

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-62707; File No. SR-NYSEAmex-2010-79)

August 12, 2010

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Notice of Filing and Immediate Effectiveness of Proposed Rule Change by NYSE AMEX LLC Amending Rule 980-Exercise of Options Contracts

Pursuant to Section 19(b)(1)¹ of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the “Act”)² and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,³ notice is hereby given that, on August 3, 2010, NYSE Amex LLC (“NYSE Amex” or the “Exchange”) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”) the proposed rule change as described in Items I and II below, which Items have been prepared by the self-regulatory organization. The Commission is publishing this notice to solicit comments on the proposed rule change from interested persons.

I. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Terms of the Substance of the Proposed Rule Change

The Exchange proposes to amend Rule 980-Exercise of Options Contracts. The text of the proposed rule change is attached as Exhibit 5 to the 19b-4 form. A copy of this filing is available on the Exchange’s Web site at www.nyse.com, at the Exchange’s principal office, at the Commission’s Public Reference Room, and on the Commission’s Web site at <http://www.sec.gov>.

II. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

In its filing with the Commission, the self-regulatory organization included statements concerning the purpose of, and basis for, the proposed rule change and discussed any comments it received on the proposed rule change. The text of those statements may be examined at the places

¹ 15 U.S.C.78s(b)(1).

² 15 U.S.C. 78a.

³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

specified in Item IV below. The Exchange has prepared summaries, set forth in sections A, B, and C below, of the most significant parts of such statements.

A. Self-Regulatory Organization’s Statement of the Purpose of, and Statutory Basis for, the Proposed Rule Change

1. Purpose

The purpose of the proposed rule change is to amend Rule 980 in order to extend the cut-off time to submit Contrary Exercise Advices (“CEA”)⁴ to the Exchange.

The Options Clearing Corporation (“OCC”) has an established procedure, under OCC Rule 805, that provides for the automatic exercise of certain options that are in-the-money by a specified amount known as “Exercise-by-Exception” or “Ex-by-Ex.” Under the Ex-by-Ex process, options holders holding option contracts that are in-the-money by a requisite amount and who wish to have their contracts automatically exercised need take no further action. However, under OCC Rule 805, option holders who do not want their options automatically exercised or who want their options to be exercised under different parameters than that of the Ex-by-Ex procedures must instruct OCC of their “contrary intention.”

In addition to and separately from the OCC requirement, under NYSE Amex Rule 980 option holders must file a CEA with the Exchange notifying it of the contrary intention. Rule 980 is designed, in part, to deter individuals from taking improper advantage of late breaking news by requiring evidence of an option holder’s timely decision to exercise or not exercise expiring equity options. ATP Holders⁵ satisfy this evidentiary requirement by submitting a CEA form

⁴ Contrary Exercise Advices are also known as Expiring Exercise Declarations (“EED”).

⁵ The term ATP refers to an Amex Trading Permit issued by the Exchange for effecting securities transactions on the Exchange. ATP Holders have the status of “member” of the Exchange as that term is defined in Section 3 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended.

directly to the Exchange, or by electronically submitting the CEA to the Exchange through OCC's electronic communications system. The submission of the CEA allows the Exchange to satisfy its regulatory obligation to verify that the decision to make a contrary exercise was made timely and in accordance with Rule 980.

Under Rule 980, option holders have until 5:30 p.m. on the last business day before their expiration to make a final decision to exercise or not exercise an expiring option that would otherwise either expire or be automatically exercised. ATP Holders may not accept CEA instructions from their customer or non customer accounts after 5:30 p.m. However, the current rule gives ATP Holders additional time to submit the CEA instructions if they use an electronic submission process.⁶ Specifically, an ATP Holder may currently submit CEA instructions until 6:30 p.m. for electronic submission.

This current process allowing ATP Holders an additional one hour after the decision making cut off time of 5:30 p.m. to submit a CEA to the various options exchanges was approved by the Commission in 2003.⁷ In 2003, the Ex-by-Ex thresholds were \$0.75 for customers and \$0.25 for broker-dealer accounts. In 2009, the Ex-by-Ex threshold is \$0.01 for all accounts. This decrease in the Ex-by-Ex threshold, coupled with the dramatic increase in option

⁶ If an ATP Holder does not employ an electronic submission procedure, they are required to submit CEAs for non-customer accounts by the 5:30 p.m. deadline. This deadline for manual submission is required in order to prevent firms from improperly extending the 5:30 p.m. deadline to exercise or not exercise an option. This requirement is based on the difficulty in monitoring a manual procedure that has different times for deciding whether or not to exercise the option and for the submission of the CEA.

⁷ See Securities Exchange Act Release Nos. 47885 (May 16, 2003), 68 FR 28309 (May 23, 2003) (SR-Amex-2001-92); 48505 (September 17, 2003), 68 FR 55680 (September 26, 2003) (SR-ISE-2003-20); 48640 (October 16, 2003), 68 FR 60757 (October 23, 2003) (SR-PCX-2003-47); and 48639 (October 16, 2003), 68 FR 60764 (October 23, 2003) (SR-Phlx-2003-65).

trading volume from 2003 to 2009, has led to a larger number of CEA instructions and has increased the burden on firms to process and submit instructions timely.

