

207.17 Citizen suits.

1. A person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected may commence a civil action on the person's own behalf to compel compliance with this chapter as follows:

a. Against the division or any other governmental agency or subdivision which is alleged to be in violation of the provisions of this chapter or of any rule, order or permit issued or against any other person who is alleged to be in violation of any rule, order or permit issued pursuant to this chapter.

b. Against the division where there is alleged a failure of the division to perform any act or duty required under this chapter. The suit shall be filed in the county where the mining operation is or, if against the division, in the district court for Polk county or the county of the petitioner's residence.

2. An action shall not be commenced:

a. Under subsection 1, paragraph "a" of this section until sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing of the violation to the division and to any alleged violator, or if the state has commenced and is diligently prosecuting a civil action against that operator for compliance with the provisions of this chapter; however, the person may intervene in the action as a matter of right.

b. Under subsection 1, paragraph "b" of this section until sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing to the division in the manner provided by rule; however, if the violation or order complained of constitutes an imminent threat to the health or safety of the plaintiff or would immediately affect a legal interest of the plaintiff, the action may be brought immediately after giving notice.

3. The division may intervene in any action under this section.

4. The court, in issuing a final order in an action brought pursuant to subsection 1 of this section, may award costs of litigation including attorney and expert witness fees to any party.

5. This section does not restrict a right which any person or class may have under a statute or common law to seek enforcement of any of the provisions of this chapter or to seek any other relief. The availability of judicial review of the actions of the division shall not restrict any rights established by this section.

6. A person whose person or property is injured through the violation by any operator of a rule, order, or permit issued pursuant to this chapter may bring an action for damages including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees only in the county in which the coal mining operation complained of is located. This subsection shall not affect the rights or limits under workers' compensation as provided in chapter 85.

[C81, §83.17]

C93, §207.17