

PART 1005—ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSFER ACT (REGULATION E)

1. The authority citation for part 1005 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 12 U.S.C. 5512, 5581; 15 U.S.C. 1693b. Subpart B is also issued under 12 U.S.C. 5601 and 15 U.S.C. 1693o–1.

Subpart A—General

2. Section 1005.10 is amended by revising paragraph (e)(1) to read as follows:

§ 1005.10 Preauthorized transfers.

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(e) *Compulsory use*—(1) *Credit*. No financial institution or other person may condition an extension of credit to a consumer on the consumer's repayment by preauthorized electronic fund transfers, except for credit extended under an overdraft credit plan or extended to maintain a specified minimum balance in the consumer's account. This exception does not apply to a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.61. This exception also does not apply to covered overdraft credit extended by very large financial institutions as those terms are defined in Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.62.

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3. In Supplement I to Part 1005—Official Interpretations:

a. Under *Section 1005.10—Preauthorized Transfers*, 10(e)(1) *Credit* is revised.

b. Under *Section 1005.17—Requirements for Overdraft Services*, 17(a) *Definition* is revised.

The revisions read as follows:

Supplement I to Part 1005—Official Interpretations

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Section 1005.10—Preauthorized Transfers

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10(e) Compulsory Use

10(e)(1) Credit

1. *General rule for loan payments.* Creditors may not require repayment of loans by electronic means on a preauthorized, recurring basis.

2. *Overdraft credit plans not accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards and covered overdraft credit extended by very large financial institutions.* i. Section 1005.10(e)(1) provides an exception from the general rule for an overdraft credit plan other than for a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.61 and for covered overdraft credit extended by very large financial institutions as those terms are defined in Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.62. A financial institution may therefore require the automatic repayment of an overdraft credit plan, other than a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card or covered overdraft credit extended by very large financial institutions, even if the overdraft extension is charged to an open-end account that may be accessed by the consumer in ways other than by overdrafts.

ii. Credit extended through a negative balance on the asset feature of a prepaid account that meets the conditions of Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.61(a)(4), is considered credit extended pursuant to an overdraft credit plan for purposes of § 1005.10(e)(1). Thus, the exception for overdraft credit plans in § 1005.10(e)(1) applies to this credit.

3. *Applicability to covered separate credit features accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards.* i. Under § 1005.10(e)(1), creditors may not require by electronic means on a preauthorized, recurring basis repayment of credit extended under a covered separate credit

feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.61. The prohibition in § 1005.10(e)(1) applies to any credit extended under such a credit feature, including preauthorized checks. See Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.61, and comment 61(a)(1)-3.

ii. Under Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.12(d)(1), a card issuer may not take any action, either before or after termination of credit card privileges, to offset a cardholder's indebtedness arising from a consumer credit transaction under the relevant credit card plan against funds of the cardholder held on deposit with the card issuer. Under Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.12(d)(3), with respect to covered separate credit features accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards as defined in 12 CFR 1026.61, a card issuer generally is not prohibited from periodically deducting all or part of the cardholder's credit card debt from a deposit account (such as a prepaid account) held with the card issuer under a plan that is authorized in writing by the cardholder, so long as the card issuer does not make such deductions to the plan more frequently than once per calendar month. A card issuer is prohibited under Regulation Z, 12 CFR 1026.12(d), from automatically deducting all or part of the cardholder's credit card debt under a covered separate credit feature from a deposit account (such as a prepaid account) held with the card issuer on a daily or weekly basis, or whenever deposits are made to the deposit account. Section 1005.10(e)(1) further restricts the card issuer from requiring payment from a deposit account (such as a prepaid account) of credit card balances of a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card by electronic means on a preauthorized, recurring basis.

4. *Incentives.* A creditor may offer a program with a reduced annual percentage rate or other cost-related incentive for an automatic repayment feature, provided the program with the automatic payment feature is not the only loan program offered by the creditor for the type of credit involved. Examples include:

i. Mortgages with graduated payments in which a pledged savings account is automatically debited during an initial period to supplement the monthly payments made by the borrower.

ii. Mortgage plans calling for preauthorized biweekly payments that are debited electronically to the consumer's account and produce a lower total finance charge.

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Section 1005.17—Requirements for Overdraft Services

17(a) Definition

1. *Exempt securities- and commodities-related lines of credit.* The definition of “overdraft service” does not include the payment of transactions in a securities or commodities account pursuant to which credit is extended by a broker-dealer registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission or the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

2. *Covered overdraft credit.* Under § 1005.17(a)(1), a line of credit subject to Regulation Z (12 CFR 1026) is not an overdraft service. Covered overdraft credit as that term is defined in 12 CFR 1026.62, is a line of credit subject to Regulation Z and is therefore not an overdraft service. Covered overdraft credit includes above breakeven overdraft credit extended by a very large financial institution as those terms are defined in 12 CFR 1026.62. Above breakeven overdraft credit extended by a very large financial institution is therefore not an overdraft service under § 1005.17(a).

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PART 1026—TRUTH IN LENDING (REGULATION Z)

4. The authority citation for part 1026 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 12 U.S.C. 2601, 2603–2605, 2607, 2609, 2617, 3353, 5511, 5512, 5532, 5581; 15 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*

Subpart A—General

5. Section 1026.2 is amended by revising paragraph (a)(15) to read as follows:

§ 1026.2 Definitions and rules of construction.

(a) * * *

(15)(i) *Credit card* means any card, plate, or other single credit device that may be used from time to time to obtain credit. The term *credit card* includes both a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 and a hybrid debit-credit card as defined in § 1026.62.

(ii) *Credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan* means any open-end credit account that is accessed by a credit card, except:

(A) A home-equity plan subject to the requirements of § 1026.40 that is accessed by a credit card; or

(B) A covered overdraft credit account as defined in § 1026.62 offered by a creditor other than a very large financial institution as defined in § 1026.62 that is accessed by a debit card or account number.

(iii) *Charge card* means a credit card on an account for which no periodic rate is used to compute a finance charge. The term does not include a hybrid debit-credit card as defined in § 1026.62.

(iv) *Debit card* means any card, plate, or other single device that may be used from time to time to access an asset account other than a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61. The term *debit card* does not include a prepaid card as defined in § 1026.61.

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6. Section 1026.4 is amended by revising paragraph (b)(2), adding paragraph (b)(12), and revising paragraph (c)(3) to read as follows:

§ 1026.4 Finance charge.

* * * *

(b) * * *

(2) Service, transaction, activity, and carrying charges, including any charge imposed on a checking or other transaction account (except a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 or a covered asset account as that term is defined in § 1026.62) to the extent that the charge exceeds the charge for a similar account without a credit feature.

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(12) With regard to a covered asset account as that term is defined in § 1026.62(b)(2):

(i) Any service, transaction, activity, or carrying charge imposed on the separate credit account required by § 1026.62(c); and

(ii) Any service, transaction, activity, or carrying charge imposed on the covered asset account to the extent that the charge exceeds a comparable charge imposed on a checking or other transaction account that does not have overdraft credit.

(iii) For purposes of paragraph (b)(12)(ii) of this section, a charge or combination of charges, including a per transaction fee, imposed on a covered asset account when overdraft credit is extended is not comparable to the following fees or charges imposed on a checking or other transaction account that does not have overdraft credit:

(A) A charge for authorizing or paying a transaction that overdraws the checking or other transaction account.

(B) A charge for declining to authorize or pay a transaction.

(C) A charge for returning a transaction unpaid.

(D) A charge for transferring funds into the checking or other transaction account from any credit account.

(E) A charge for transferring funds into the checking or other transaction account from any other asset account.