The Exchange proposes to extend the current 6:30 p.m. deadline for submitting CEA instructions to the Exchange by one additional hour, to 7:30 p.m. The Exchange believes that this proposed rule change is necessary to address concerns that, given the decrease in the Ex-by-Ex threshold and the increase in trading, the existing deadline for submitting CEAs to the Exchange is problematic for timely back-office processing. The proposed additional one hour will address this concern by further enabling firms to more timely manage, process, and submit the instructions to the Exchange. The Exchange also proposes to modify the language in subsection (g) of the current rule, which allows ATP Holders up to 2 hours and 30 minutes to submit a CEA to the Exchange in the event of a modified close of trading on the day of expiration, by removing the two hour and thirty minute restriction and allowing for submission of a CEA to the Exchange in the event of a modified close of trading of up to the proposed 7:30 p.m. deadline. This will make consistent the submission deadline for both regular and modified close expiration days. Moreover, this will provide uniformity with submission deadlines for both regular and modified close expiration days which will remove any possibility for error when determining what the submission deadline is on any modified close expiration day.

In addition, the Exchange proposes to revise Commentary .04(i) to reflect that members and member firms, who electronically submit Contrary Exercise Advice decisions on behalf of non-customer option holders, will now have until 7:30 p.m. ET to submit such decisions to the Exchange.

This proposal does not change the substantive requirement that option holders make a final decision by 5:30 p.m. The options exchanges currently enforce the 5:30 p.m. requirement

while giving members additional time to process and submit the CEA instructions. This proposal seeks to increase that additional submission time by one hour, and the Exchange believes that this proposal will be beneficial to the marketplace, particularly as it concerns back-office processing. The initiative to address ATP Holder concerns is industry-wide. The International Securities Exchange recently adopted a rule change which extended by a one hour the submission time for CEAs.⁸ The Exchange anticipates that other options exchanges will also propose similar rule changes. This additional processing time and Exchange submission deadline will not conflict with OCC submission rules or cause any OCC processing issues.

If the operative date of this proposed rule change is more than five business days prior to the date of the next options expiration Friday, i.e. the third Friday of the month ("Expiration Friday")⁹, the Exchange will implement the rule change so as to be effective for that Expiration Friday. If the operative date of this proposed rule change is 5 business days, or less, prior to the date of the next Expiration Friday, the Exchange will implement the rule change so as to be effective for the following Expiration Friday. NYSE Amex will notify OTP Holders of the implementation date of the rule change via a Regulatory Bulletin.

2. Statutory Basis

The Exchange believes that its proposal is consistent with Section 6(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (the "Act"),¹⁰ in general, and furthers the objectives of Section 6(b)(5) of the Act,¹¹ in particular, in that it is designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and

⁸ See Securities and Exchange Act Release No. 61710 (March 15, 2010), 75 FR 13636 (March 22, 2010) Approval order for SR-ISE-2010-02.

⁹ For example, Expiration Friday for August 2010 options will be August 20, 2010, Expiration Friday for September 2010 options will be September 17, 2010.

¹⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b).

¹¹ 15 U.S.C. 78f(b)(5).

practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, to remove impediments to and perfect the mechanism of a free and open market and a national market system, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. This proposed rule change will foster coordination with back office personnel engaged in processing information and is consistent with the facilitating of transactions in securities as set forth in Section 6(b)(5) in that it, by providing ATP Holders an additional hour within which to complete the necessary processing of CEAs, will thereby decrease the burden of processing an increasing number of contrary exercise advices and enable ATP Holders to more easily manage and process these instructions.

B. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Burden on Competition

The Exchange does not believe that the proposed rule change will impose any burden on competition that is not necessary or appropriate in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

C. Self-Regulatory Organization's Statement on Comments Regarding the Proposed Rule Change Received from Members, Participants or Others

No written comments were solicited or received with respect to the proposed rule change.

III. Date of Effectiveness of the Proposed Rule Change and Timing for Commission Action

Because the foregoing proposed rule change does not: (i) significantly affect the protection of investors or the public interest; (ii) impose any significant burden on competition; and (iii) become operative for 30 days from the date on which it was filed, or such shorter time as the Commission may designate, it has become effective pursuant to Section 19(b)(3)(A) of the Act¹² and Rule 19b-4(f)(6) thereunder.¹³

¹² 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(3)(A).

¹³ 17 CFR 240.19b-4(f)(6). In addition, Rule 19b-4(f)(6) requires a self-regulatory organization to give the Commission written notice of its intent to file the proposed rule change at least five business days prior to the date of filing of the proposed rule change,

At any time within 60 days of the filing of the proposed rule change, the Commission summarily may temporarily suspend such rule change if it appears to the Commission that such action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest, for the protection of investors, or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Electronic comments:

- Use the Commission's Internet comment form (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>); or
- Send an e-mail to rule-comments@sec.gov. Please include File Number SR-NYSEAMEX-2010-79 on the subject line.

Paper comments:

- Send paper comments in triplicate to Elizabeth M. Murphy, Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549-1090.

All submissions should refer to File Number SR-NYSEAMEX-2010-79. This file number should be included on the subject line if e-mail is used. To help the Commission process and review your comments more efficiently, please use only one method. The Commission will post all comments on the Commission's Internet Web site (<http://www.sec.gov/rules/sro.shtml>). Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those

or such shorter time as designated by the Commission. The Exchange has satisfied this requirement.

that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for Web site viewing and printing in the Commission's Public Reference Room, 100 F Street, NE, Washington, DC 20549, on official business days between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Copies of such filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of the Exchange. All comments received will be posted without change; the Commission does not edit personal identifying information from submissions. You should submit only information that you wish to make publicly available. All submissions should refer to File Number SR-NYSEAMEX-2010-79 and should be submitted on or before [insert date 21 days from publication in the Federal Register].

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.¹⁴

Florence E. Harmon
Deputy Secretary

¹⁴ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).