

TITLE 810. WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION
CHAPTER 10. PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE

RULEMAKING ACTION:

EMERGENCY adoption

RULES:

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810:10-5-67. [RESERVED]

Part 15. Settlements

810:10-5-95. Joint petition settlements [NEW]

AUTHORITY:

Workers' Compensation Commission; 85A O.S. §§ 1 et seq.

COMMENT PERIOD:

January 15, 2015 through February 16, 2015

PUBLIC HEARING:

February 18, 2015

ADOPTION:

March 23, 2015

EFFECTIVE:

Immediately upon Governor's approval

EXPIRATION:

Effective through September 14, 2015, unless superseded by another rule or disapproved by the Legislature

SUPERSEDED EMERGENCY ACTIONS:

Superseded rules:

810:10-1-9. Who may appear before Commission [NEW]

810:10-5-45. Submission to medical examination; appointment of medical or vocational expert; travel expenses [NEW]

810:10-5-48. Sessions, hearings and venue, generally [NEW]

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810:10-5-67. [RESERVED]

810:10-5-95. Joint petition settlements [NEW]

Gubernatorial approval:

February 4, 2014

Register publication:

31 Ok Reg 449

Docket number:

14-216

INCORPORATIONS BY REFERENCE:

n/a

FINDING OF EMERGENCY:

The rules are necessary as emergency measures under 75 O.S. § 253(A)(1)(c), avoid violation of state law. 810:10-1-9 currently allows non-lawyers to appear before the Commission on behalf of an employer, which is the unauthorized practice of law. The remaining proposed emergency rules will bring the Commission's rules in compliance with its statute, Title 85A, and orders of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

ANALYSIS:

810:10-5-45(c) currently reads that an employer or insurance carrier shall reimburse the employee for the actual mileage in excess of forty (40) miles round-trip to and from the claimant's home to the location of a medical service provider. The statute, 85A O.S. § 50(G), states an employee is reimbursed for mileage in excess of twenty (20) miles. 810:10-5-48 and 810:10-5-95 state hearings and joint petition settlements shall be audio recorded not stenographically recorded. The Oklahoma Supreme Court held that the Commission is prohibited from providing only an audio recording of all hearings, in lieu of a stenographer. *Williams v. Workers' Compensation Commission*, 2014 OK 98. 810:10-5-66 provides that oral arguments before the Commission en banc are permitted at the discretion of the Commission; however, oral arguments under 85A O.S. § 78(A) are not discretionary. 810:10-5-67 provides that the Commission hears orders appealed from the Court of Existing Claims entered on or after February 1, 2014. The Oklahoma Supreme Court held the Commission cannot review orders of the Court of Existing Claims. *Carlock v. Workers Compensation Commission*, 2014 OK 29, 324 P.3d 408. All the aforementioned rules were amended to comply with the applicable statute or orders of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

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PURSUANT TO THE ACTIONS DESCRIBED HEREIN, THE FOLLOWING EMERGENCY RULES ARE CONSIDERED PROMULGATED AND EFFECTIVE UPON APPROVAL BY THE GOVERNOR AS SET FORTH IN 75 O.S. § 253(F):

SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

810:10-1-9. Who may appear before Commission

(a) Attorneys licensed to practice law in Oklahoma and members in good standing of the Oklahoma Bar Association may appear on behalf of parties to litigation before the Commission and in Joint Petition Settlement proceedings before the Commission. Legal interns licensed by the Oklahoma Supreme Court may appear on behalf of a party only on matters properly within the scope of their license. Out-of-state attorneys who have complied with the requirements of Chapter 1, Appendix 1, Article II, Section 5 of Title 5 of the Oklahoma Statutes may appear on behalf of a party with leave of the Commission. The attorney shall file an entry of appearance with the Commission as provided in 810:10-1-10.

(b) Persons other than licensed attorneys, including adjusters, may file standard, administrative reporting forms such as the Employer's First Notice of Injury and notice of compliance with payment and reporting obligations related to Multiple Injury Trust Fund assessments (85A O.S., § 31) and Self-insurance Guaranty Fund assessments (85A O.S., § 98), which are required by law and/or Commission rules, are not considered legal pleadings, and the submission of which in no way is intended as an act of legal representation. Persons other than licensed attorneys may not assume an advocate's role or introduce evidence or examine witnesses in proceedings before the Commission or an Administrative Law Judge.

