), and (f) of the Act, the provisions of subsection (g) of the Act are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from those subsections of the Act.

(f) *Exempt records provided by another agency.* Individuals may not have access to records maintained by the EPA if such records were provided by another Federal agency which has determined by regulation that such records are subject to general exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j). If an individual requests access to such exempt records, EPA will consult with the source agency.

(g) *Exempt records included in a non-exempt system of records.* All records obtained from a system of records that has been determined by regulation to be subject to general exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j) retain their exempt status even if such records are also included in a system of records for which

a general exemption has not been claimed.

[71 FR 234, Jan. 4, 2006, as amended at 83 FR 62718, Dec. 6, 2018; 86 FR 62732, Nov. 12, 2021]

#### § 16.12 Specific exemptions.

(a) *Exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2)—(1) Systems of records affected.* (i) EPA–17 OCEFT Criminal Investigative Index and Files.

(ii) EPA–21 External Compliance Program Discrimination Complaint Files.

(iii) EPA–30 OIG Hotline Allegation System.

(iv) EPA–40 Inspector General’s Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Investigative Files.

(v) EPA–41 Inspector General’s Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Personnel Security Files.

(vi) EPA–63 eDiscovery Enterprise Tool Suite.

(vii) EPA–79 NEIC Master Tracking System.

(2) *Authority.* Under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2), the head of any Federal agency may by rule exempt any PA system of records within the agency from certain provisions of the Act, if the system of records is investigatory material compiled for law enforcement purposes, other than material within the scope of subsection (j)(2) of the Act. However, if any individual is denied any right, privilege, or benefit that the individual would otherwise be entitled to by Federal law, or for which he or she would otherwise be eligible, as a result of the maintenance of the material, the material must be provided, except to the extent that the disclosure would reveal the identity of a confidential source.

(3) *Qualification for exemption.* All of the affected PA systems of records contain investigatory material compiled for law enforcement purposes, material which is not within the scope of subsection (j)(2) of the Act.

(4) *Scope of exemption.* (i) EPA systems of records 17, 30, 40, 41, 63, and 79 are exempted from the following provisions of the PA, subject to the limitations set forth in 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2): 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3); (d); (e)(1), (4)(G) and (4)(H); and (f)(2) through (5). EPA system of records 21 is exempt from the following provisions of the PA, subject to the limitations set forth in 5 U.S.C.



552a(k)(2): 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3), (d), and (e)(1).

(ii) An individual is “denied any right, privilege, or benefit that he or she would otherwise be entitled by Federal law, or for which he or she would otherwise be eligible, as a result of the maintenance of such material,” only if EPA actually uses the material in denying or proposing to deny such right, privilege, or benefit.

(iii) EPA-17 OCEFT Criminal Investigative Index and Files, EPA-40 Inspector General’s Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Investigative Files, and EPA-79 NEIC Master Tracking System are exempted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2), and these systems are exempted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) only to the extent that the (j)(2) exemption is held to be invalid.

(5) *Reasons for exemption.* EPA systems of records 17, 21, 30, 40, 41, 63, and 79 are exempted from the provisions of the PA in paragraph (a)(4) of this section for the following reasons:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires an agency to make the accounting of each disclosure of records available to the individual named in the record at his or her request. These accountings must state the date, nature, and purpose of each disclosure of a record and the name and address of the recipient. Accounting for each disclosure would alert the subjects of an investigation to the existence of the investigation and the fact that they are subjects of the investigation. The release of such information to the subjects of an investigation would provide them with significant information concerning the nature of the investigation, and could seriously impede or compromise the investigation, endanger the physical safety of confidential sources, witnesses, law enforcement personnel and their families, and lead to the improper influencing of witnesses, the destruction of evidence, or the fabrication of testimony.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d) requires an agency to permit an individual to gain access to records pertaining to him or her, to request amendment of such records, to request a review of an agency decision not to amend such records, and to contest the information contained in such records. Granting access

