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[Page 293-298]

TITLE 26--INTERNAL REVENUE

(CONTINUED)

COMPUTATION OF TAXABLE INCOME--Table of Contents

Sec. 1.79-4T Questions and answers relating to the nondiscrimination requirements for group-term life insurance (temporary).

Q-1: When does section 79, as amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, become effective?

A-1: (a) Generally, section 79, as amended, applies to taxable years (of the employee receiving insurance coverage) beginning after December 31, 1983. There are, however, several exceptions to this effective date where there is coverage under a group-term life insurance plan of the employer that was in existence on January 1, 1984, or a comparable successor to such a plan maintained by the employer or a successor employer.

(b) First, the new rules of section 79 (b) and (e), that require the inclusion in income of a retired employee of amounts attributable to the cost of group-term life insurance in excess of \$50,000 and that include former employees within the definition of the term "employee," will not apply to any employee who retired from employment on or before January 1, 1984.

(c) Second, in the case of an individual who retires after January 1, 1984, and before January 1, 1987, the new rules of section 79 (b) and (e) do not apply if (1) the individual attained age 55 on or before January 1, 1984, and (2) the plan was maintained by the same employer who employed the individual during 1983, or by a successor employer.

(d) Third, in the case of an individual who retires after December 31, 1986, the new rules of section 79 (b) and (e) do not apply if (1) the individual attained age 55 on or before January 1, 1984, (2) the plan was maintained by the same employer who employed the individual during 1983, or by a successor employer, and (3) the plan is not, after December 31, 1986, a discriminatory group-term life insurance plan (not taking into account any group-term life insurance coverage provided to employees who retired before January 1, 1987).

(e) For purposes of determining whether a plan is, after December 31, 1986, a discriminatory group-term life insurance plan, there shall be ignored any insurance coverage provided pursuant to a state law requirement that an insurer continue to provide insurance coverage for a period of time not in excess of two months following the termination of a policy.

Q-2: What is meant by a "group-term life insurance plan of the employer that was in existence on January 1, 1984"?

A-2: A group-term life insurance plan of the employer was in existence on January 1, 1984, only if the group policy or policies providing group-term life insurance benefits under the plan were executed on or before January 1, 1984, and were not terminated prior to

such date. The applicability of section 79, as amended, to an employee will not be affected by the transfer of the employee between employers treated as a single employer under section 79(d)(7) if the employee continues, after the transfer, to be provided with group-term life insurance benefits under a plan that is comparable (determined under the principles set forth in Q&A 3) to the plan provided by the former employer.

Q-3: When is a plan of group-term life insurance a ``comparable successor'' to another such plan?

A-3: A plan of group-term life insurance will be a comparable successor to another plan of group-term life insurance (the first plan) only if the plan does not differ from the first plan in any significant aspect with respect to individuals who are potentially eligible for benefits provided under the grandfather provisions in Q&A 1. These individuals consist of those persons who are covered under a plan of group-term life insurance of the employer that was in existence on January 1, 1984, or a comparable successor to such a plan maintained by the employer or a successor employer, and who either retired

[[Page 294]]

on or before January 1, 1984, or who both attained age 55 on or before January 1, 1984, and were employed by the employer maintaining the plan (or a predecessor of that employer) during the year 1983. Accordingly, if significant additional or reduced benefits are provided only to individuals who are not described in the preceding sentence, the plan will be considered a comparable successor plan. A plan will not fail to be a comparable successor plan merely because the employer purchases a policy or policies identical to the employer's first plan from a different insurance company. If the new plan provides significant additional or reduced benefits (either as to the type or amount available) to employees, or provides benefits to a category of employees that was formerly excluded from participating in the plan, the plan is generally not a comparable successor to the first plan. However, a plan will not be considered as providing significant additional or reduced benefits merely because a participant's coverage is based on a percentage of compensation and the participant's compensation for the taxable year has been increased or decreased. Furthermore, a plan will not be considered a non-comparable successor plan merely because it is amended, either to decrease benefits provided to key employees or to increase benefits provided to non-key employees, solely in order to comply with the nondiscrimination requirements of section 79(d). Finally, a plan will not be considered a non-comparable successor plan merely because a policy that is part of a discriminatory plan is terminated in order to end discriminatory coverage.

