

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**GENERAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION****NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND
SPACE ADMINISTRATION****48 CFR Parts 11, 22, 36, 49, and 52**

[FAR Case 1999-003]

RIN 9000-A163

**Federal Acquisition Regulation;
Liquidated Damages**

AGENCIES: Department of Defense (DoD), General Services Administration (GSA), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Civilian Agency Acquisition Council and the Defense Acquisition Regulations Council (Councils) are proposing to amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to rewrite guidance on liquidated damages in plain language.

DATES: Interested parties should submit comments in writing on or before March 13, 2000 to be considered in the formulation of a final rule.

ADDRESSES: Interested parties should submit written comments to: General Services Administration, FAR Secretariat (MVRS), 1800 F Street, NW, Room 4035, ATTN: Laurie Duarte, Washington, DC 20405.

Address e-mail comments submitted via the Internet to: farcase.1999-003@gsa.gov. Please submit comments only and cite FAR case 1999-003 in all correspondence related to this case.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The FAR Secretariat, Room 4035, GS Building, Washington, DC, 20405, at (202) 501-4755 for information pertaining to status or publication schedules. For clarification of content, contact Ms. Victoria Moss, Procurement Analyst, at (202) 501-4764. Please cite FAR case 1999-003.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**A. Background**

The proposed rule amends guidance on liquidated damages in FAR Parts 11, 22, 36, and 49 and associated clauses at FAR Part 52. The FAR guidance on liquidated damages, particularly that at 11.502, is difficult to understand. We have amended the guidance using the plain language guidelines in a White House memorandum, Plain Language in Government Writing, dated June 1, 1998.

This rule was not subject to Office of Management and Budget review under

Section 6(b) of Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review, dated September 30, 1993. This rule is not a major rule under 5 U.S.C. 804.

B. Regulatory Flexibility Act

This proposed rule is not expected to have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities within the meaning of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601, *et seq.*, because the rule does not change existing practices. An Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis has, therefore, not been performed. Comments are invited from small businesses and other interested parties. The Councils will consider comments from small entities concerning the affected FAR subparts in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 610. Interested parties must submit such comments separately and should cite 5 U.S.C. 601, *et seq.* (FAR case 1999-003), in correspondence.

C. Paperwork Reduction Act

The Paperwork Reduction Act does not apply because the changes to the FAR do not impose information collection requirements that require the approval of the Office of Management and Budget under 44 U.S.C. 3501, *et seq.*

List of Subjects in 48 CFR Parts 11, 22, 36, 49, and 52

Government procurement.

Dated: January 7, 2000.

Edward C. Loeb,

Director, Federal Acquisition Policy Division.

Therefore, DoD, GSA, and NASA propose that 48 CFR parts 11, 22, 36, 49, and 52 be amended as set forth below:

1. The authority citation for 48 CFR parts 11, 22, 36, 49, and 52 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 40 U.S.C. 486(c); 10 U.S.C. chapter 137; and 42 U.S.C. 2473(c).

**PART 11—DESCRIBING AGENCY
NEEDS**

2. Revise Subpart 11.5 to read as follows:

Subpart 11.5—Liquidated Damages

Sec.

11.500 Scope.

11.501 Policy.

11.502 Procedures.

11.503 Contract clauses.

11.500 Scope.

This subpart prescribes policies and procedures for using liquidated damages clauses in solicitations and contracts for supplies, services, research and development, and construction. This subpart does not apply to liquidated damages for subcontracting plans (see

19.705-7) or liquidated damages related to the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (see subpart 22.3).

11.501 Policy.

(a) The contracting officer must consider the potential impact on pricing, competition, and contract administration before using a liquidated damages clause. Use liquidated damages clauses only when—

(1) The time of delivery or timely performance is so important that the Government may reasonably expect to suffer damage if the delivery or performance is delinquent; and

(2) The extent or amount of such damage would be difficult or impossible to estimate accurately or prove.