* * * *

(c) * * *

(3) Charges imposed by a financial institution for paying items that overdraw an account, unless the payment of such items and the imposition of the charge were previously agreed upon in writing. This paragraph (c)(3) does not apply to credit offered in connection with a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61. This paragraph (c)(3) also does not apply to above breakeven overdraft credit as defined in § 1026.62.

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Subpart G—Special Rules Applicable to Credit Card Accounts and Open-End Credit Offered to College Students

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7. Section 1026.60 is amended by revising paragraph (a)(5) to read as follows:

§ 1026.60 Credit and charge card applications and solicitations.

(a) * * *

(5) *Exceptions.* This section does not apply to:

(i) Home-equity plans accessible by a credit or charge card that are subject to the requirements of § 1026.40;

(ii) Covered overdraft credit as defined in § 1026.62 tied to asset accounts accessed by check-guarantee cards or by debit cards other than hybrid debit-credit cards as defined in § 1026.62;

(iii) Lines of credit accessed by check-guarantee cards or by debit cards, other than covered overdraft credit accessed by hybrid debit-credit cards, that can be used only at automated teller machines;

(iv) Lines of credit accessed solely by account numbers except for a covered separate credit feature solely accessible by an account number that is a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 or covered overdraft credit accessible by an account number that is a hybrid debit-credit card;

(v) Additions of a credit or charge card to an existing open-end plan;

(vi) General purpose applications unless the application, or material accompanying it, indicates that it can be used to open a credit or charge card account; or

(vii) Consumer-initiated requests for applications.

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8. Section 1026.62 is added to read as follows:

§ 1026.62 Overdraft credit.

(a) *In general*—(1) Overdraft credit is subject to this section and this part as specified below.

(2) *Overdraft credit* is any consumer credit extended by a financial institution to pay a transaction from a checking or other transaction account (other than a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61) held at the financial institution when the consumer has insufficient or unavailable funds in that account. The term overdraft credit includes, but is not limited to, any such

consumer credit extended through a transfer from a credit card account or overdraft line of credit. The term does not include credit exempt from this part pursuant to § 1026.3.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section and this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) *Above breakeven overdraft credit* means overdraft credit extended by a very large financial institution to pay a transaction on which, as an incident to or a condition of the overdraft credit, the very large financial institution imposes a charge or combination of charges exceeding the average of its costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit as described in § 1026.62(d).

(2) *Covered asset account* means a checking or other transaction account (other than a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61) provided by a very large financial institution that is tied to overdraft credit provided by the very large financial institution.

(3) *Covered overdraft credit* means overdraft credit that is subject to a finance charge or is payable by written agreement in more than four installments.

(4) *Covered overdraft credit account* means a credit account through which a financial institution extends or can extend covered overdraft credit. For example, the term includes any line of credit, credit card account, credit feature, credit plan, or credit subaccount through which the financial institution extends or can extend covered overdraft credit.

(5) *Hybrid debit-credit card* means any card, plate, or other single credit device that a consumer may use from time to time to obtain covered overdraft credit from a very large financial institution.

(6) *Non-covered overdraft credit* means overdraft credit that is not subject to a finance charge and is not payable by written agreement in more than four installments.

(7) *Overdraft credit* has the meaning set out in § 1026.62(a)(2).

(8) *Very large financial institution* means an insured depository institution or an insured credit union that has total assets of more than \$10,000,000,000 and any affiliate thereof, as determined under 12 U.S.C. 5515(a).

(c) *Structure of covered overdraft credit.* A very large financial institution shall not structure covered overdraft credit as a negative balance on a checking or other transaction account. The very large financial institution shall structure covered overdraft credit as a separate credit account. The separate credit account is a covered overdraft credit account. The tied checking or other transaction account is a covered asset account.

(d) *Charges exceeding the average of its costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit—(1) General rule.* For purposes of paragraph 62(b)(1) of this section, any charge or combination of charges to pay a transaction exceeds the average of a very large financial institution's costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit if the charge or combination of charges exceeds the greater of:

(i) The pro rata share of the very large financial institution's total direct costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit in the previous year, calculated in accordance with this paragraph; or

(ii) \$5.

(2) *Cost and loss calculation.* When calculating the pro rata share of the very large financial institution's total direct costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit in the previous year, a very large financial institution may consider only those costs and charge-off losses specifically traceable to its provision of non-covered overdraft credit in the previous year. Such costs and charge-off losses include, but are not limited to, its cost of funds, its net charge-off losses, and operating expenses for its non-covered overdraft credit program.

Such costs and charge-off losses do not include general overhead costs or charge-off losses due to unauthorized use, EFT errors, billing errors, returned deposit items, or rescinded provisional credit.

(3) For purposes of § 1026.62(d)(2), a cost or charge-off loss is specifically traceable if it has a direct relationship to the provision of non-covered overdraft services and the very large financial institution can provide evidence to demonstrate that direct relationship.

(4) For purposes of § 1026.62(d)(1), a charge or combination of charges includes all revenue received in connection with an overdraft transaction, including, but not limited to, any extended or sustained overdraft fees, any interest charges on outstanding overdraft balances, and any other payments the very large financial institution receives in connection with an overdraft transaction.

(5) When calculating the pro rata share of its total direct costs and charge-off losses for providing non-covered overdraft credit in the previous year, a very large financial institution must include all non-covered overdraft transactions from the previous year in its calculation.

(6) For purposes of § 1026.62(d)(1)(i), the term “previous year” means a period that encompasses, at the very large financial institution’s option, any of the following periods:

- (i) The prior calendar year,
- (ii) Any 365-day period that begins within the prior calendar year,
- (iii) The prior four financial quarters, or
- (iv) The very large financial institution’s prior accounting year.

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9. In Supplement I to Part 1026—Official Interpretations:

a. Under *Section 1026.2—Definitions and Rules of Construction*:

- i. *2(a)(14) Credit* is revised.
- ii. *Paragraph 2(a)(15)* is revised.
- iii. *2(a)(20) Open-End Credit* is revised.
- b. Under *Section 1026.4—Finance Charge*:
 - i. *Paragraph 4(b)(2)* is revised.
 - ii. *Paragraph 4(c)(3)* is revised.
- c. Under *Section 1026.12—Special Credit Card Provisions*:
 - i. Introductory paragraph 1 is revised.
 - ii. *Paragraph 12(a)(1)* is revised.
 - iii. *Paragraph 12(a)(2)* is revised.
 - iv. *12(c) Right of Cardholder To Assert Claims or Defenses Against Card Issuer* is revised.
 - v. *12(c)(1) General Rule* is revised.
- d. Under *Section 1026.55—Limitations on Increasing Annual Percentage Rates, Fees, and Charges*, revise *55(a) General Rule*.
- e. Under *Section 1026.57—Reporting and Marketing Rules for College Student Open-End Credit*, revise *57(a)(1) College student credit card*.

The revisions read as follows:

Supplement I to Part 1026—Official Interpretations

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Subpart A—General

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Section 1026.2—Definitions and Rules of Construction

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2(a)(14) Credit

1. *Exclusions.* The following situations are not considered credit for purposes of the regulation:

i. Layaway plans, unless the consumer is contractually obligated to continue making payments. Whether the consumer is so obligated is a matter to be determined under applicable law. The fact that the consumer is not entitled to a refund of any amounts paid towards the cash price of the merchandise does not bring layaways within the definition of credit.

ii. Tax liens, tax assessments, court judgments, and court approvals of reaffirmation of debts in bankruptcy. However, third-party financing of such obligations (for example, a bank loan obtained to pay off a tax lien) is credit for purposes of the regulation.

iii. Insurance premium plans that involve payment in installments with each installment representing the payment for insurance coverage for a certain future period of time, unless the consumer is contractually obligated to continue making payments.

iv. Home improvement transactions that involve progress payments, if the consumer pays, as the work progresses, only for work completed and has no contractual obligation to continue making payments.

v. Borrowing against the accrued cash value of an insurance policy or a pension account, if there is no independent obligation to repay.

vi. Letters of credit.

vii. The execution of option contracts. However, there may be an extension of credit when the option is exercised, if there is an agreement at that time to defer payment of a debt.

viii. Investment plans in which the party extending capital to the consumer risks the loss of the capital advanced. This includes, for example, an arrangement with a home purchaser in which the investor pays a portion of the downpayment and of the periodic mortgage payments in return for an ownership interest in the property, and shares in any gain or loss of property value.

ix. Mortgage assistance plans administered by a government agency in which a portion of the consumer's monthly payment amount is paid by the agency. No finance charge is imposed on the subsidy amount, and that amount is due in a lump-sum payment on a set date or upon the occurrence of certain events. (If payment is not made when due, a new note imposing a finance charge may be written, which may then be subject to the regulation.)