to records in these affected PA systems of records could inform the subject of an investigation of an actual or potential criminal violation, of the existence of that investigation, of the nature and scope of the information and evidence obtained as to his or her activities, of the identity of confidential sources, witnesses, and law enforcement personnel, and could provide information to enable the subject to avoid detection or apprehension. Granting access to such information could seriously impede or compromise an investigation, endanger the physical safety of confidential sources, witnesses, law enforcement personnel and their families, lead to the improper influencing of witnesses, the destruction of evidence, or the fabrication of testimony, and disclose investigative techniques and procedures. In addition, granting access to such information could disclose classified, security-sensitive, or confidential business information and could constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of others.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual as is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or by Executive order of the President. Maintaining records in this way could impair investigations and law enforcement efforts, because it is not always possible to detect the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of an investigation. The relevance and necessity of maintaining information are often questions of judgment and timing, and it is only after that information is evaluated that its relevance and necessity can be established. In addition, during the course of an investigation, the investigator may obtain information which is incidental to the main purpose of the investigation but which may relate to matters under the investigative jurisdiction of another agency. Such information cannot readily be segregated. Furthermore, during the course of an investigation, the investigator may obtain information concerning the violation of laws other than those within the scope of the agency’s jurisdiction. In the interest of

effective law enforcement, EPA investigators should retain this information, since it can aid in establishing patterns of criminal activity and can provide valuable leads for other law enforcement agencies.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4)(G) and (H) require an agency to publish a FEDERAL REGISTER notice concerning its procedures for notifying an individual upon request if the system of records contains a record pertaining to him or her, how the individual can gain access to the record, and how to contest its content. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsection (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules, and subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, these requirements are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from subsections (f) and (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from these requirements, EPA has published such a notice concerning its notification, access, and contest procedures because, under certain circumstances, EPA might decide it is appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in these systems of records.

(v) 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(1) requires an agency to promulgate rules which shall establish procedures whereby an individual can be notified in response to his or her request if any system of records named by the individual contains a record pertaining to him or her. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, the requirements of subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules for obtaining access to such records, are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from subsection (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from the requirements of subsection (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, EPA has promulgated rules which establish Agency procedures because, under certain circumstances, it might be appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in these systems of records.

These procedures are described elsewhere in this part.

(b) *Exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5)—(1) Systems of records affected.* EPA 36 Research Grant, Cooperative Agreement, and Fellowship Application Files.

EPA 40 Inspector General's Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Investigative Files.

EPA 41 Inspector General's Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Personnel Security Files.

(2) *Authority.* Under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5), the head of any agency may by rule exempt any system of records within the agency from certain provisions of the PA, if the system of records is investigatory material compiled solely for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment, Federal contracts, or access to classified information, but only to the extent that the disclosure of such material would reveal the identity of a source who furnished information to the Government under an express promise that the identity of the source would be held in confidence, or, prior to September 27, 1975, under an implied promise that the identity would be held in confidence.

(3) *Qualification for exemption.* These systems contain investigatory material compiled solely for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment, military service, Federal contracts, or access to classified information.

(4) *Scope of exemption.* (i) EPA 36 is exempted from 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) and (d). EPA 40 and 41 are exempted from the following provisions of the PA, subject to the limitations of 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(5); 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3); (d); (e)(1), (4)(H); and (f)(2) through (5).

(ii) To the extent that records in EPA 40 and 41 reveal a violation or potential violation of law, then an exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(2) is also claimed for these records. EPA 40 is also exempt under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j)(2) of the Act.

