

(l) The Agency may delegate its authority for conducting complaint investigations to other Federal agencies, except that the authority for making the final determination may not be delegated to another agency.

[53 FR 19760, May 31, 1988, as amended at 61 FR 2691, Jan. 29, 1996]

PART 140—DEBT COLLECTION THROUGH OFFSET

Sec.

140.1 What does this part cover?

140.2 What is a debt and how can the SBA collect it through offset?

140.3 What rights do you have when SBA tries to collect a debt from you through offset?

AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 3711, Collection and compromise; 31 U.S.C. 3720A, Reduction of tax refund by amount of debt; 5 U.S.C. 5514, Installment deduction for indebtedness to the United States; 31 U.S.C. 3716, Administrative offset; 15 U.S.C. 634(b)(6), Small Business Act.

SOURCE: 60 FR 62191, Dec. 5, 1995, unless otherwise noted.

§ 140.1 What does this part cover?

This part establishes procedures which SBA may use in the collection, through offset, of past-due debts owed to the Government. SBA's failure to comply with any provision of the regulations in this part is not available to any debtor as a defense against collection of the debt through judicial process.

§ 140.2 What is a debt and how can the SBA collect it through offset?

(a) A debt means an amount owed to the United States from loans made or guaranteed by the United States, and from fees, leases, rents, royalties, services, sales of real or personal property, overpayments, fines, penalties, damages, interest, forfeitures, or any other source. You are a debtor if you owe an amount to the United States from any of these sources.

(b) SBA may collect past-due debts through offset by using any of three procedures: administrative offset, salary offset, or IRS tax refund offset. A past-due debt is one which has been reduced to judgment, has been acceler-

ated, or has been due for at least 90 days.

(1) *Administrative offset.* SBA may withhold money it owes to the debtor in order to satisfy the debt. This procedure is an "administrative offset" and is authorized by 31 U.S.C. 3716.

(2) *Salary offset.* If the debtor is a federal employee (a civilian employee as defined by 5 U.S.C. 2105, an employee of the U.S. Postal Service or Postal Rate Commission, or a member of the Uniformed Services or Reserve of the Uniformed Services), SBA may deduct payments owed to SBA or another federal agency from the debtor's paycheck. This procedure is a "salary offset" and is authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5514.

(i) Any amount deducted from salary in any one pay period will not exceed 15 percent of a debtor's disposable pay, unless the debtor agrees in writing to a greater percentage.

(ii) SBA also may collect against travel advances, training expenses, disallowed payments, retirement benefits, or any other amount due the employee, including lump-sum payments.

(iii) If an employee has terminated employment after salary offset has been initiated, there are no limitations on the amount that can be withheld or offset.

(3) *IRS tax refund offset.* SBA may request that IRS reduce a debtor's tax refund by the amount of the debt, as authorized by 31 U.S.C. 3720A. Where available, administrative and salary offsets must be used before collection is attempted through income tax offset. SBA may refer a debt to the IRS for a tax refund offset and take additional action against the debtor to collect the debt at the same time or in sequence. When SBA makes simultaneous or sequential referrals (within six months of the initial notice), only one review pursuant to the rules in this part and the statutes authorizing them is required.

§ 140.3 What rights do you have when SBA tries to collect a debt from you through offset?

(a) SBA must write to you and tell you that it proposes to collect the debt by reducing your federal paycheck, withholding money the Government