2. *Payday loans; deferred presentment.* Credit includes a transaction in which a cash advance is made to a consumer in exchange for the consumer's personal check, or in exchange for the consumer's authorization to debit the consumer's deposit account, and where the parties agree either that the check will not be cashed or deposited, or that the consumer's deposit account will not be debited, until a designated future date. This type of transaction is often referred to as a "payday loan" or "payday advance" or "deferred-presentment loan." A fee charged in connection with such a transaction may be a finance charge for purposes of § 1026.4, regardless of how the fee is characterized under state law. Where the fee charged constitutes a finance charge under § 1026.4 and the person advancing funds regularly extends consumer credit, that person is a creditor and is required to provide disclosures consistent with the requirements of Regulation Z. (See § 1026.2(a)(17).)

3. *Transactions on the asset features of prepaid accounts when there are insufficient or unavailable funds.* Credit includes authorization of a transaction on the asset feature of a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 where the consumer has insufficient or unavailable funds in the

asset feature of the prepaid account at the time the transaction is authorized to cover the amount of the transaction. It also includes settlement of a transaction on the asset feature of a prepaid account where the consumer has insufficient or unavailable funds in the asset feature of the prepaid account at the time the transaction is settled to cover the amount of the transaction. This includes a transaction where the consumer has sufficient or available funds in the asset feature of a prepaid account to cover the amount of the transaction at the time the transaction is authorized but insufficient or unavailable funds in the asset feature of the prepaid account to cover the transaction amount at the time the transaction is settled. See § 1026.61 and related commentary on the applicability of this regulation to credit that is extended in connection with a prepaid account.

4. *Overdraft credit.* Credit includes, for example, funds extended by a financial institution to a consumer to pay transactions that overdraw a checking or other transaction account held at the financial institution whenever the consumer has a contractual obligation to repay the funds.

Paragraph 2(a)(15)

1. *Usable from time to time.* A credit card must be usable from time to time. Since this involves the possibility of repeated use of a single device, checks and similar instruments that can be used only once to obtain a single credit extension are not credit cards.

2. *Examples.* i. Examples of credit cards include:

A. A card that guarantees checks or similar instruments, if the asset account is also tied to covered overdraft credit or if the instrument directly accesses a line of credit.

B. A debit card (other than a debit card that is solely an account number) that also accesses a credit account (that is, a debit-credit card or hybrid debit-credit card as defined in

§ 1026.62). See comment 2(a)(15)-2.ii.C for guidance on whether a debit card that is solely an account number is a credit card.

C. An identification card that permits the consumer to defer payment on a purchase.

D. An identification card indicating loan approval that is presented to a merchant or to a lender, whether or not the consumer signs a separate promissory note for each credit extension.

E. A card or device that can be activated upon receipt to access credit, even if the card has a substantive use other than credit, such as a purchase-price discount card. Such a card or device is a credit card notwithstanding the fact that the recipient must first contact the card issuer to access or activate the credit feature.

F. A prepaid card that is a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61.

ii. In contrast, credit card does not include, for example:

A. A check-guarantee or debit card with no credit feature or agreement.

B. Any card, key, plate, or other device that is used in order to obtain petroleum products for business purposes from a wholesale distribution facility or to gain access to that facility, and that is required to be used without regard to payment terms.

C. An account number that accesses a credit account, unless the account number can access an open-end line of credit to purchase goods or services or as provided in § 1026.61 with respect to a hybrid prepaid-credit card. An account number that can access an open-end line of credit to purchase goods or services includes an account number that can access a covered overdraft credit account offered by a very large financial institution. For example, if a creditor provides a consumer with an open-end line of credit that can be accessed by an account number in order to transfer funds into another account (such as an asset account with the same creditor), the account number is not a credit card for purposes of § 1026.2(a)(15)(i). However, if the

account number can also access the line of credit to purchase goods or services (such as an account number that can be used to purchase goods or services on the Internet), the account number is a credit card for purposes of § 1026.2(a)(15)(i), regardless of whether the creditor treats such transactions as purchases, cash advances, or some other type of transaction.

Furthermore, if the line of credit can also be accessed by a card (such as a debit card), that card is a credit card for purposes of § 1026.2(a)(15)(i).

D. A prepaid card that is not a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61.

E. A check-guarantee or debit card that can access non-covered overdraft credit as defined in § 1026.62 and cannot access any other form of credit.

3. *Charge card.* i. Charge cards are credit cards where no periodic rate is used to compute the finance charge. The term *charge card* does not include a hybrid debit-credit card as defined in § 1026.62. Thus, covered overdraft credit extended by a very large financial institution through a hybrid debit-credit card is not subject to special charge card rules.

A. Under the regulation, a reference to credit cards generally includes charge cards. In particular, references to credit card accounts under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan in subparts B and G generally include charge cards.

B. The term *charge card* is, however, distinguished from credit card or credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan in §§ 1026.6(b)(2)(xiv), 1026.7(b)(11) (except as described in comment 2(a)(15)-3.ii below), 1026.7(b)(12), 1026.9(e), 1026.9(f), 1026.28(d), 1026.52(b)(1)(ii)(C), 1026.60, and appendices G–10 through G–13.

ii. A hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 is a charge card with respect to a covered separate credit feature if no periodic rate is used to compute the finance charge in connection with the covered separate credit feature. Unlike other charge card accounts, the

requirements in § 1026.7(b)(11) apply to a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card that is a charge card when that covered separate credit feature is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan. Thus, under § 1026.5(b)(2)(ii)(A), with respect to a covered separate credit feature that is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan, a card issuer of a hybrid prepaid-credit card that meets the definition of a charge card because no periodic rate is used to compute a finance charge in connection with the covered separate credit feature must adopt reasonable procedures for the covered separate credit feature designed to ensure that

(1) periodic statements are mailed or delivered at least 21 days prior to the payment due date disclosed on the statement pursuant to § 1026.7(b)(11)(i)(A); and

(2) the card issuer does not treat as late for any purposes a required minimum periodic payment received by the card issuer within 21 days after mailing or delivery of the periodic statement disclosing the due date for that payment.

4. Credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan.

i. An open-end consumer credit account is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan for purposes of § 1026.2(a)(15)(ii) if:

A. The account is accessed by a credit card, as defined in § 1026.2(a)(15)(i); and

B. The account is not excluded under § 1026.2(a)(15)(ii)(A) or (B).

ii. The exclusion from credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan provided by § 1026.2(a)(15)(ii)(B) for covered overdraft credit offered by a creditor that is not a very large financial institution does not apply to a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card (including a hybrid prepaid-credit card that is solely an account number) as defined in § 1026.61.

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2(a)(20) Open-End Credit

1. *General.* This definition describes the characteristics of open-end credit (for which the applicable disclosure and other rules are contained in Subpart B), as distinct from closed-end credit. Open-end credit is consumer credit that is extended under a plan and meets *all 3* criteria set forth in the definition.