(5) *Reasons for exemption.* EPA 36, 40, and 41 are exempted from the above provisions of the PA for the following reasons:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires an agency to make the accounting of each disclosure of records available to the individual named in the record at his or her request. These accountings must state the date, nature, and purpose of each disclosure of a record and the name and address of the recipient. Making such an accounting could cause the identity of a confidential source to be revealed, endangering the physical safety of the confidential source, and could impair the ability of the EPA to compile, in the future, investigatory material for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment, Federal contracts, or access to classified information.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d) requires an agency to permit an individual to gain access to records pertaining to him or her, to request amendment to such records, to request a review of an agency decision not to amend such records, and to contest the information contained in such records. Granting such access could cause the identity of a confidential source to be revealed, endangering the physical safety of the confidential source, and could impair the ability of the EPA to compile, in the future, investigatory material for the purpose of determining suitability, eligibility, or qualifications for Federal civilian employment, Federal contracts, or access to classified information.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual as is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or by Executive order of the President. The application of this provision could impair investigations, because it is not always possible to detect the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of an investigation. Relevance and necessity are often questions of judgment and timing, and it is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4)(H) requires an agency to publish a FEDERAL REGISTER notice concerning its procedures for notifying an individual upon request

how to gain access to any record pertaining to him or her and how to contest its content. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules, and subsection (b) of the Act, concerning access to records, these requirements are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that these systems of records are exempted from subsections (f)(2) through (5) and (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from these requirements, EPA has published such a notice concerning its access and contest procedures because, under certain circumstances, EPA might decide it is appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in these systems of records.

(v) 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(2) through (5) require an agency to promulgate rules for obtaining access to records. Since EPA is claiming that these systems of records are exempt from subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, the requirements of subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules for obtaining access to such records, are inapplicable and are exempt to the extent that this system of records is exempt from subsection (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from the requirements of subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, EPA has promulgated rules which establish Agency procedures because, under certain circumstances, it might be appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in this system of records. These procedures are described elsewhere in this part.

(c) *Exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(1)*—(1) *System of records affected.* EPA 41 Inspector General's Operation and Reporting (IGOR) System Personnel Security Files.

(2) *Authority.* Under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k)(1), the head of any agency may by rule exempt any system of records within the agency from certain provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974, if the system of records is subject to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(1). A system of records is subject to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(1) if it contains records that are specifically authorized under

criteria established by an Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive order.

(3) *Qualification for Exemption.* EPA 41 may contain some records that bear a national defense/foreign policy classification of Confidential, Secret, or Top Secret.

(4) *Scope of exemption.* To the extent that EPA 41 contains records provided by other Federal agencies that are specifically authorized under criteria established by Executive Order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and are in fact properly classified by other Federal agencies pursuant to that Executive Order, the system of records is exempted from the following provisions of the PA: 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3); (d); (e)(1), (4)(G) and (4)(H); and (f)(2) through (5) of the Act.

(5) *Reasons for exemption.* EPA 41 is exempted from the above provisions of the PA for the following reasons:

(i) 5 U.S.C. 552a(c)(3) requires an agency to make the accounting of each disclosure of records available to the individual named in the record at his request. These accountings must state the date, nature, and purpose of each disclosure of a record and the name and address of the recipient. Making such an accounting could result in the release of properly classified information, which would compromise the national defense or disrupt foreign policy.

(ii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(d) requires an agency to permit an individual to gain access to records pertaining to him or her, to request amendment to such records, to request a review of an agency decision not to amend such records, and to contest the information contained in such records. Granting such access could cause the release of properly classified information, which would compromise the national defense or disrupt foreign policy.

(iii) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(1) requires each agency to maintain in its records only such information about an individual as is relevant and necessary to accomplish a purpose of the agency required by statute or by Executive order of the President. The application of this provision could impair personnel security

investigations which use properly classified information, because it is not always possible to know the relevance or necessity of specific information in the early stages of an investigation. Relevance and necessity are often questions of judgment and timing, and it is only after the information is evaluated that the relevance and necessity of such information can be established.

(iv) 5 U.S.C. 552a(e)(4) (G) and (H) require an agency to publish a FEDERAL REGISTER notice concerning its procedures for notifying an individual upon request if the system of records contains a record pertaining to him or her, how to gain access to such a record, and how to contest its content. Since EPA is claiming that this system of records is exempt from subsection (f) of the Act, concerning agency rules, and subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, these requirements are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that this system of records is exempted from subsections (f) and (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from these requirements, EPA has published such a notice concerning its notification, access, and contest procedures because, under certain circumstances, EPA might decide it is appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his records in this system of records.