(b) Liquidated damages are not punitive and are not negative performance incentives (see 16.402-2). Liquidated damages are used to compensate the Government for probable damages. Therefore, the liquidated damages rate must be a reasonable forecast of just compensation for the harm that is caused by late delivery or untimely performance of the particular contract. Use a maximum amount or a maximum period for assessing liquidated damages if these limits reflect the maximum probable damage to the Government. Also, the contracting officer may use more than one liquidated damages rate when the contracting officer expects the probable damage to the Government to change over the contract period of performance.

(c) The contract officer must take all reasonable steps to mitigate liquidated damages. If the contract contains a liquidated damages clause and the contracting officer is considering terminating the contract for default, the contracting officer should seek expeditiously to obtain performance by the contractor or terminate the contract and repurchase (see subpart 49.4). Prompt contracting officer action will prevent excessive loss to defaulting contractors and protect the interests of the Government.

(d) The amount of liquidated damages assessed under a contract is a unilateral decision made solely at the discretion of the Government.

(e) The head of the agency may reduce or waive the amount of liquidated damages assessed under a contract, if the Commissioner, Financial Management Service, or designee approves (see Treasury Order 145-10).

11.502 Procedures.

(a) Include the applicable liquidated damages clause and liquidated damages rates in solicitations when the contract

will contain liquidated damages provisions.

(b) Construction contracts with liquidated damages provisions must describe the rate(s) of liquidated damages assessed per day of delay. The rate(s) should include the estimated daily cost of Government inspection and superintendence. The rate(s) should also include an amount for other expected expenses associated with delayed completion such as—

- (1) Renting substitute property; or
- (2) Paying additional allowance for living quarters.

11.503 Contract clauses.

(a) Use the clause at 52.211–11, Liquidated Damages—Supplies, Services, or Research and Development, in fixed-price solicitations and contracts for supplies, services, or research and development when the contracting officer determines that liquidated damages are appropriate (see 11.501(a)).

(b) Use the clause at 52.211–12, Liquidated Damages—Construction, in solicitations and contracts for construction, other than cost-plus-fixed-fee, when the contracting officer determines that liquidated damages are appropriate (see 11.501(a)). If the contract specifies more than one completion date for separate parts or stages of the work, revise paragraph (a) of the clause to state the amount of liquidated damages for delay of each separate part or stage of the work.

(c) Use the clause at 52.211–13, Time Extensions, in solicitations and contracts for construction that use the clause at 52.211–12, Liquidated Damages—Construction.

PART 22—APPLICATION OF LABOR LAWS TO GOVERNMENT ACQUISITIONS

3. Revise section 22.302 to read as follows:

22.302 Liquidated damages and overtime pay.

(a) When an overtime computation discloses under-payments, the responsible contractor or subcontractor must pay the affected employee any unpaid wages and pay liquidated damages to the Government. The contracting officer must assess liquidated damages at the rate of \$10 per affected employee for each calendar day on which the employer required or permitted the employee to work in excess of the standard workweek of 40 hours without paying overtime wages required by the Act.

(b) If the contractor or subcontractor fails or refuses to comply with overtime pay requirements of the Act and the

funds withheld by Federal agencies for labor standards violations do not cover the unpaid wages due laborers and mechanics and the liquidated damages due the Government, make payments in the following order—

(1) Pay laborers and mechanics the wages they are owed (or prorate available funds if they do not cover the entire amount owed); and

(2) Pay liquidated damages.

(c) If the head of an agency finds that the administratively determined liquidated damages due under paragraph (a) of this section are incorrect, or that the contractor or subcontractor inadvertently violated the Act despite the exercise of due care, the agency head may—

(1) Reduce the amount of liquidated damages assessed for liquidated damages of \$500 or less;

(2) Release the contractor or subcontractor from the liability for liquidated damages of \$500 or less; or

(3) Recommend that the Secretary of Labor reduce or waive liquidated damages over \$500.

(d) After the contracting officer determines the liquidated damages and the contractor makes appropriate payments, disburse any remaining assessments in accordance with agency procedures.

4. Sections 22.406–8 and 22.406–9 are revised to read as follows:

22.406–8 Investigations.

Conduct labor standards investigations when available information indicates such action is warranted. In addition, the Department of Labor may conduct an investigation on its own initiative or may request a contracting agency to do so.