2. *Existence of a plan.* i. The definition requires that there be a plan, which connotes a contractual arrangement between the creditor and the consumer.

ii. With respect to a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61, a plan means a program where the consumer is obligated contractually to repay any credit extended by the creditor. For example, a plan includes a program under which a creditor routinely extends credit from a covered separate credit feature offered by the prepaid account issuer, its affiliate, or its business partner where the prepaid card can be used from time to time to draw, transfer, or authorize the draw or transfer of credit from the covered separate credit feature in the course of authorizing, settling, or otherwise completing transactions conducted with the card to obtain goods or services, obtain cash, or conduct person-to-person transfers, and the consumer is obligated contractually to repay those credit transactions. Such a program constitutes a plan notwithstanding that, for example, the creditor has not agreed in writing to extend credit for those transactions, the creditor retains discretion not to extend credit for those transactions, or the creditor does not extend credit for those transactions once the consumer has exceeded a certain amount of credit. See § 1026.61(a) and related commentary for guidance on the applicability of this regulation to credit accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards.

iii. Some creditors offer programs containing a number of different credit features. The consumer has a single account with the institution that can be accessed repeatedly via a number of sub-accounts established for the different program features and rate structures. Some features of the program might be used repeatedly (for example, an overdraft line) while others might be used infrequently (such as the part of the credit line available for secured credit). If the program as a whole is subject to prescribed terms and otherwise meets the definition of open-end credit, such a program would be considered a single, multifeatured plan.

iv. With respect to a covered asset account as defined in § 1026.62, a plan includes, for example, a program where the consumer is obligated contractually to repay any credit extended by the creditor. Such a program constitutes a plan notwithstanding that, for example, the creditor has not agreed in writing to extend credit for those transactions, the creditor retains discretion not to extend credit for those transactions, or the creditor does not extend credit for those transactions once the consumer has exceeded a certain amount of credit.

3. *Repeated transactions.* Under this criterion, the creditor must reasonably contemplate repeated transactions. This means that the credit plan must be usable from time to time and the creditor must legitimately expect that there will be repeat business rather than a one-time credit extension. The creditor must expect repeated dealings with consumers under the credit plan as a whole and need not believe a consumer will reuse a particular feature of the plan. The determination of whether a creditor can reasonably contemplate repeated transactions requires an objective analysis. Information that much of the creditor's customer base with accounts under the plan make repeated transactions over some period of time is relevant to the determination, particularly when the plan is opened primarily for the financing of infrequently purchased products or services. A standard based on reasonable belief by a creditor necessarily includes

some margin for judgmental error. The fact that particular consumers do not return for further credit extensions does not prevent a plan from having been properly characterized as open-end. For example, if much of the customer base of a clothing store makes repeat purchases, the fact that some consumers use the plan only once would not affect the characterization of the store's plan as open-end credit. The criterion regarding repeated transactions is a question of fact to be decided in the context of the creditor's type of business and the creditor's relationship with its customers. For example, it would be more reasonable for a bank or depository institution to contemplate repeated transactions with a customer than for a seller of aluminum siding to make the same assumption about its customers.

4. *Finance charge on an outstanding balance.* i. The requirement that a finance charge may be computed and imposed from time to time on the outstanding balance means that there is no specific amount financed for the plan for which the finance charge, total of payments, and payment schedule can be calculated. A plan may meet the definition of open-end credit even though a finance charge is not normally imposed, provided the creditor has the right, under the plan, to impose a finance charge from time to time on the outstanding balance. For example, in some plans, a finance charge is not imposed if the consumer pays all or a specified portion of the outstanding balance within a given time period. Such a plan could meet the finance charge criterion, if the creditor has the right to impose a finance charge, even though the consumer actually pays no finance charges during the existence of the plan because the consumer takes advantage of the option to pay the balance (either in full or in installments) within the time necessary to avoid finance charges.

ii. With regard to a covered separate credit feature and an asset feature on a prepaid account that are both accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61, any

service, transaction, activity, or carrying charges imposed on the covered separate credit feature, and any such charges imposed on the asset feature of the prepaid account to the extent that the amount of the charge exceeds comparable charges imposed on prepaid accounts in the same prepaid account program that do not have a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card, generally is a finance charge. See § 1026.4(a) and (b)(11). Such charges include a periodic fee to participate in the covered separate credit feature, regardless of whether this fee is imposed on the credit feature or on the asset feature of the prepaid account. With respect to credit from a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card, any service, transaction, activity, or carrying charges that are finance charges under § 1026.4 constitute finance charges imposed from time to time on an outstanding unpaid balance as described in § 1026.2(a)(20) if there is no specific amount financed for the credit feature for which the finance charge, total of payments, and payment schedule can be calculated.

iii. Regardless of whether a financial institution assesses such charges on a covered asset account as defined in § 1026.62 or a separate credit account, any service, transaction, activity, or carrying charges imposed by the financial institution for paying a transaction that overdraws a consumer's covered asset account held at the financial institution are generally finance charges unless they are otherwise addressed by § 1026.4(b)(2), (b)(12), or (c). See § 1026.4(a), (b)(2), (b)(12), and (c). Additionally, such charges would constitute finance charges imposed from time to time on an outstanding unpaid balance, as described in § 1026.2(a)(20), if there is no specific amount financed for the plan for which the finance charge, total of payments, and payment schedule can be calculated.

5. *Reusable line.* The total amount of credit that may be extended during the existence of an open-end plan is unlimited because available credit is generally replenished as earlier

advances are repaid. A line of credit is self-replenishing even though the plan itself has a fixed expiration date, as long as during the plan's existence the consumer may use the line, repay, and reuse the credit. The creditor may occasionally or routinely verify credit information such as the consumer's continued income and employment status or information for security purposes but, to meet the definition of open-end credit, such verification of credit information may not be done as a condition of granting a consumer's request for a particular advance under the plan. In general, a credit line is self-replenishing if the consumer can take further advances as outstanding balances are repaid without being required to separately apply for those additional advances. A credit card account where the plan as a whole replenishes meets the self-replenishing criterion, notwithstanding the fact that a credit card issuer may verify credit information from time to time in connection with specific transactions. This criterion of unlimited credit distinguishes open-end credit from a series of advances made pursuant to a closed-end credit loan commitment. For example:

- i. Under a closed-end commitment, the creditor might agree to lend a total of \$10,000 in a series of advances as needed by the consumer. When a consumer has borrowed the full \$10,000, no more is advanced under that particular agreement, even if there has been repayment of a portion of the debt. (See § 1026.2(a)(17)(iv) for disclosure requirements when a credit card is used to obtain the advances.)

- ii. This criterion does not mean that the creditor must establish a specific credit limit for the line of credit or that the line of credit must always be replenished to its original amount. The creditor may reduce a credit limit or refuse to extend new credit in a particular case due to changes in the creditor's financial condition or the consumer's creditworthiness. (The rules in § 1026.40(f), however, limit the ability of a creditor to suspend credit advances for home equity

plans.) While consumers should have a reasonable expectation of obtaining credit as long as they remain current and within any preset credit limits, further extensions of credit need not be an absolute right in order for the plan to meet the self-replenishing criterion.

6. *Verifications of collateral value.* Creditors that otherwise meet the requirements of § 1026.2(a)(20) extend open-end credit notwithstanding the fact that the creditor must verify collateral values to comply with Federal, state, or other applicable law or verifies the value of collateral in connection with a particular advance under the plan.

7. *Open-end real estate mortgages.* Some credit plans call for negotiated advances under so-called open-end real estate mortgages. Each such plan must be independently measured against the definition of open-end credit, regardless of the terminology used in the industry to describe the plan. The fact that a particular plan is called an open-end real estate mortgage, for example, does not, by itself, mean that it is open-end credit under the regulation.