Q-4: For purposes of determining the effective date of section 79, as amended by the Tax Reform Act of 1984, what is a ``successor employer''?

A-4: A successor employer is an employer who employs a group of individuals formerly employed by another employer as a result of a business merger, acquisition or division.

Q-5: Under what circumstances will separate policies of group-term life insurance of an employer be considered to be a single plan in determining whether the employer's plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory?

A-5: All policies providing group-term life insurance to a common key employee or key employees (as defined in this Q&A) carried directly

or indirectly by an employer (or by a group of employers described in section 79(d)(7)) will be considered as a single plan for purposes of determining whether an employer's group-term life insurance plan is discriminatory. For example, if a key employee receives \$50,000 of group-term life insurance coverage under one policy and the same key employee receives an additional \$250,000 of coverage under a separate group-term life insurance policy, the two policies will be treated as a single plan in determining whether the group-term life insurance provided by the employer is discriminatory. If it is discriminatory, the key employees covered by either policy will not receive the benefit of section 79(a)(1) or section 79(c) for either policy. The result is the same even if each policy, considered alone, would be nondiscriminatory. A policy that provides group-term life insurance to a key employee and a policy under which the same key employee is eligible to receive group-term life insurance upon separation from service will be considered to provide group-term life insurance to a common key employee. In addition, an employer may treat two or more policies that do not provide group-term life insurance to a common key employee as constituting a single plan for purposes of satisfying the nondiscrimination provisions of section 79(d). For example, if the employer provides group-term life insurance coverage for non-key employees under one policy and provides group-term life insurance coverage for key employees under a second policy, the two policies may be considered together in determining whether the requirements of section 79(d) are satisfied with regard to the second policy. For purposes of this section, the term ``key employee'' has the meaning given to such term by paragraph (1) of section 416(i), except that subparagraph (A)(iv) of such paragraph shall be applied by not taking into account employees described in section 79(d)(3)(B) who are not participants in the plan. For purposes of this section, all references to ``plan year'' or ``plan years'' in section 416(g)(4)(C)

[[Page 295]]

and section 416(i) shall be deleted and replaced with ``taxable year of the employer'' or ``taxable years of the employer,'' respectively.

Q-6: In the case of a discriminatory group-term life insurance plan, what amounts should be included in the gross income of a key employee?

A-6: (a) In the case of a discriminatory group-term life insurance plan, each key employee must include in gross income for the taxable year the cost of his or her insurance benefit for that year provided by the employer under the plan.

(b) The cost of group-term life insurance coverage provided by an employer for a key employee during the employee's taxable year is determined by apportioning the net premium (group premium less policy dividends, premium refunds or experience rating credits) allocable to the group-term life insurance coverage during the key employee's taxable year, less the actual cost allocated to other key employees pursuant to the method described in the subparagraph (d) of this answer, if applicable, among the covered employees. In the event that the employer has other forms and types of coverage with the same insurer, the employer must make a reasonable allocation of the total premiums paid to the insurer. For example, where an employer has both health insurance coverage and a plan of group-term life insurance with the same insurer, and there is no volume discount, the net premium for the plan of group-term life insurance must include the excess, if any, of the payments the employer makes for the health insurance coverage over the payments the

employer would make for such coverage if the plan of group-term life insurance for which this calculation is being made did not exist.

(c) In general, the portion of the net premium for group-term life insurance that should be apportioned to a key employee, other than a key employee to whom the method in subparagraph (d) of this answer is applicable, is determined by: (1) Calculating a ``tabular'' premium for the entire group (with the exception of all key employees to whom the method in subparagraph (d) of this answer is applicable), in the manner described below, (2) determining the ratio of the total actual net premium (less the actual cost allocated to key employees pursuant to the method in the subparagraph (d) of this answer) to the total tabular premium and (3) multiplying the tabular premium for the key employee at his or her attained age by such ratio. Thus, if the total actual net premium is 125 percent of the total tabular premium for all covered employees and the tabular premium at the key employee's attained age is \$2.00 per thousand per month, the cost for such employee would be \$2.50 per thousand per month (\$2.00 times 125 percent). For these purposes the table used to calculate tabular premiums will be determined as follows:

(i) If the group policy contains a reasonable table (based on recognized mortality assumptions) of premium rates on an attained age basis (which table may use age brackets not exceeding five years) with reference to which the group premium is determined, such table will be used;

(ii) If such table is not available, the 1960 Basic Group Table published by the Society of Actuaries will be used.