(a) *Contracting agency responsibilities.* Conduct an investigation when a compliance check indicates that substantial or willful violations may have occurred or violations have not been corrected.

(1) The investigation must—

(i) Include all aspects of the contractor's compliance with contract labor standards requirements;

(ii) Not be limited to specific areas raised in a complaint or uncovered during compliance checks; and

(iii) Use personnel familiar with labor laws and their application to contracts.

(2) Do not disclose contractor employees' oral or written statements taken during an investigation or the employee's identity to anyone other than an authorized Government official without that employee's prior signed consent.

(3) Send a written request to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, to obtain—

(i) Investigation and enforcement instructions; or

(ii) Available pertinent Department of Labor files.

(4) Obtain permission from the Department of Labor before disclosing material obtained from Labor Department files, other than computations of back wages and liquidated damages and summaries of back wages due, to anyone other than Government contract administrators.

(b) *Investigation report.* The contracting officer must review the investigation report on receipt and make preliminary findings. The contracting officer normally must not base adverse findings solely on employee statements that the employee does not wish to have disclosed. However, if the investigation establishes a pattern of possible violations that are based on employees statements that are not authorized for disclosure, the pattern itself may support a finding of noncompliance.

(c) *Contractor Notification.* After completing the review, the contracting officer must do the following:

(1) Provide the contractor any written preliminary findings and proposed corrective actions, and notice that the contractor has the right to request that the basis for the findings be made available and to submit written rebuttal information within a reasonable period of time.

(2) Upon request, provide the contractor with rationale for the findings. However, under no circumstances will the contracting officer permit the contractor to examine the investigation report. Also, the contracting officer must not disclose the identity of any employee who filed a complaint or who was interviewed, without the prior consent of the employee.

(3)(i) The contractor may rebut the findings in writing within 60 days after it receives a copy of the preliminary findings. The rebuttal becomes part of the official investigation record. If the contractor submits a rebuttal, evaluate the preliminary findings and notify the contractor of the final findings.

(ii) If the contracting officer does not receive a timely rebuttal, the contracting officer must consider the preliminary findings final.

(4) If appropriate, request the contractor to make restitution for underpaid wages and assess liquidated damages. If the request includes liquidated damages, the request must state that the contractor has 60 days to request relief from such assessment.

(d) *Contracting officer's report.* After taking the actions prescribed in

paragraphs (b) and (c) of this subsection—

(1) The contracting officer must prepare and forward a report of any violations, including findings and supporting evidence, to the agency head. Standard Form 1446, Labor Standards Investigation Summary Sheet, is the first page of the report; and

(2) The agency head must process the report as follows:

(i) The contracting officer must send a detailed enforcement report to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, within 60 days after completion of the investigation, if—

(A) A contractor or subcontractor underpaid by \$1,000 or more;

(B) The contracting officer believes that the violations are aggravated or willful (or, also, there is reason to believe that the contractor has disregarded its obligations to employees and subcontractors under the Davis-Bacon Act);

(C) The contractor or subcontractor has not made restitution; or

(D) Future compliance has not been assured.

(ii) If the Department of Labor expressly requested the investigation and none of the conditions in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this subsection exist, submit a summary report to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division. The report must include—

(A) A summary of any violations;

(B) The amount of restitution paid;

(C) The number of workers who received restitution;

(D) The amount of liquidated damages assessed under the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act;

(E) Corrective measures taken; and

(F) Any information that may be necessary to review any recommendations for an appropriate adjustment in liquidated damages.

(iii) If none of the conditions in paragraphs (d)(2)(i) or (ii) of this subsection are present, close the case and retain the report in the appropriate contract file.

(iv) If substantial evidence is found that violations are willful and in violation of a criminal statute, (generally 18 U.S.C. 874 or 1001), forward the report (supplemented if necessary) to the Attorney General of the United States for prosecution if the facts warrant. Notify the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division, when the report is forwarded for the Attorney General's consideration.