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Section 1026.4—Finance Charge

* * * * *

Paragraph 4(b)(2)

1. *Checking or transaction account charges.* A charge imposed in connection with a credit feature on a checking or transaction account (other than a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 or a covered asset account as that term is defined in § 1026.62) is a finance charge under § 1026.4(b)(2) to the extent the charge exceeds the charge for a similar account without a credit feature and the charge is not addressed by § 1026.4(b)(12). If a charge for an account with a credit feature does not exceed the charge for an account without a credit feature, the charge is not a finance charge under § 1026.4(b)(2). To illustrate:

i. A \$5 service charge is imposed on an account with an overdraft line of credit (where the institution has agreed in writing to pay an overdraft), while a \$3 service charge is imposed on an account without a credit feature; the \$2 difference is a finance charge. (If the difference is not related to account activity, however, it may be excludable as a participation fee. See the commentary to § 1026.4(c)(4).)

ii. A \$5 service charge is imposed for each item that results in an overdraft on an account with an overdraft line of credit, while a \$25 service charge is imposed for paying or returning each item on a similar account without a credit feature; the \$5 charge is not a finance charge.

2. *Prepaid accounts.* Fees or charges related to credit offered in connection with prepaid accounts as defined in § 1026.61 are discussed in §§ 1026.4(b)(11) and 1026.61 and related commentary.

* * * * *

Paragraph 4(c)(3)

1. *Assessing interest on an overdraft balance.* Except with respect to credit offered in connection with a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 and above breakeven overdraft credit as defined in § 1026.62(b)(1), a charge on an overdraft balance computed by applying a rate of interest to the amount of the overdraft is not a finance charge, even though the consumer agrees to the charge in the account agreement, unless the financial institution agrees in writing that it will pay such items.

2. *Credit accessed in connection with a prepaid account.* See comment 4(b)(11)–1 for guidance on when fees imposed with regard to credit accessed in connection with a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 are finance charges.

3. *Credit accessed in connection with a covered asset account.* See §1026.4(b)(12) for guidance on when fees imposed on a covered asset account as defined in § 1026.62 are finance charges.

* * * * *

Section 1026.12—Special Credit Card Provisions

1. *Scope.* Sections 1026.12(a) and (b) deal with the issuance and liability rules for credit cards, whether the card is intended for consumer, business, or any other purposes. Sections 1026.12(a) and (b) are exceptions to the general rule that the regulation applies only to consumer credit. (See §§ 1026.1 and 1026.3.) Notwithstanding paragraph (g) of this section or Regulation E, 12 CFR 1005.12(a), paragraphs (a) through (f) of this section apply to hybrid debit-credit cards as defined in § 1026.62.

2. *Definition of “accepted credit card”.* For purposes of this section, “accepted credit card” means any credit card that a cardholder has requested or applied for and received, or has signed, used, or authorized another person to use to obtain credit. Any credit card issued as a renewal or substitute in accordance with § 1026.12(a) becomes an accepted credit card when received by the cardholder.

12(a) Issuance of Credit Cards

Paragraph 12(a)(1)

1. *Explicit request.* A request or application for a card must be explicit. For example, a request for an overdraft plan tied to a checking account does not constitute an application for a credit card with overdraft checking features. Therefore, a very large financial institution cannot issue a hybrid debit-credit card to a person without first receiving an oral or written request or

application for the hybrid debit-credit card. The term hybrid debit-credit card has the same meaning as provided in § 1026.62.

2. *Addition of credit features.* If the consumer has a non-credit card, including a prepaid card, the addition of a credit feature or plan to the card that would make the card into a credit card under § 1026.2(a)(15)(i) constitutes issuance of a credit card. For example, the following constitute issuance of a credit card:

i. Granting overdraft privileges on a checking account when the consumer already has a check guarantee card; or

ii. Allowing a prepaid card to access a covered separate credit feature that would make the card into a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 with respect to the covered separate credit feature.

iii. Extending covered overdraft credit through a hybrid debit-credit card as defined in § 1026.62.

3. *Variance of card from request.* The request or application need not correspond exactly to the card that is issued. For example:

i. The name of the card requested may be different when issued.

ii. The card may have features in addition to those reflected in the request or application.

4. *Permissible form of request.* The request or application may be oral (in response to a telephone solicitation by a card issuer, for example) or written.

5. *Time of issuance.* A credit card may be issued in response to a request made before any cards are ready for issuance (for example, if a new program is established), even if there is some delay in issuance.

6. *Persons to whom cards may be issued.* A card issuer may issue a credit card to the person who requests it, and to anyone else for whom that person requests a card and who will be an authorized user on the requester's account. In other words, cards may be sent to consumer A on A's request, and also (on A's request) to consumers B and C, who will be authorized users on A's account. In these circumstances, the following rules apply:

- i. The additional cards may be imprinted in either A's name or in the names of B and C.
- ii. No liability for unauthorized use (by persons other than B and C), not even the \$50, may be imposed on B or C since they are merely users and not cardholders as that term is defined in § 1026.2 and used in § 1026.12(b); of course, liability of up to \$50 for unauthorized use of B's and C's cards may be imposed on A.
- iii. Whether B and C may be held liable for their own use, or on the account generally, is a matter of state or other applicable law.

7. *Issuance of non-credit cards.* i. *Issuance of non-credit cards other than prepaid cards.* A. Under § 1026.12(a)(1), a credit card cannot be issued except in response to a request or an application. (See comment 2(a)(15)-2 for examples of cards or devices that are and are not credit cards.) A non-credit card other than a prepaid card may be sent on an unsolicited basis by an issuer that does not propose to connect the card to any credit plan; a credit feature may be added to a previously issued non-credit card other than a prepaid card only upon the consumer's specific request.

B. *Examples.* A purchase-price discount card may be sent on an unsolicited basis by an issuer that does not propose to connect the card to any credit plan. An issuer demonstrates that it proposes to connect the card to a credit plan by, for example, including promotional materials about credit features or account agreements and disclosures required by § 1026.6. The issuer will

violate the rule against unsolicited issuance if, for example, at the time the card is sent a credit plan can be accessed by the card or the recipient of the unsolicited card has been preapproved for credit that the recipient can access by contacting the issuer and activating the card.

ii. *Issuance of a prepaid card.* Section 1026.12(a)(1) does not apply to the issuance of a prepaid card where an issuer does not connect the card to any covered separate credit feature that would make the prepaid card into a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 at the time the card is issued and only opens a covered separate credit feature, or provides an application or solicitation to open a covered separate credit feature, or allows an existing credit feature to become a covered separate credit feature accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 in compliance with § 1026.61(c). A covered separate credit feature may be added to a previously issued prepaid card only upon the consumer's application or specific request and only in compliance with § 1026.61(c). An issuer does not connect a prepaid card to a covered separate credit feature that would make the card into a credit card simply by providing the disclosures required by Regulation E, 12 CFR 1005.18(b)(2)(x), (b)(4)(iv), and (vii), with the prepaid card. See § 1026.12(a)(2) and related commentary for when a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 may be issued as a replacement or substitution for another hybrid prepaid-credit card. See also Regulation E, 12 CFR 1005.5 and 1005.18(a), and related commentary, governing issuance of access devices under Regulation E.

8. *Unsolicited issuance of PINs.* A card issuer may issue personal identification numbers (PINs) to existing credit cardholders without a specific request from the cardholders, provided the PINs cannot be used alone to obtain credit. For example, the PINs may be necessary if consumers wish to use their existing credit cards at automated teller machines or at merchant locations with point of sale terminals that require PINs.

Paragraph 12(a)(2)

1. *Renewal.* Renewal generally contemplates the regular replacement of existing cards because of, for example, security reasons or new technology or systems. It also includes the re-issuance of cards that have been suspended temporarily, but does not include the opening of a new account after a previous account was closed.

