

Rural Area Impact Statement:

1. **Types and numbers of rural areas:** The rule removes the requirement of mandatory adjournment for cross-examination of a claimant's attending medical provider, requires written extensions for submitting deposition transcripts of cross-examination of medical witnesses, and updates medical witness deposition fees.
2. **Reporting, recordkeeping and other compliance requirements; and professional services:** The same compliance requirements apply to rural areas as metropolitan ones. Rural employers should not need any new professional services to comply with this rule. It is economically and technologically feasible for rural businesses to comply with the proposed amendments. Although there may be requirements to file certain forms electronically, parties are already required to participate in electronic filing.
3. **Costs:** Compliance with the proposed regulations should generally not impose increased compliance costs on rural employers. Although deposition fees will have a slight increase, which the Board has determined is consistent with deposition fee and medical cost increases nationwide, these fees will be paid by the insurance carrier in most cases. Fees may be directly incurred by a self-insured rural employer. Notably, an employer can choose to opt-in to self-insure, and in doing so elects to bear administrative costs. Additionally, higher fees may apply when fees are not paid within 45 days. Employers can avoid additional costs by paying fees on time.

4. **Minimizing adverse impact:** The proposed amendments are not anticipated to have an adverse impact on rural areas. The Board has considered potential adverse impacts, including a potential increase in deposition fees, and this proposal balances the needs of insurance carriers (and other payers, such as self-insured employers) to ensure accurate payment with the needs of medical providers for timely payment of deposition fees. Additionally, injured workers have a need for timely payment and resolution of their claims without delay, and encouraging the deposition process to progress in a timely fashion addresses that need. The Board has also considered reports of injured workers in rural areas having difficulty finding medical providers who are willing to accept payment under the Workers' Compensation system. These changes are part of the Board's efforts to address reasons that medical providers, especially in rural areas, may hesitate to accept Workers' Compensation patients.

5. **Rural area participation:**

The Board does not have a rural area database but has sent an electronic communication describing the proposal to all insurer, self-insured employer, third party administrators, health care providers, and attorneys and licensed representative subscribers for Board updates.

The Board will duly consider all public comments received from rural areas during the public comment period.