

conclude that the requesters are acting in concert and are acting specifically to avoid payment. In no case will multiple requests on unrelated subjects from one requester be aggregated.

(4) *Advance payments.* The Department of Veterans Affairs may not require a requester to make an advance payment, i.e., payment before work is commenced or continued on a request, unless:

(i) The allowable charges that a requester may be required to pay are likely to exceed \$250. Then, the Department of Veterans Affairs should either notify the requester of the likely cost and obtain satisfactory assurance of full payment, or require an advance payment of an amount up to the full estimated charges in the case of requesters with no history of payment; or

(ii) A requester has previously failed to pay a fee charged in a timely fashion (i.e., within 30 days of the date of the billing). Then, the Department of Veterans Affairs may require the requester to pay the full amount owed, plus any applicable interest as provided in paragraph (g)(1) of this section, or to demonstrate that he or she has, in fact, paid the fee, and to make an advance payment of the estimated fee before the Department begins to process a new request or a pending request from that requester.

(iii) If a requester is required to make advance payments, as described in this section, the time limits prescribed in §1.553a of this part, for responding to initial requests and appeals from initial denials, will begin only after the Department has received the advance fee payments.

(5) *Debt collection.* In the event of non-payment of billed charges for disclosure of records, the procedures authorized by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-365) may be used. This may include disclosure to consumer reporting agencies and use of collection agencies.

(Authority: 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(A))
[53 FR 10377, Mar. 31, 1988]

§ 1.556 Requests for other reasonably described records.

Each administration, staff office, and field facility head will designate an employee(s) who will be responsible for initial action on (granting or denying) requests to inspect or obtain information from or copies of records under their jurisdiction and within the purview of §1.553. This responsibility includes maintaining a uniform listing of such requests. Data logged will consist of: Name and address of requester; date of receipt of request; brief description of request; action taken on request, granted or denied; citation of the specific section when request is denied; and date of reply to the requester. In the field a denial of any such request may be made only by the Director or the designated employee and in Central Office only by the administration or staff office head or designee. The letter notifying the requester of the denial will be signed by the official making the denial decision. Any legal question arising in a field station concerning the release of information will be referred to the appropriate Regional Counsel for disposition as contemplated by §13.401* of this chapter. In Central Office such legal questions will be referred to the General Counsel. Any administrative question will be referred through administrative channels to the appropriate administration or staff office head. All denials or proposed denials at the Central Office level will be coordinated with the Director, Information Service as well as the General Counsel.

[40 FR 12658, Mar. 20, 1975]

§ 1.557 Administrative review.

(a) Upon denial of a request, the responsible Department of Veterans Affairs official or designated employee will inform the requester in writing of the denial, cite the specific exemption in §1.554 upon which the denial is based, set forth the names and titles or positions of each person responsible for the denial of such request, and advise

*EDITORIAL NOTE: At 42 FR 41410, Aug. 17, 1977, §13.401 was removed.