(d) In cases where the mortality charge for group-term life insurance coverage provided to a key employee is calculated separately by the insurer (for example, where the charge for the coverage provided to a key employee is based on a medical examination) and the amount of such mortality charge plus a proportionate share of the loading charge for the coverage provided to the group is higher than the amount that would be allocable to such employee under the allocation method in subparagraph (c) the cost of group-term life insurance coverage for that employee shall be that higher amount.

Q-7: Must all active and former employees be considered in applying the coverage tests in section 79(d)(3) to determine whether or not a plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory with respect to coverage?

A-7: No. Generally, a plan of group-term life insurance which covers both active and former employees will not satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 79(d) unless the coverage tests in section 79(d)(3) are satisfied with respect to both the active and

[[Page 296]]

the former employees of the employer, except to the extent they are excluded from tests for discrimination by application of the grandfather provisions set forth in Q&A 1. However, for purposes of determining whether a plan is discriminatory with respect to coverage, the coverage tests must be applied separately to active and former employees. In addition, if the plan limits participation by former employees to employees who retired from employment with the employer, then only retired employees must be considered in applying the coverage tests to former employees. Also, in applying the coverage tests in section 79(d)(3), the employer may make reasonable mortality assumptions regarding former employees who are not covered under the plan but must be considered in applying the coverage tests. Furthermore, only those

former employees who terminated employment on or after the earliest date of termination from employment for any former employee covered by the plan must be considered. Finally, for purposes of determining whether a plan of group-term life insurance of the employer (or a successor employer) that was in existence on January 1, 1984 (or a comparable successor to such a plan) is discriminatory, after December 31, 1986, with respect to group-term life insurance coverage for former employees, coverage provided to employees who retired on or before December 31, 1986, shall not be taken into account.

Q-8: Will a group-term life insurance plan be considered discriminatory if active employees receive greater benefits as a percentage of compensation than former employees, or vice versa?

A-8: No. For purposes of determining whether a plan is discriminatory with respect to the type and amount of benefits available, insurance coverage for former employees must be tested separately from insurance coverage for active employees. For example, a group-term life insurance plan that provides group-term life insurance benefits equal to 200 percent of compensation for all active employees and 100 percent of final compensation (based on the average annual compensation for the final five years) for all former employees would satisfy the nondiscrimination requirements of section 79(d). However, a group-term life insurance plan that provides group-term life insurance benefits equal to 200 percent of compensation for all active employees and 100 percent of final compensation (based on the average annual compensation for the final five years) only for key employees who are no longer employed by the employer (or a successor employer) would not satisfy the nondiscrimination requirement of section 79(d)(2)(A).

Q-9: Under what circumstances will the amount of benefits available under a plan of group-term life insurance be considered not to discriminate in favor of participants who are key employees?

A-9: A plan of group-term life insurance will be considered not to discriminate in favor of participants who are key employees, as to the amount of benefits available, if the plan provides a fixed amount of insurance which is the same for all covered employees. In other circumstances, the determination of whether a plan is nondiscriminatory will be based on all of the facts and circumstances. Such plans will be considered not to discriminate in favor of participants who are key employees, as to the amount of benefits available, if the plan contains no group of employees described in the following sentence that, if tested separately, would fail to satisfy the requirements of section 79(d)(2)(A). The group subject to separate testing under the preceding sentence consists of a key employee and all other participants (including other key employees) who receive, under the plan, an amount of insurance (as a multiple of compensation (either total compensation or the basic or regular rate of compensation)) that is equal to or greater than the amount of insurance received by such key employee. As described in Q&As 7&8, active and former employees are tested separately under section 79(d)(2)(A).

