

(c) Notice of violation; action required of violator; waiver of legal rights

Upon the issuance of a notice or order charging that a violation of this chapter has occurred, the Secretary shall inform the operator within thirty days of the proposed amount of said penalty. The person charged with the penalty shall then have thirty days to pay the proposed penalty in full or, if the person wishes to contest either the amount of the penalty or the fact of the violation, forward the proposed amount to the Secretary for placement in an escrow account. If through administrative or judicial review of the proposed penalty, it is determined that no violation occurred, or that the amount of the penalty should be reduced, the Secretary shall within thirty days remit the appropriate amount to the person, with interest at the rate of 6 percent, or at the prevailing Department of the Treasury rate, whichever is greater. Failure to forward the money to the Secretary within thirty days shall result in a waiver of all legal rights to contest the violation or the amount of the penalty.

(d) Civil action to recover civil penalties

Civil penalties owed under this chapter, may be recovered in a civil action brought by the Attorney General at the request of the Secretary in any appropriate district court of the United States.

(e) Willful violations

Any person who willfully and knowingly violates a condition of a permit issued pursuant to a Federal program, a Federal lands program or Federal enforcement pursuant to section 1252 of this title or during Federal enforcement of a State program pursuant to section 1271 of this title or fails or refuses to comply with any order issued under section 1271 or section 1276 of this title, or any order incorporated in a final decision issued by the Secretary under this chapter, except an order incorporated in a decision issued under subsection (b) of this section or section 1294 of this title, shall, upon conviction, be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000, or by imprisonment for not more than one year or both.

(f) Corporate violations

Whenever a corporate permittee violates a condition of a permit issued pursuant to a Federal program, a Federal lands program or Federal enforcement pursuant to section 1252 of this title or Federal enforcement of a State program pursuant to section 1271 of this title or fails or refuses to comply with any order issued under section 1271 of this title, or any order incorporated in a final decision issued by the Secretary under this chapter except an order incorporated in a decision issued under subsection (b) of this section or section 1293 of this title, any director, officer, or agent of such corporation who willfully and knowingly authorized, ordered, or carried out such violation, failure, or refusal shall be subject to the same civil penalties, fines, and imprisonment that may be imposed upon a person under subsections (a) and (e) of this section.

(g) False statements, representations, or certifications

Whoever knowingly makes any false statement, representation, or certification, or know-

ingly fails to make any statement, representation, or certification in any application, record, report, plan, or other document filed or required to be maintained pursuant to a Federal program or a Federal lands program or any order of decision issued by the Secretary under this chapter, shall, upon conviction, be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000, or by imprisonment for not more than one year or both.

(h) Failure to correct violation

Any operator who fails to correct a violation for which a citation has been issued under section 1271(a) of this title within the period permitted for its correction (which period shall not end until the entry of a final order by the Secretary, in the case of any review proceedings under section 1275 of this title initiated by the operator wherein the Secretary orders, after an expedited hearing, the suspension of the abatement requirements of the citation after determining that the operator will suffer irreparable loss or damage from the application of those requirements, or until the entry of an order of the court, in the case of any review proceedings under section 1276 of this title initiated by the operator wherein the court orders the suspension of the abatement requirements of the citation), shall be assessed a civil penalty of not less than \$750 for each day during which such failure or violation continues.

(i) Effect on additional enforcement right or procedure available under State law

As a condition of approval of any State program submitted pursuant to section 1253 of this title, the civil and criminal penalty provisions thereof shall, at a minimum, incorporate penalties no less stringent than those set forth in this section, and shall contain the same or similar procedural requirements relating thereto. Nothing herein shall be construed so as to eliminate any additional enforcement right or procedures which are available under State law to a State regulatory authority but which are not specifically enumerated herein.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title V, § 518, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 499.)