2. *Substitution—examples.* Substitution encompasses the replacement of one card with another because the underlying account relationship has changed in some way—such as when the card issuer has:

- i. Changed its name.
- ii. Changed the name of the card.
- iii. Changed the credit or other features available on the account. For example, the original card could be used to make purchases and obtain cash advances at teller windows. The substitute card might be usable, in addition, for obtaining cash advances through automated teller machines. (If the substitute card constitutes an access device, as defined in Regulation E, then the Regulation E issuance rules would have to be followed.) The substitution of one card with another on an unsolicited basis is not permissible, however, where in conjunction with the substitution an additional credit card account is opened and the consumer is able to make new purchases or advances under both the original and the new account with the new card. For example, if a retail card issuer replaces its credit card with a combined retailer/bank card, each of the creditors maintains a separate account, and both accounts can be accessed for new transactions by use of the new credit card, the card cannot be provided to a consumer without solicitation.

iv. Substituted a card user's name on the substitute card for the cardholder's name appearing on the original card.

v. Changed the merchant base, provided that the new card is honored by at least one of the persons that honored the original card. However, unless the change in the merchant base is the addition of an affiliate of the existing merchant base, the substitution of a new card for another on an unsolicited basis is not permissible where the account is inactive. A credit card cannot be issued in these circumstances without a request or application. For purposes of § 1026.12(a), an account is inactive if no credit has been extended and if the account has no outstanding balance for the prior 24 months. (See § 1026.11(b)(2).)

3. *Substitution—successor card issuer.* Substitution also occurs when a successor card issuer replaces the original card issuer (for example, when a new card issuer purchases the accounts of the original issuer and issues its own card to replace the original one). A permissible substitution exists even if the original issuer retains the existing receivables and the new card issuer acquires the right only to future receivables, provided use of the original card is cut off when use of the new card becomes possible.

4. *Substitution—non-credit-card plan.* A credit card that replaces a retailer's open-end credit plan not involving a credit card is not considered a substitute for the retailer's plan—even if the consumer used the retailer's plan. A credit card cannot be issued in these circumstances without a request or application.

5. *One-for-one rule.* An accepted card may be replaced by no more than one renewal or substitute card. For example, the card issuer may not replace a credit card permitting purchases and cash advances with two cards, one for the purchases and another for the cash advances.

6. *One-for-one rule—exceptions.* The regulation does not prohibit the card issuer from:

i. Replacing a single card that is both a debit card and a credit card, such as a hybrid debit-credit card as defined in § 1026.62, with a credit card and a separate debit card with only debit functions (or debit functions plus an associated capability to extend overdraft credit that is not covered overdraft credit as defined in § 1026.62), since the latter card could be issued on an unsolicited basis under Regulation E.

ii. Replacing a single card that is both a prepaid card and a credit card with a credit card and a separate prepaid card where the latter card is not a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61.

iii. Replacing an accepted card with more than one renewal or substitute card, provided that:

A. No replacement card accesses any account not accessed by the accepted card;

B. For terms and conditions required to be disclosed under § 1026.6, all replacement cards are issued subject to the same terms and conditions, except that a creditor may vary terms for which no change in terms notice is required under § 1026.9(c); and

C. Under the account's terms the consumer's total liability for unauthorized use with respect to the account does not increase.

7. *Methods of terminating replaced card.* The card issuer need not physically retrieve the original card, provided the old card is voided in some way, for example:

i. The issuer includes with the new card a notification that the existing card is no longer valid and should be destroyed immediately.

ii. The original card contained an expiration date.

iii. The card issuer, in order to preclude use of the card, reprograms computers or issues instructions to authorization centers.

8. *Incomplete replacement.* If a consumer has duplicate credit cards on the same account (Card A—one type of bank credit card, for example), the card issuer may not replace the duplicate cards with one Card A and one Card B (Card B—another type of bank credit card) unless the consumer requests Card B.

9. *Multiple entities.* Where multiple entities share responsibilities with respect to a credit card issued by one of them, the entity that issued the card may replace it on an unsolicited basis, if that entity terminates the original card by voiding it in some way, as described in comment 12(a)(2)-7. The other entity or entities may not issue a card on an unsolicited basis in these circumstances.

* * * * *

12(c) Right of Cardholder To Assert Claims or Defenses Against Card Issuer

1. *Relationship to § 1026.13.* The § 1026.12(c) credit card “holder in due course” provision deals with the consumer’s right to assert against the card issuer a claim or defense concerning property or services purchased with a credit card, if the merchant has been unwilling to resolve the dispute. Even though certain merchandise disputes, such as non-delivery of goods, may also constitute “billing errors” under § 1026.13, that section operates independently of § 1026.12(c). The cardholder whose asserted billing error involves undelivered goods may institute the error resolution procedures of § 1026.13; but whether or not the cardholder has done so, the cardholder may assert claims or defenses under § 1026.12(c). Conversely, the consumer may pay a disputed balance and thus have no further right to assert claims and defenses, but still may assert a billing error if notice of that billing error is given in the proper time and manner. An assertion that a particular transaction resulted from unauthorized use of the card could also be both a “defense” and a billing error.

2. *Claims and defenses assertible.* Section 1026.12(c) merely preserves the consumer's right to assert against the card issuer any claims or defenses that can be asserted against the merchant. It does not determine what claims or defenses are valid as to the merchant; this determination must be made under state or other applicable law.

3. *Transactions excluded.* Section 1026.12(c) does not apply to the use of a check guarantee card or a debit card (other than a hybrid debit-credit card) in connection with an overdraft credit plan, or to a check guarantee card used in connection with cash-advance checks.

4. *Method of calculating the amount of credit outstanding.* The amount of the claim or defense that the cardholder may assert shall not exceed the amount of credit outstanding for the disputed transaction at the time the cardholder first notifies the card issuer or the person honoring the credit card of the existence of the claim or defense. However, when a consumer has asserted a claim or defense against a creditor pursuant to § 1026.12(c), the creditor must apply any payment or other credit in a manner that avoids or minimizes any reduction in the amount subject to that claim or defense. Accordingly, to determine the amount of credit outstanding for purposes of this section, payments and other credits must be applied first to amounts other than the disputed transaction.

i. For examples of how to comply with §§ 1026.12 and 1026.53 for credit card accounts under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan, see comment 53-3.

ii. For other types of credit card accounts, creditors may, at their option, apply payments consistent with § 1026.53 and comment 53-3. In the alternative, payments and other credits may be applied to: Late charges in the order of entry to the account; then to finance charges in the order of entry to the account; and then to any debits other than the transaction subject to the claim or defense in the order of entry to the account. In these circumstances, if more than one

item is included in a single extension of credit, credits are to be distributed pro rata according to prices and applicable taxes.

5. *Prepaid cards.* i. Section 1026.12(c) applies to property or services purchased with the hybrid prepaid-credit card that accesses a covered separate credit feature as defined in § 1026.61. The following examples illustrate when a hybrid prepaid-credit card is used to purchase property or services:

A. A consumer uses a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 to make a purchase to obtain goods or services from a merchant and credit is drawn directly from a covered separate credit feature accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card without transferring funds into the asset feature of the prepaid account to cover the amount of the purchase. For example, assume that the consumer has \$10 of funds in the asset feature of the prepaid account and initiates a transaction with a merchant to obtain goods or services with the hybrid prepaid-credit card for \$25. In this case, \$10 is debited from the asset feature and \$15 of credit is drawn directly from the covered separate credit feature accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card without any transfer of funds into the asset feature of the prepaid account to cover the amount of the purchase. In this case, the consumer is using credit accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card to purchase property or services where credit is drawn directly from the covered separate credit feature accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card to cover the amount of the purchase.