Example: Assume that a plan of group-term life insurance has 500 participants, 10 of whom are key employees. Under the plan, 400 of the non-key employees receive an amount of insurance equal to 100 percent of compensation, while all of the key employees and 90 of the non-key employees receive an amount of insurance equal to 200 percent of compensation. The plan will be considered not to discriminate in favor of the participants who are key employees because, tested

separately, the group of participants receiving an amount of insurance equal to or greater than 200 percent of compensation would satisfy the requirements of section 79(d)(2)(A) (by reason of section 79(d)(3)(A)(ii)). If one of the key employees received an amount of insurance equal to 300 percent of compensation, the plan would be considered to discriminate in favor of participants who are key employees, because, tested separately, the group consisting of the single key employee receiving an amount of insurance equal to or greater than 300 percent of compensation would fail to satisfy the requirements of section 79(d)(2)(A).

In determining the groups of employees that are tested separately for this purpose, allowance shall be made for reasonable differences in amount of insurance (as a multiple of compensation) due to rounding, the use of compensation brackets or other similar factors. Thus, if a plan bases group-term life insurance coverage on ``compensation brackets,`` it is not intended that any participants will be treated as receiving an amount of insurance (as a multiple of compensation) that is greater (or less) than that of any other participant merely because the first participant's compensation is at the lower (or higher) end of a compensation bracket while the second participant's compensation is at the higher (or lower) end of a compensation bracket. However, any compensation brackets utilized by a plan will be examined to determine if the brackets, or compensation groupings, result in discrimination in favor of key employees. In addition, a plan does not meet the requirements for nondiscrimination as to the type and amount of benefits available under the plan unless all types of benefits (including permanent benefits) and all terms and conditions with respect to such benefits which are available to any participant who is a key employee are also available on a nondiscriminatory basis to non-key employee participants.

Q-10: How is additional coverage purchased by employees under a plan of group-term life insurance treated for purposes of determining whether a plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory?

A-10: (a) The extent to which employees purchase additional coverage under a plan of group-term life insurance is not taken into account for purposes of determining whether a plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory. For example, a plan providing insurance to all employees of 1 times annual compensation, which gives all employees the option to purchase additional insurance of 1 times annual compensation at their own expense, would not be considered discriminatory as to the type and amount of benefits available, even if the group (or groups) of participants who purchase additional insurance, if tested separately, would not satisfy the requirements of section 79(d)(2)(A). Solely for this purpose, the choice of an amount of group-term life insurance as a benefit under a cafeteria plan will be treated as the purchase of group-term life insurance by an employee. If additional insurance coverage is available to any key employee that is not available, on a nondiscriminatory basis, to non-key employees, the plan will be considered discriminatory, even if the full cost of such additional insurance coverage is paid by the employee(s) electing such benefits.

(b) If the employer bears a part of the expense of any additional coverage that is purchased by an employee under a plan of group-term life insurance, the additional insurance shall be treated, in part, as an amount of insurance provided by the employer under the plan and, in

part, as an amount of insurance purchased by the employee. Except to the extent provided in subparagraph (a) above, the portion of insurance treated as an amount of insurance purchased by the employee is not taken into account for purposes of determining whether the plan is discriminatory. Whether such insurance (together with any other insurance provided by the employer under the plan) will cause the plan to be considered to discriminate in favor of participants who are key employees is determined under the rules of Q&A 9.

Q-11: What effect do the provisions of section 79(d)(1) have if a plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory for only part of a year?

A-11: If a plan of group-term life insurance is discriminatory at any time during the key employee's taxable year, then it is a discriminatory group-

[[Page 298]]

term life insurance plan for that taxable year and the provisions of section 79(d)(1) will be applicable with respect to all group-term life insurance costs allocable to that employee for that year.

Q-12: Are the section 79(d) provisions independent from the requirements contained in Treas. Reg. Sec. 1.79-1?

A-12: Yes. Treasury regulation Sec. 1.79-1(c)(1) provides that life insurance provided to a group of employees cannot qualify as group-term life insurance if it is provided to less than ten full-time employees unless certain requirements are satisfied. The satisfaction of these requirements does not guarantee that the plan will be nondiscriminatory, and vice versa. Treasury regulation Sec. 1.79-1(a)(4) provides that life insurance is not group-term life insurance unless the amount of insurance provided to each employee is computed under a formula that precludes individual selection. The mere fact that a life insurance policy is nondiscriminatory is not determinative as to whether the policy precludes individual selection, and vice versa.

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