Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Two changes in the Federal regulations governing the mineral leasing of land owned by Indian tribes and by individual Indians were announced today by the Department of the Interior.

Underlying purpose of the changes is to provide better protection for the interests of the Indian landowners in the light of current economic conditions in the mining industry.

One of the amendments governing leases for minerals other than oil and gas, provides for an annual rental of not less than $1 per acre and annual development expenses of not less than $10 per acre unless otherwise authorized by the Commissioner. This represents an increase in the rental rates under the former regulations which were fixed on a graduated scale of 25 cents per acre for the first year, 50 cents per acre for the second and third years, and $1 per acre for each year thereafter. Development expense requirements under the old regulations varies with different minerals but were less than $10 per acre for all except coal.

The second amendment affects the term of mining leases on individually owned Indian lands and provides that they may extend for 10 years and as long thereafter as the minerals are produced in paying quantities. A similar provision on term has been in effect for the tribal lands and for oil and gas leasing of individual lands for some years. Under the former regulations, however, leases for minerals other than nil and gas on individual lands were limited to 15 years without regard to production.