B. A consumer uses a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 to make a purchase to obtain goods or services from a merchant and credit is transferred from a covered separate credit feature accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card into the asset feature of the prepaid account to cover the amount of the purchase. For example, assume the same facts as above, except that the \$15 will be transferred from a covered separate credit feature to the asset

feature, and a transaction of \$25 is debited from the asset feature of the prepaid account. In this case, the consumer is using credit accessed by the hybrid prepaid-credit card to purchase property or services because credit is transferred to the asset feature of the prepaid account to cover the amount of a purchase made with the card. This is true even though the \$15 credit transaction is treated as “nonsale credit” under § 1026.8(b). See comments 8(a)-9.ii and 8(b)-1.vi.

ii. For a transaction at point of sale where a hybrid prepaid-credit card is used to obtain goods or services from a merchant and the transaction is partially paid with funds from the asset feature of the prepaid account, and partially paid with credit from the covered separate credit feature, the amount of the purchase transaction that is funded by credit generally would be subject to the requirements of § 1026.12(c). The amount of the transaction funded from the prepaid account would not be subject to the requirements of § 1026.12(c).

12(c)(1) General Rule

1. *Situations excluded and included.* The consumer may assert claims or defenses only when the goods or services are “purchased with the credit card.” This would include when the goods or services are purchased by a consumer using a hybrid prepaid-credit card to access a covered separate credit feature as defined in § 1026.61 or using a hybrid debit-credit card to access a covered overdraft credit account as defined in § 1026.62. This could include mail, the Internet or telephone orders, if the purchase is charged to the credit card account. But it would exclude:

i. Use of a credit card to obtain a cash advance, even if the consumer then uses the money to purchase goods or services. Such a transaction would not involve “property or services purchased with the credit card.”

ii. The purchase of goods or services by use of a check accessing an overdraft account and a credit card used solely for identification of the consumer. (On the other hand, if the credit card is used to make partial payment for the purchase and not merely for identification, the right to assert claims or defenses would apply to credit extended via the credit card, although not to credit extended by the overdraft line. If partial payment for the purchase is made with a hybrid prepaid-credit card or a hybrid debit-credit card, the right to assert claims or defenses would apply to credit accessed from a covered separate credit feature or covered overdraft credit account, respectively.)

iii. Purchases made by use of a check guarantee card in conjunction with a cash advance check (or by cash advance checks alone). (*See* comment 12(c)-3.) A cash advance check is a check that, when written, does not draw on an asset account; instead, it is charged entirely to an open-end credit account.

iv. Purchases effected by use of either a check guarantee card or a debit card (other than a hybrid debit-credit card) when used to draw on overdraft credit plans. (*See* comment 12(c)-3.) The debit card exemption applies whether the card accesses an asset account via point of sale terminals, automated teller machines, or in any other way, and whether the card qualifies as an “access device” under Regulation E or is only a paper based debit card. If a card serves both as an ordinary credit card and also as a check guarantee or debit card, a transaction will be subject to this rule on asserting claims and defenses when used as an ordinary credit card (including when used as a hybrid debit-credit card to access a covered overdraft credit account), but not when used as a check guarantee or debit card. For purchases effected by use of a hybrid debit-credit card where the transaction is partially paid with funds from the asset account, and partially

paid with covered overdraft credit, the provisions of § 1026.12(c) apply only to the credit portion of the purchase transaction.

* * * * *

Section 1026.55—Limitations on Increasing Annual Percentage Rates, Fees, and Charges

55(a) General Rule

1. *Increase in rate, fee, or charge.* Section 1026.55(a) prohibits card issuers from increasing an annual percentage rate or any fee or charge required to be disclosed under § 1026.6(b)(2)(ii), (b)(2)(iii), or (b)(2)(xii) on a credit card account unless specifically permitted by one of the exceptions in § 1026.55(b). Except as specifically provided in § 1026.55(b), this prohibition applies even if the circumstances under which an increase will occur are disclosed in advance. The following examples illustrate the general application of § 1026.55(a) and (b). Additional examples illustrating specific aspects of the exceptions in § 1026.55(b) are provided in the commentary to those exceptions.

i. Account-opening disclosure of non-variable rate for six months, then variable rate.

Assume that, at account opening on January 1 of year one, a card issuer discloses that the annual percentage rate for purchases is a non-variable rate of 15% and will apply for six months. The card issuer also discloses that, after six months, the annual percentage rate for purchases will be a variable rate that is currently 18% and will be adjusted quarterly by adding a margin of 8 percentage points to a publicly-available index not under the card issuer's control. Furthermore, the card issuer discloses that the annual percentage rate for cash advances is the same variable rate that will apply to purchases after six months. Finally, the card issuer discloses that, to the extent consistent with § 1026.55 and other applicable law, a non-variable penalty rate of 30% may apply if the consumer makes a late payment. The payment due date for the account is the

twenty-fifth day of the month and the required minimum periodic payments are applied to accrued interest and fees but do not reduce the purchase and cash advance balances.

A. Change-in-terms rate increase for new transactions after first year. On January 15 of year one, the consumer uses the account to make a \$2,000 purchase and a \$500 cash advance. No other transactions are made on the account. At the start of each quarter, the card issuer may adjust the variable rate that applies to the \$500 cash advance consistent with changes in the index (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(2)). All required minimum periodic payments are received on or before the payment due date until May of year one, when the payment due on May 25 is received by the creditor on May 28. At this time, the card issuer is prohibited by § 1026.55 from increasing the rates that apply to the \$2,000 purchase, the \$500 cash advance, or future purchases and cash advances. Six months after account opening (July 1), the card issuer may begin to accrue interest on the \$2,000 purchase at the previously-disclosed variable rate determined using an 8-point margin (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(1)). Because no other increases in rate were disclosed at account opening, the card issuer may not subsequently increase the variable rate that applies to the \$2,000 purchase and the \$500 cash advance (except due to increases in the index pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(2)). On November 16, the card issuer provides a notice pursuant to § 1026.9(c) informing the consumer of a new variable rate that will apply on January 1 of year two (calculated using the same index and an increased margin of 12 percentage points). On December 15, the consumer makes a \$100 purchase. On January 1 of year two, the card issuer may increase the margin used to determine the variable rate that applies to new purchases to 12 percentage points (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(3)). However, § 1026.55(b)(3)(ii) does not permit the card issuer to apply the variable rate determined using the 12-point margin to the \$2,000 purchase balance. Furthermore, although the \$100 purchase occurred more than 14 days after

provision of the § 1026.9(c) notice, § 1026.55(b)(3)(iii) does not permit the card issuer to apply the variable rate determined using the 12-point margin to that purchase because it occurred during the first year after account opening. On January 15 of year two, the consumer makes a \$300 purchase. The card issuer may apply the variable rate determined using the 12-point margin to the \$300 purchase.

