

Internal Reforms Announced for FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection

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The Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection is about to undergo reform, according to FTC Acting Chairman Maureen Ohlhausen. In a [press release](#) issued on July 17, the FTC stated that the changes are part of an ongoing initiative to simplify information requests and improve transparency that began last April, when Ohlhausen announced new internal working groups on agency reform and efficiency.

"It is our duty to carry out our vital mission in the most effective and efficient way possible. The changes announced today will reduce unnecessary and undue burdens of FTC investigations without compromising our ability to protect American consumers," Ohlhausen stated.

The current round of reforms concern Civil Investigative Demands (CIDs) in consumer protection cases. According to the FTC, the changes include:

- Plain language descriptions of the CID process and business education materials;
- More detailed descriptions of the scope and purpose of investigations to provide a better understanding of the information requested;
- Reduced time periods for investigations to minimize the burden on companies;
- Streamlined instructions for providing electronically stored data; and
- Where appropriate, longer response times for CIDs to improve quality and timeliness.

The reforms are intended to make investigatory/information gathering requests less burdensome to businesses and more efficient generally. If effective, they will narrow the scope of information requested to specific pertinent information. As in many areas of legal and regulatory compliance, responding to CIDs—even in the absence of any wrongdoing or evidence thereof—can be time consuming and costly to businesses.

Other regulatory reform initiatives have been announced by the FTC in recent months, so it is reasonable to expect that more changes will be on horizon. Most recently, the FTC announced that it is seeking public comments on the Picture Tube, Textile, Energy Labeling, and CAN-SPAM Rules to inform the agency's decision on whether to update them.

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