(e) *Department of Labor investigations.* The Department of Labor will furnish the contracting officer an enforcement report detailing violations found and any corrective action taken

by the contractor, in investigations that disclose—

(1) Underpayments totaling \$1,000 or more;

(2) Aggravated or willful violations (or, when the contracting officer believes that the contractor has disregarded its obligations to employees and subcontractors under the Davis-Bacon Act); or

(3) Potential assessment of liquidated damages under the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act.

(f) *Other investigations.* The Department of Labor will provide a letter summarizing the findings of the investigation to the contracting officer for all investigations that are not described in paragraph (e) of this subsection.

22.406-9 Withholding from or suspension of contract payments.

(a) *Withholding from contract payments.* If the contracting officer believes a violation exists (see 22.406-8), or upon request of the Department of Labor, the contracting officer must withhold from payments due the contractor an amount equal to the estimated wage underpayment and estimated liquidated damages due the United States under the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act. (See 22.302.)

(1) Contracting officers must, if the contracting officer believes a violation exists or upon request of the Department of Labor, withhold funds from any current Federal contract or Federally assisted contract with the same prime contractor, that is subject to either Davis-Bacon Act or Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act requirements.

(2) If a subsequent investigation confirms violations, the contracting officer must adjust the withholding as necessary. However, if the Department of Labor requested the withholding, the contracting officer must not reduce or release the withholding without written approval of the Department of Labor.

(3) Use withheld funds as provided in paragraph (c) of this subsection to satisfy assessed liquidated damages, and unless the contractor makes restitution, validated wage underpayments.

(b) *Suspension of contract payments.* If a contractor or subcontractor fails or refuses to comply with the labor standards clauses of the Davis-Bacon Act and related statutes, the agency upon its own action or upon the written request of the Department of Labor, must suspend any further payment, advance, or guarantee of funds until the violations cease or until the agency has withheld sufficient funds to compensate

employees for back wages, and to cover any liquidated damages due.

(c) *Disposition of contract payments withheld or suspended.* (1) *Forwarding wage underpayments to Secretary of the Treasury.* Upon final administrative determination, if the contractor or subcontractor has not made restitution, the contracting officer must forward to the appropriate disbursing office Standard Form (SF) 1093, Schedule of Withholdings Under the Davis-Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. 276(a)) and/or Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. 327-333). Attach to the SF 1093 a list of the name, social security number, and last known address of each affected employee; the amount due each employee; employee claims if feasible; and a brief rationale for restitution. Also, the contracting officer must indicate if restitution was not made because the employee could not be located. The Government may assist underpaid employees in preparation of their claims. The disbursing office must submit the SF 1093 with attached additional data and the funds withheld (by check) to the Secretary of the Treasury.

(2) *Returning of withheld funds to contractor.* When funds withheld exceed the amount required to satisfy validated wage underpayments and assessed liquidated damages, return the funds to the contractor.

(3) *Limitation on forwarding or returning funds.* If the Department of Labor requested the withholding or if the findings are disputed (see 22.406-10(e)), the contracting officer must not forward the funds to the Secretary of the Treasury, or return them to the contractor without approval by the Department of Labor.

(4) *Liquidated damages.* Upon final administrative determination, the contracting officer must dispose of funds withheld or collected for liquidated damages in accordance with agency procedures.

PART 36—CONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECT-ENGINEER CONTRACTS

36.206 [Amended]

5. Amend section 36.206 by removing “shall” and adding “must” in its place.

PART 49—TERMINATION OF CONTRACTS

6. In section 49.402-7, revise paragraph (a); and amend paragraph (b) by removing “shall” and inserting “must” in its place. The revised text reads as follows:

49.402-7 Other damages.

(a) If the contracting officer terminates a contract for default or follows a course of action instead of termination for default (see 49.402-4), the contracting officer promptly must assess and demand any liquidated damages to which the Government is entitled under the contract. Under the contract clause at 52.211-11, these damages are in addition to any excess repurchase costs.

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7. Revise section 49.404 to read as follows:

49.404 Surety-takeover agreements.

(a) The procedures in this section apply primarily, but not solely, to fixed-price construction contracts terminated for default.