B. Account becomes more than 60 days delinquent during first year. Same facts as above except that the required minimum periodic payment due on May 25 of year one is not received by the card issuer until July 30 of year one. Because the card issuer received the required minimum periodic payment more than 60 days after the payment due date, § 1026.55(b)(4) permits the card issuer to increase the annual percentage rate applicable to the \$2,000 purchase, the \$500 cash advance, and future purchases and cash advances. However, § 1026.55(b)(4)(i) requires the card issuer to first comply with the notice requirements in § 1026.9(g). Thus, if the card issuer provided a § 1026.9(g) notice on July 25 stating that all rates on the account would be increased to the 30% penalty rate, the card issuer could apply that rate beginning on September 8 to all balances and to future transactions.

ii. Account-opening disclosure of non-variable rate for six months, then increased non-variable rate for six months, then variable rate; change-in-terms rate increase for new transactions after first year. Assume that, at account opening on January 1 of year one, a card issuer discloses that the annual percentage rate for purchases will increase as follows: A non-variable rate of 5% for six months; a non-variable rate of 10% for an additional six months; and thereafter a variable rate that is currently 15% and will be adjusted monthly by adding a margin of 5 percentage points to a publicly-available index not under the card issuer's control. The payment due date for the account is the fifteenth day of the month and the required minimum

periodic payments are applied to accrued interest and fees but do not reduce the purchase balance. On January 15 of year one, the consumer uses the account to make a \$1,500 purchase. Six months after account opening (July 1), the card issuer may begin to accrue interest on the \$1,500 purchase at the previously-disclosed 10% non-variable rate (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(1)). On September 15, the consumer uses the account for a \$700 purchase. On November 16, the card issuer provides a notice pursuant to § 1026.9(c) informing the consumer of a new variable rate that will apply on January 1 of year two (calculated using the same index and an increased margin of 8 percentage points). One year after account opening (January 1 of year two), the card issuer may begin accruing interest on the \$2,200 purchase balance at the previously-disclosed variable rate determined using a 5-point margin (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(1)). Section 1026.55 does not permit the card issuer to apply the variable rate determined using the 8-point margin to the \$2,200 purchase balance. Furthermore, § 1026.55 does not permit the card issuer to subsequently increase the variable rate determined using the 5-point margin that applies to the \$2,200 purchase balance (except due to increases in the index pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(2)). The card issuer may, however, apply the variable rate determined using the 8-point margin to purchases made on or after January 1 of year two (pursuant to § 1026.55(b)(3)).

iii. *Change-in-terms rate increase for new transactions after first year; penalty rate increase after first year.* Assume that, at account opening on January 1 of year one, a card issuer discloses that the annual percentage rate for purchases is a variable rate determined by adding a margin of 6 percentage points to a publicly-available index outside of the card issuer's control. The card issuer also discloses that, to the extent consistent with § 1026.55 and other applicable law, a non-variable penalty rate of 28% may apply if the consumer makes a late payment. The due date for the account is the fifteenth of the month. On May 30 of year two, the account has a

purchase balance of \$1,000. On May 31, the card issuer provides a notice pursuant to § 1026.9(c) informing the consumer of a new variable rate that will apply on July 16 for all purchases made on or after June 15 (calculated by using the same index and an increased margin of 8 percentage points). On June 14, the consumer makes a \$500 purchase. On June 15, the consumer makes a \$200 purchase. On July 1, the card issuer has not received the payment due on June 15 and provides the consumer with a notice pursuant to § 1026.9(g) stating that the 28% penalty rate will apply as of August 15 to all transactions made on or after July 16 and that, if the consumer becomes more than 60 days late, the penalty rate will apply to all balances on the account. On July 17, the consumer makes a \$300 purchase.

A. Account does not become more than 60 days delinquent. The payment due on June 15 of year two is received on July 2. On July 16, § 1026.55(b)(3)(ii) permits the card issuer to apply the variable rate determined using the 8-point margin disclosed in the § 1026.9(c) notice to the \$200 purchase made on June 15 but does not permit the card issuer to apply this rate to the \$1,500 purchase balance. On August 15, § 1026.55(b)(3)(ii) permits the card issuer to apply the 28% penalty rate disclosed at account opening and in the § 1026.9(g) notice to the \$300 purchase made on July 17 but does not permit the card issuer to apply this rate to the \$1,500 purchase balance (which remains at the variable rate determined using the 6-point margin) or the \$200 purchase (which remains at the variable rate determined using the 8-point margin).

B. Account becomes more than 60 days delinquent after provision of § 1026.9(g) notice. Same facts as above except the payment due on June 15 of year two has not been received by August 15. Section 1026.55(b)(4) permits the card issuer to apply the 28% penalty rate to the \$1,500 purchase balance and the \$200 purchase because it has not received the June 15 payment within 60 days after the due date. However, in order to do so, § 1026.55(b)(4)(i) requires the card

issuer to first provide an additional notice pursuant to § 1026.9(g). This notice must be sent no earlier than August 15, which is the first day the account became more than 60 days' delinquent. If the notice is sent on August 15, the card issuer may begin accruing interest on the \$1,500 purchase balance and the \$200 purchase at the 28% penalty rate beginning on September 29.

2. Relationship to grace period. Nothing in § 1026.55 prohibits a card issuer from assessing interest due to the loss of a grace period to the extent consistent with § 1026.5(b)(2)(ii)(B) and § 1026.54. In addition, a card issuer has not reduced an annual percentage rate on a credit card account for purposes of § 1026.55 if the card issuer does not charge interest on a balance or a portion thereof based on a payment received prior to the expiration of a grace period. For example, if the annual percentage rate for purchases on an account is 15% but the card issuer does not charge any interest on a \$500 purchase balance because that balance was paid in full prior to the expiration of the grace period, the card issuer has not reduced the 15% purchase rate to 0% for purposes of § 1026.55.

3. Fees in connection with covered separate credit features accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards. With regard to a covered separate credit feature and an asset feature on a prepaid account that are both accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined in § 1026.61 where the credit feature is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan, § 1026.55(a) prohibits card issuers from increasing an annual percentage rate or any fee or charge required to be disclosed under § 1026.6(b)(2)(ii), (iii), or (xii) on a credit card account unless specifically permitted by one of the exceptions in § 1026.55(b). This is true regardless of whether these fees or annual percentage rates are imposed on the asset feature of the prepaid account or on the credit feature.

4. *Fees imposed on the asset feature of a prepaid account that are not charges imposed as part of the plan.* Section 1026.55(a) does not apply to any fee or charge imposed on the asset feature of the prepaid account that is not a charge imposed as part of the plan under § 1026.6(b)(3). See § 1026.6(b)(3)(iii)(D) and (E) and related commentary regarding fees imposed on the asset feature of the prepaid account that are not charges imposed as part of the plan under § 1026.6(b)(3) with respect to covered separate credit features accessible by hybrid prepaid-credit cards and non-covered separate credit features as those terms are defined in § 1026.61.

5. *Fees in connection with covered overdraft credit.* With regard to covered overdraft credit accessible by a hybrid debit-credit card, § 1026.55(a) prohibits card issuers from increasing an annual percentage rate or any fee or charge required to be disclosed under § 1026.6(b)(2)(ii), (iii), or (xii) on a credit card account unless specifically permitted by one of the exceptions in § 1026.55(b). This is true regardless of whether these fees or annual percentage rates are imposed on the covered asset account associated with the covered overdraft credit or on the covered overdraft credit account.

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Section 1026.57—Reporting and Marketing Rules for College Student Open-End Credit

57(a) Definitions

57(a)(1) College student credit card

1. *Definition.* The definition of college student credit card excludes home-equity lines of credit accessed by credit cards and covered overdraft credit accounts as defined in 1026.62 offered by a creditor other than a very large financial institution as defined in 1026.62 that is accessed by a debit card or account number. A college student credit card includes a college

affinity card within the meaning of TILA section 127(r)(1)(A). In addition, a card may fall within the scope of the definition regardless of the fact that it is not intentionally targeted at or marketed to college students. For example, an agreement between a college and a card issuer may provide for marketing of credit cards to alumni, faculty, staff, and other non-student consumers who have a relationship with the college, but also contain provisions that contemplate the issuance of cards to students. A credit card issued to a student at the college in connection with such an agreement qualifies as a college student credit card. The definition of college student credit card includes a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined by § 1026.61 that is issued to any college student where the card can access a covered separate credit feature that is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan. The definition of college student credit card also includes a prepaid account as defined in § 1026.61 that is issued to any college student where a covered separate credit feature that is a credit card account under an open-end (not home-secured) consumer credit plan accessible by a hybrid prepaid-credit card as defined by § 1026.61 may be added in the future to the prepaid account.

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