

§5.21

contractors, their associations, laborers and mechanics and their organizations, and local, State and Federal agencies, who may be concerned with these provisions of the law. The interpretations contained in this subpart are authoritative and may be relied upon as provided for in section 10 of the Portal-to-Portal Act of 1947 (29 U.S.C. 359). The omission to discuss a particular problem in this subpart or in interpretations supplementing it should not be taken to indicate the adoption of any position by the Secretary of Labor with respect to such problem or to constitute an administrative interpretation, practice, or enforcement policy. Questions on matters not fully covered by this subpart may be referred to the Secretary for interpretation as provided in §5.12.

§ 5.21 [Reserved]

§5.22 Effect of the Davis-Bacon fringe benefits provisions.

The Davis-Bacon Act and the prevailing wage provisions of the related statutes listed in §1.1 of this subtitle confer upon the Secretary of Labor the authority to predetermine, as minimum wages, those wage rates found to be prevailing for corresponding classes of laborers and mechanics employed on projects of a character similar to the contract work in the area in which the work is to be performed. See paragraphs (a) and (b) of §1.2 of this subtitle. The fringe benefits amendments enlarge the scope of this authority by including certain bona fide fringe benefits within the meaning of the terms "wages", "scale of wages", "wage rates", "minimum wages" and "prevailing wages", as used in the Davis-Bacon Act.

§ 5.23 The statutory provisions.

The fringe benefits provisions of the 1964 amendments to the Davis-Bacon Act are, in part, as follows:

(b) As used in this Act the term "wages", "scale of wages", "wage rates", "minimum wages", and "prevailing wages" shall include—

- (1) The basic hourly rate of pay; and
- (2) The amount of—

(A) The rate of contribution irrevocably made by a contractor or subcontractor to a

29 CFR Subtitle A (7-1-09 Edition)

trustee or to a third person pursuant to a fund, plan, or program; and

(B) The rate of costs to the contractor or subcontractor which may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits to laborers and mechanics pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program which was communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected,

for medical or hospital care, pensions on retirement or death, compensation for injuries or illness resulting from occupational activity, or insurance to provide any of the foregoing, for unemployment benefits, life insurance, disability and sickness insurance, or accident insurance, for vacation and holiday pay, for defraying costs of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or for other bona fide fringe benefits, but only where the contractor or subcontractor is not required by other Federal, State, or local law to provide any of such benefits * * *.

§ 5.24 The basic hourly rate of pay.

"The basic hourly rate of pay" is that part of a laborer's or mechanic's wages which the Secretary of Labor would have found and included in wage determinations prior to the 1964 amendments. The Secretary of Labor is required to continue to make a separate finding of this portion of the wage. In general, this portion of the wage is the cash payment made directly to the laborer or mechanic. It does not include fringe benefits.

§ 5.25 Rate of contribution or cost for fringe benefits.

(a) Under the amendments, the Secretary is obligated to make a separate finding of the rate of contribution or cost of fringe benefits. Only the amount of contributions or costs for fringe benefits which meet the requirements of the act will be considered by the Secretary. These requirements are discussed in this subpart.

(b) The rate of contribution or cost is ordinarily an hourly rate, and will be reflected in the wage determination as such. In some cases, however, the contribution or cost for certain fringe benefits may be expressed in a formula or method of payment other than an hourly rate. In such cases, the Secretary may in his discretion express in the wage determination the rate of contribution or cost used in the formula or method or may convert it to

an hourly rate of pay whenever he finds that such action would facilitate the administration of the Act. See § 5.5(a)(1)(i) and (iii).

§ 5.26 “* * * contribution irrevocably made * * * to a trustee or to a third person”.

Under the fringe benefits provisions (section 1(b)(2) of the Act) the amount of contributions for fringe benefits must be made to a trustee or to a third person irrevocably. The “third person” must be one who is not affiliated with the contractor or subcontractor. The trustee must assume the usual fiduciary responsibilities imposed upon trustees by applicable law. The trust or fund must be set up in such a way that in no event will the contractor or subcontractor be able to recapture any of the contributions paid in or any way divert the funds to his own use or benefit. Although contributions made to a trustee or third person pursuant to a benefit plan must be irrevocably made, this does not prevent return to the contractor or subcontractor of sums which he had paid in excess of the contributions actually called for by the plan, as where such excess payments result from error or from the necessity of making payments to cover the estimated cost of contributions at a time when the exact amount of the necessary contributions under the plan is not yet ascertained. For example, a benefit plan may provide for definite insurance benefits for employees in the event of the happening of a specified contingency such as death, sickness, accident, etc., and may provide that the cost of such definite benefits, either in full or any balance in excess of specified employee contributions, will be borne by the contractor or subcontractor. In such a case the return by the insurance company to the contractor or subcontractor of sums paid by him in excess of the amount required to provide the benefits which, under the plan, are to be provided through contributions by the contractor or subcontractor, will not be deemed a recapture or diversion by the employer of contributions made pursuant to the plan. (See Report of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public

Welfare, S. Rep. No. 963, 88th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 5.)

§ 5.27 “* * * fund, plan, or program”.

The contributions for fringe benefits must be made pursuant to a fund, plan or program (sec. 1(b)(2)(A) of the act). The phrase “fund, plan, or program” is merely intended to recognize the various types of arrangements commonly used to provide fringe benefits through employer contributions. The phrase is identical with language contained in section 3(1) of the Welfare and Pension Plans Disclosure Act. In interpreting this phrase, the Secretary will be guided by the experience of the Department in administering the latter statute. (See Report of Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, S. Rep. No. 963, 88th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 5.)

§ 5.28 Unfunded plans.

(a) The costs to a contractor or subcontractor which may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits of the types described in the act pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program, are considered fringe benefits within the meaning of the act (see 1(b)(2)(B) of the act). The legislative history suggests that these provisions were intended to permit the consideration of fringe benefits meeting, among others, these requirements and which are provided from the general assets of a contractor or subcontractor. (Report of the House Committee on Education and Labor, H. Rep. No. 308, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4.)

(b) No type of fringe benefit is eligible for consideration as a so-called unfunded plan unless:

(1) It could be reasonably anticipated to provide benefits described in the act;

(2) It represents a commitment that can be legally enforced;

(3) It is carried out under a financially responsible plan or program; and

(4) The plan or program providing the benefits has been communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.)

(c) It is in this manner that the act provides for the consideration of unfunded plans or programs in finding prevailing wages and in ascertaining compliance with the Act. At the same