§ 1269. Release of performance bonds or deposits**(a) Filing of request; submittal of copy of advertisement; notification by letter of intent to seek release**

The permittee may file a request with the regulatory authority for the release of all or part of a performance bond or deposit. Within thirty days after any application for bond or deposit release has been filed with the regulatory authority, the operator shall submit a copy of an advertisement placed at least once a week for four successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality of the surface coal mining operation. Such advertisement shall be considered part of any bond release application and shall contain a notification of the precise location of the land affected, the number of acres, the permit and the date approved, the amount of the bond filed and the portion sought to be released, and the type and appropriate dates of reclamation work performed, and a description of the results achieved as they relate

to the operator's approved reclamation plan. In addition, as part of any bond release application, the applicant shall submit copies of letters which he has sent to adjoining property owners, local governmental bodies, planning agencies, and sewage and water treatment authorities, or water companies in the locality in which the surface coal mining and reclamation activities took place, notifying them of his intention to seek release from the bond.

(b) Inspection and evaluation; notification of decision

Upon receipt of the notification and request, the regulatory authority shall within thirty days conduct an inspection and evaluation of the reclamation work involved. Such evaluation shall consider, among other things, the degree of difficulty to complete any remaining reclamation, whether pollution of surface and subsurface water is occurring, the probability of continuance of future occurrence of such pollution, and the estimated cost of abating such pollution. The regulatory authority shall notify the permittee in writing of its decision to release or not to release all or part of the performance bond or deposit within sixty days from the filing of the request, if no public hearing is held pursuant to subsection (f), and if there has been a public hearing held pursuant to subsection (f), within thirty days thereafter.

(c) Requirements for release

The regulatory authority may release in whole or in part said bond or deposit if the authority is satisfied the reclamation covered by the bond or deposit or portion thereof has been accomplished as required by this chapter according to the following schedule:

(1) When the operator completes the backfilling, regrading, and drainage control of a bonded area in accordance with his approved reclamation plan, the release of 60 per centum of the bond or collateral for the applicable permit area.

(2) After revegetation has been established on the regraded mined lands in accordance with the approved reclamation plan. When determining the amount of bond to be released after successful revegetation has been established, the regulatory authority shall retain that amount of bond for the revegetated area which would be sufficient for a third party to cover the cost of reestablishing revegetation and for the period specified for operator responsibility in section 1265 of this title of reestablishing revegetation. No part of the bond or deposit shall be released under this paragraph so long as the lands to which the release would be applicable are contributing suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit area in excess of the requirements set by section 1265(b)(10) of this title or until soil productivity for prime farm lands has returned to equivalent levels of yield as nonmined land of the same soil type in the surrounding area under equivalent management practices as determined from the soil survey performed pursuant to section 1257(b)(16) of this title. Where a silt dam is to be retained as a permanent impoundment pursuant to section 1265(b)(8) of this title, the portion of bond may be released

under this paragraph so long as provisions for sound future maintenance by the operator or the landowner have been made with the regulatory authority.

(3) When the operator has completed successfully all surface coal mining and reclamation activities, the release of the remaining portion of the bond, but not before the expiration of the period specified for operator responsibility in section 1265 of this title: *Provided, however*, That no bond shall be fully released until all reclamation requirements of this chapter are fully met.

(d) Notice of disapproval

If the regulatory authority disapproves the application for release of the bond or portion thereof, the authority shall notify the permittee, in writing, stating the reasons for disapproval and recommending corrective actions necessary to secure said release and allowing opportunity for a public hearing.

(e) Notice to municipality

When any application for total or partial bond release is filed with the regulatory authority, the regulatory authority shall notify the municipality in which a surface coal mining operation is located by certified mail at least thirty days prior to the release of all or a portion of the bond.

(f) Objections to release; hearing

Any person with a valid legal interest which might be adversely affected by release of the bond or the responsible officer or head of any Federal, State, or local governmental agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental, social, or economic impact involved in the operation, or is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards with respect to such operations shall have the right to file written objections to the proposed release from bond to the regulatory authority within thirty days after the last publication of the above notice. If written objections are filed, and a hearing requested, the regulatory authority shall inform all the interested parties, of the time and place of the hearing, and hold a public hearing in the locality of the surface coal mining operation proposed for bond release within thirty days of the request for such hearing. The date, time, and location of such public hearings shall be advertised by the regulatory authority in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality for two consecutive weeks, and shall hold a public hearing in the locality of the surface coal mining operation proposed for bond release or at the State capital at the option of the objector, within thirty days of the request for such hearing.