(v) 5 U.S.C. 552a(f)(1) requires an agency to promulgate rules which shall establish procedures whereby an individual can be notified in response to his request if any system of records named by the individual contains a record pertaining to him or her. Since EPA is claiming that this system of records is exempt from subsection (d) of the Act, concerning access to records, the requirements of subsections (f)(2) through (5) of the Act, concerning agency rules for obtaining access to such records, are inapplicable and are exempted to the extent that this system of records is exempt from subsection (d) of the Act. Although EPA is claiming exemption from the requirements of subsection (f) of the Act, EPA has promulgated rules which establish Agency procedures because, under certain circumstances, it might be appropriate for an individual to have access to all or a portion of his or

## Environmental Protection Agency

## § 17.2

her records in this system of records. These procedures are described elsewhere in this part.

(d) *Exempt records provided by another Federal agency.* Individuals may not have access to records maintained by the EPA if such records were provided by another Federal agency which has determined by regulation that such records are subject to general exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(j) or specific exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k). If an individual requests access to such exempt records, EPA will consult with the source agency.

(e) *Exempt records included in a non-exempt system of records.* All records obtained from a system of records which has been determined by regulation to be subject to specific exemption under 5 U.S.C. 552a(k) retain their exempt status even if such records are also included in a system of records for which a specific exemption has not been claimed.

[71 FR 234, Jan. 4, 2006, as amended at 83 FR 62718, Dec. 6, 2018; 86 FR 62732, Nov. 12, 2021]

## PART 17—IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT IN EPA ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS

### Subpart A—General Provisions

Sec.

- 17.1 Purpose of these rules.
- 17.2 Definitions.
- 17.3 Proceedings covered.
- 17.4 Applicability to EPA proceedings.
- 17.5 Eligibility of applicants.
- 17.6 Standards for awards.
- 17.7 Allowable fees and other expenses.
- 17.8 Delegation of authority.

### Subpart B—Information Required From Applicants

- 17.11 Contents of application.
- 17.12 Net worth exhibit.
- 17.13 Documentation of fees and expenses.
- 17.14 Time for submission of application.

### Subpart C—Procedures for Considering Applications

- 17.21 Filing and service of documents.
- 17.22 Answer to application.
- 17.23 Comments by other parties.
- 17.24 Settlement.
- 17.25 Extensions of time and further proceedings.

- 17.26 Decision on application.
- 17.27 Agency review.
- 17.28 Judicial review.
- 17.29 Payment of award.

AUTHORITY: Section 504, Title 5 U.S.C., as amended by sec. 203(a)(1), Equal Access to Justice Act (Title 2 of Pub. L. 96-481, 94 Stat. 2323).

SOURCE: 48 FR 39936, Sept. 2, 1983, unless otherwise noted.

## Subpart A—General Provisions

### § 17.1 Purpose of these rules.

These rules are adopted by EPA pursuant to section 504 of title 5 U.S.C., as added by section 203(a)(1) of the Equal Access to Justice Act, Public Law No. 96-481. Under the Act, an eligible party may receive an award for attorney's fees and other expenses when it prevails over EPA in an adversary adjudication before EPA unless EPA's position as a party to the proceeding was substantially justified or special circumstances make an award unjust. The purpose of these rules is to establish procedures for the submission and consideration of applications for awards against EPA when the underlying decision is not reviewed by a court.

### § 17.2 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *The Act* means section 504 of title 5 U.S.C., as amended by section 203(a)(1) of the Equal Access to Justice Act, Public Law No. 96-481.

(b) *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

(c) *Adversary adjudication* means an adjudication required by statute to be held pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 554 in which the position of the United States is represented by counsel or otherwise, but excludes an adjudication for the purpose of granting or renewing a license.

(d) *EPA* means the Environmental Protection Agency, an Agency of the United States.

(e) *Presiding officer* means the official, without regard to whether he is designated as an administrative law judge or a hearing officer or examiner, who presides at the adversary adjudication.

(f) *Proceeding* means an adversary adjudication as defined in § 17.2(b).