(c) An individual may appear pro se or by an attorney. A corporation, limited liability company, insurance carrier, individual own risk employer, and group self-insurance association, may appear only

by its attorney.

SUBCHAPTER 5. HEARINGS CONDUCTED BY ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES AND COMMISSIONERS

PART 7. INITIAL AND SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS

810:10-5-45. Submission to medical examination; appointment of medical or vocational expert; travel expenses

(a) **Submission to medical examination.** Upon reasonable advance notice from the employer or insurance carrier, the employee must submit to a medical examination by a physician selected by the employer or insurance carrier. If the claimant refuses to submit to the examination, the employer or insurance carrier may file a CC-Form-13 requesting the claimant's compensation and right to prosecute any proceeding under the AWCA be suspended during the period of refusal as provided in 85A O.S. § 50(E). The claimant must show cause at the hearing why the request of the employer or insurance carrier should not be granted.

(b) **Appointment of medical or vocational expert.** Appointment of an independent medical examiner is governed by 810:15-9-4. Appointment of a medical case manager is governed by 810:15-11-4. Appointment of a vocational rehabilitation provider is governed by 810:20-1-4.

(c) **Travel expenses.** The employer or insurance carrier shall reimburse the employee for the actual mileage in excess of twenty (20) miles round-trip to and from the claimant's home to the location of a medical service provider for all reasonable and necessary medical treatment, for vocational rehabilitation or retraining, for an evaluation by an independent medical examiner and for any evaluation, including an evaluation for vocational rehabilitation or vocational retraining, made at the respondent's request, but in no event in excess of six hundred (600) miles round-trip. Mileage and necessary lodging expenses are limited to the provisions of the State Travel Reimbursement Act, 74 O.S. §§ 500.1, et. seq. Meals will be reimbursed at a per diem rate of Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) per meal per four hours of travel status, not to exceed three meals per day.

810:10-5-48. Sessions, hearings and venue, generally

(a) **Open to the public.** Hearings of the Commission or any Administrative Law Judge on matters filed with the Commission for disposition will be open to the public. As allowed in 85A O.S. § 19(D), the Commission or any Commissioner may hold hearings in any city of this state. Consistent with 85A O.S. § 71(B)(4), hearings before an Administrative Law Judge shall be held at the Commission's main offices in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, or at a designated location in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as determined by the Commission.

(b) **Time.** All hearings shall commence at the time designated in the notice of hearing or by order of the Commission.

(c) **Conduct before the Commission.** Conduct of attorneys before the Commission shall be governed by applicable rules of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. All parties, witnesses, and observers will at all times maintain decorum, and will conduct themselves in such manner as to reflect respect for the authority and dignity of the Commission and its Administrative Law Judges. Upon violation of this provision, any person or party attending any proceeding before the Commission may be subject to sanctions for contempt as provided in 85A O.S. § 73(B).

(d) **Record of hearing.** Hearings before the Commission or an Administrative Law Judge shall be stenographically recorded by a Commission reporter. The Commission may contract for court reporter services. A transcript of proceedings will be made by a court reporter at the request and expense of the person ordering it, or at the request of the Commission, in which case, a copy will be made for any person requesting it, at that person's expense.

PART 9. POST ORDER RELIEF

810:10-5-66. Appeal of Commission Administrative Law Judge order

(a) **Request for Review.** Any party aggrieved by a judgment or award of an Administrative Law Judge, which party for purposes of this Section shall be known as the "appellant", may appeal the order to the Commission en banc by filing an original and two (2) copies of a Request for Review with the Commission within ten (10) days of when the order was issued as reflected by the file-stamped date on the order. The Request for Review shall:

(1) be in writing;

(2) include a copy of the order being appealed;

(3) clearly and concisely rebut each issue in the Administrative Law Judge's order that the appellant wants reviewed, and state the relief sought. General allegations of error do not suffice. Allegations of error concerning matters not included in a timely filed Request for Review shall be deemed waived;

(4) be served on all other parties of record, which for purposes of this Section shall be known as the "respondents";

(5) have a certificate of service setting forth the manner of such service as required by 810:10-1-7;

(6) be accompanied by a designation of record filed by the appealing party and a copy submitted to the Commission reporter and all parties in the case concurrently with or before filing a Request for Review; and

(7) be accompanied by a non-refundable filing fee in the sum of One Hundred Seventy-five Dollars (\$175.00) pursuant to 85A O.S. § 78(B).