(g) Informal conference

Without prejudice to the rights of the objectors, the applicant, or the responsibilities of the regulatory authority pursuant to this section, the regulatory authority may establish an informal conference as provided in section 1263 of this title to resolve such written objections.

(h) Power of regulatory authority with respect to informal conference

For the purpose of such hearing the regulatory authority shall have the authority and is hereby

empowered to administer oaths, subpoena witnesses, or written or printed materials, compel the attendance of witnesses, or production of the materials, and take evidence including but not limited to inspections of the land affected and other surface coal mining operations carried on by the applicant in the general vicinity. A verbatim record of each public hearing required by this chapter shall be made, and a transcript made available on the motion of any party or by order of the regulatory authority.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title V, § 519, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 501.)

§ 1270. Citizens suits

(a) Civil action to compel compliance with this chapter

Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected may commence a civil action on his own behalf to compel compliance with this chapter—

(1) against the United States or any other governmental instrumentality or agency to the extent permitted by the eleventh amendment to the Constitution which is alleged to be in violation of the provisions of this chapter or of any rule, regulation, order or permit issued pursuant thereto, or against any other person who is alleged to be in violation of any rule, regulation, order or permit issued pursuant to this subchapter; or

(2) against the Secretary or the appropriate State regulatory authority to the extent permitted by the eleventh amendment to the Constitution where there is alleged a failure of the Secretary or the appropriate State regulatory authority to perform any act or duty under this chapter which is not discretionary with the Secretary or with the appropriate State regulatory authority.

The district courts shall have jurisdiction, without regard to the amount in controversy or the citizenship of the parties.

(b) Limitation on bringing of action

No action may be commenced—

(1) under subsection (a)(1) of this section—

(A) prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing of the violation (i) to the Secretary, (ii) to the State in which the violation occurs, and (iii) to any alleged violator; or

(B) if the Secretary or the State has commenced and is diligently prosecuting a civil action in a court of the United States or a State to require compliance with the provisions of this chapter, or any rule, regulation, order, or permit issued pursuant to this chapter, but in any such action in a court of the United States any person may intervene as a matter of right; or

(2) under subsection (a)(2) of this section prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing of such action to the Secretary, in such manner as the Secretary shall by regulation prescribe, or to the appropriate State regulatory authority, except that such action may be brought immediately after such

notification in the case where the violation or order complained of constitutes an imminent threat to the health or safety of the plaintiff or would immediately affect a legal interest of the plaintiff.

(c) Venue; intervention

(1) Any action respecting a violation of this chapter or the regulations thereunder may be brought only in the judicial district in which the surface coal mining operation complained of is located.

(2) In such action under this section, the Secretary, or the State regulatory authority, if not a party, may intervene as a matter of right.

(d) Costs; filing of bonds

The court, in issuing any final order in any action brought pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, may award costs of litigation (including attorney and expert witness fees) to any party, whenever the court determines such award is appropriate. The court may, if a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction is sought require the filing of a bond or equivalent security in accordance with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

(e) Effect on other enforcement methods

Nothing in this section shall restrict any right which any person (or class of persons) may have under any statute or common law to seek enforcement of any of the provisions of this chapter and the regulations thereunder, or to seek any other relief (including relief against the Secretary or the appropriate State regulatory authority).

(f) Action for damages

Any person who is injured in his person or property through the violation by any operator of any rule, regulation, order, or permit issued pursuant to this chapter may bring an action for damages (including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees) only in the judicial district in which the surface coal mining operation complained of is located. Nothing in this subsection shall affect the rights established by or limits imposed under State Workmen's Compensation laws.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title V, § 520, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 503.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, referred to in subsec. (d), are set out in the Appendix to Title 28, Judiciary and Judicial Procedure.

§ 1271. Enforcement

(a) Notice of violation; Federal inspection; waiver of notification period; cessation order; affirmative obligation on operator; suspension or revocation of permits; contents of notices and orders

(1) Whenever, on the basis of any information available to him, including receipt of information from any person, the Secretary has reason to believe that any person is in violation of any requirement of this chapter or any permit condition required by this chapter, the Secretary