(b) **Timeliness of filings.** The timeliness of the filing of a Request for Review is governed by 810:10-1-13. Untimely Requests for Review do not invoke the jurisdiction of the Commission en banc and will not be reviewed by the Commission en banc.

(c) **Oral argument.**

Oral argument before the Commission en banc shall be limited to ten (10) minutes per side, unless the time is enlarged by leave of the Commission en banc. Any party failing to appear when the appeal is called for oral argument shall be deemed to have waived the right to argue the case and the appeal shall be considered as submitted on the record.

(d) **Written argument.** In any case pending on a Request for Review, the parties of record shall submit written arguments, including a statement of facts and legal authority for their respective positions, as an aid to the Commission en banc. The written argument shall not exceed five (5) pages in length, and shall be double spaced and prepared in at least ten point font size on 8 ½" x 11" paper with one inch margins. No appendix or other documents shall be attached to the written argument. The appellant has twenty (20) days after the filing of the Request for Review within which to file an original and four (4) copies of the written argument with the Commission, with a copy served on all opposing parties. The opposing parties shall have ten (10) days within which to submit a response. When submitted, the original and four (4) copies of the response shall be filed with the Commission and a copy served on the appellant.

(e) **Dismissal for failure to file.** An appeal may be dismissed with prejudice by the Commission's Presiding Appellate Officer when appellant has failed to timely file the written argument and has failed to timely respond to the Commission's order to file the required written argument.

(f) **Default judgment for failure to file.** Default judgment may be entered by the Commission's Presiding Appellate Officer against the opposing parties when opposing parties have failed to timely file the written response and have failed to timely respond to the Commission's order to file the required written argument.

(g) Description of appeal proceeding.

(1) In appeals pursuant to this Section, the Commission en banc may:

- (A) modify the decision of the Administrative Law Judge;
- (B) reverse the decision of the Administrative Law Judge and render a new decision;
- (C) reverse the decision of the Administrative Law Judge and remand the matter to the Administrative Law Judge with instructions or for a new administrative hearing; or
- (D) affirm the decision of the Administrative Law Judge.

(2) The Commission en banc may reverse or modify the decision of an Administrative Law Judge only if it determines that the decision was against the clear weight of the evidence or was contrary to law. Any judgment of the Commission en banc which reverses a decision of the Administrative Law Judge shall contain specific findings relating to the reversal.

(3) All proceedings of the Commission en banc shall be recorded by a court reporter, if requested by a party. Any party requesting a transcript of the proceedings shall bear the costs associated with its preparation. During the pendency of an appeal to the Commission en banc, the Administrative Law Judge shall retain jurisdiction over any issue not affected by the eventual ruling of the appellate body.

(h) Appeal to Supreme Court. An order of the Commission en banc may be appealed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, as provided in 85A O.S. § 78, within twenty (20) days of being sent to the parties as reflected by the file-stamped date on the order.

810:10-5-67. [RESERVED]

PART 15. SETTLEMENTS

810:10-5-95. Joint petition settlements.

(a) Under 85A O.S. § 87 and 85A O.S. § 115, upon and after the filing of a claim for compensation, or, in the absence of a claim for compensation, the filing of the Employer's First Notice of Injury in a claim involving a pro se employee, the parties may engage in a compromise and release of any and all liability which is claimed to exist under the AWCA on account of the injury or occupational disease or illness, subject to approval by the Commission, an Administrative Law Judge, or a Benefit Review Officer.

(b) The parties in interest to a claim for compensation may settle upon and determine any and all issues and matters by agreement, subject to the terms and conditions of this Section.

(c) Any agreement submitted to the Commission, Administrative Law Judge or Benefit Review Officer of the Commission's Counselor Division, for approval shall be set forth in a Commission prescribed CC-Joint Petition Settlement. Nothing in this rule shall preclude the Multiple Injury Trust Fund from compromising a claim as authorized by 85A O.S. § 32(F).

(d) No CC-Joint Petition Settlement agreement shall be binding on the parties in interest unless it is approved by the Commission pursuant to 85A O.S. § 22, Administrative Law Judge of the Commission pursuant to 85A O.S. § 115, or a Commission Benefit Review Officer pursuant to 85A O.S. § 70. The CC-Joint Petition Settlement, including any attached appendix as provided in 85A O.S. § 115(B), identifying the outstanding issues that are subject to the Commission's continuing jurisdiction and possible reopen, shall be approved unless it is determined that:

- (1) The agreement is unfair, unconscionable, or improper as a matter of law; or
- (2) The agreement is the result of an intentional misrepresentation of a material fact; or
- (3) The agreement, if for permanent disability, is not supported by competent medical evidence as required by 85 O.S. § 2(33).

(e) As used in this Section, "parties in interest" means the respondent (employer and the employer's insurance carrier if insured), and an employee. An employee who is not represented by legal counsel may effect a CC-Joint Petition Settlement upon the employer's filing of the Employer's First

Notice of Injury as provided in 810:10-1-4, or the employee's filing of a claim for compensation (CC-Form-3 or CC-Form-3B), regarding the injury or occupational disease or illness which is the subject of the CC-Joint Petition Settlement.

(f) In no instance shall the total attorney's fee amount provided for in a CC-Joint Petition Settlement exceed the maximum attorney fee allowed by law.

(g) No CC-Joint Petition Settlement shall be made upon written interrogatory or deposition except in cases where the claimant is currently engaged in the military service of the United States, is outside of the state, is a nonresident of Oklahoma, or in cases of extreme circumstances.

(h) A stenographic record of the terms and conditions of an approved joint petition settlement and the understanding of the claimant concerning the effect of the settlement must be made by a Commission court reporter and transcribed at the expense of the employer or insurance carrier. Medical reports and other exhibits submitted in support of a CC-Joint Petition Settlement shall not be transcribed. The original exhibits or duplicate copies thereof shall be affixed to the original transcript and placed in the Commission file.

(i) A file-stamped copy of an approved CC-Joint Petition Settlement shall be mailed by the Commission to all unrepresented parties and attorneys of record.

(j) A CC-Joint Petition Settlement that fully and finally resolves all issues in a claim for compensation between the employee and the employer, shall not be deemed an adjudication of the rights between the medical or rehabilitation provider and the employer for reasonable and necessary medical and rehabilitation expenses incurred by the employee due to the injury before the file-stamped date of the approved CC-Joint Petition Settlement.

(k) Within seven (7) days of the date a medical provider provides initial treatment for a work-related accident, the medical provider shall provide notice in writing to the Commission, if and only if, a CC-Form-3 or CC-Form-3B has been filed with the Commission, and in all cases shall provide notice in writing to the patient's employer, and if known, the employer's insurance carrier. If the medical provider fails to provide the required notification, the medical provider forfeits any rights to future notification, including those circumstances where a case is fully and finally settled by a CC-Joint Petition Settlement, unless the medical provider is actually known to the employer or insurance carrier or is listed by the employee.

(l) If the issue of medical treatment is fully and finally settled by a CC-Joint Petition Settlement, the employee shall provide to the employer or insurance carrier a list of all medical providers known to the employee. The Commission prescribed Form CC-JPS shall be used for that purpose. Within ten (10) days from the file-stamped date of the CC-Joint Petition Settlement, the employer or insurance carrier shall send notice of the CC-Joint Petition Settlement to all medical providers listed by the employee and to all medical providers known to the employer or insurance carrier. The employee is liable for payment of any medical services rendered after the CC-Joint Petition Settlement is filed. The employee also is responsible for informing any future medical providers that the case or issue of medical treatment was fully and finally disposed of by a CC-Joint Petition Settlement and that the employee, rather than the employer or insurance carrier, is the party financially responsible for such services.