(b) Since the surety is liable for damages resulting from the contractor's default, the surety has certain rights and interests in the completion of the contract work and application of any undisbursed funds. Therefore, the contracting officer must consider carefully the surety's proposals for completing the contract. The contracting officer must take action on the basis of the Government's interest, including the possible effect upon the Government's rights against the surety.

(c) The contracting officer should permit surety offers to complete the contract, unless the contracting officer believes that the persons or firms proposed by the surety to complete the work are not competent and qualified or the proposal is not in the best interest of the Government.

(d) There may be conflicting demands for the defaulting contractor's assets, including unpaid prior earnings (retained percentages and unpaid progress estimates). Therefore, the surety may include a "takeover" agreement in its proposal, fixing the surety's rights to payment from those funds. The contracting officer may (but not before the effective date of termination) enter into a written agreement with the surety. The contracting officer should consider using a tripartite agreement among the Government, the surety, and the defaulting contractor to resolve the defaulting contractor's residual rights, including assertions to unpaid prior earnings.

(e) Any takeover agreement must require the surety to complete the contract and the Government to pay the surety's costs and expenses up to the balance of the contract price unpaid at the time of default, subject to the following conditions:

(1) Any unpaid earnings of the defaulting contractor, including retained

percentages and progress estimates for work accomplished before termination, must be subject to debts due the Government by the contractor, except to the extent that the unpaid earnings may be used to pay the completing surety its actual costs and expenses incurred in the completion of the work, less its payments and obligations under the payment bond given in connection with the contract.

(2) The surety is bound by contract terms governing liquidated damages for delays in completion of the work, unless the delays are excusable under the contract.

(3) If the contract proceeds have been assigned to a financing institution, the surety must not be paid from unpaid earnings, unless the assignee provides written consent.

(4) The contracting officer must not pay the surety more than the amount it expended discharging its liabilities under the defaulting contractor's payment bond. Payments to the surety to reimburse it for discharging its liabilities under the payment bond of the defaulting contractor must be only on authority of—

(i) Mutual agreement among the Government, the defaulting contractor, and the surety;

(ii) Determination of the Comptroller General as to payee and amount; or (iii) Order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

PART 52—SOLICITATION PROVISIONS AND CONTRACT CLAUSES

8. Revise sections 52.211-11 through 52.211-13 to read as follows:

52.211-11 Liquidated Damages—Supplies, Services, or Research and Development.

As prescribed in 11.503(a), insert the following clause in solicitations and contracts:

Liquidated Damages—Supplies, Services, or Research and Development (Date)

(a) If the Contractor fails to deliver the supplies or perform the services within the time specified in this contract, the Contractor shall, in place of actual damages, pay to the Government liquidated damages of \$ _____ per calendar day of delay [Contracting Officer insert amount].

(b) If the Government terminates this contract in whole or in part under the Default—Fixed-Price Supply and Service clause, the Contractor is liable for liquidated damages accruing until the Government reasonably obtains delivery or performance of similar supplies or services. These liquidated damages are in addition to excess costs of repurchase under the Termination clause.

(c) The Contractor will not be charged with liquidated damages when the delay in delivery or performance is beyond the

control and without the fault or negligence of the Contractor as defined in the Default—Fixed-Price Supply and Service clause in this contract.

(End of clause)

52.211-12 Liquidated Damages—Construction.

As prescribed in 11.503(b), insert the following clause in solicitations and contracts:

Liquidated Damages—Construction (Date)

(a) If the Contractor fails to complete the work within the time specified in the contract, the Contractor shall pay liquidated damages to the Government in the amount of [Contracting Officer insert amount] for each calendar day of delay until the work is completed or accepted.

(b) If the Government terminates the Contractor's right to proceed, liquidated damages will continue to accrue until the work is completed. These liquidated damages are in addition to excess costs of repurchase under the Termination clause.

(End of clause)

52.211-13 Time Extensions.

As prescribed in 11.503(c), insert the following clause:

Time Extensions (Date)

Time extensions for contract changes will depend upon the extent, if any, by which the changes cause delay in the completion of the various elements of construction. The change order granting the time extension may provide that the contract completion date will be extended only for those specific elements related to the changed work and that the remaining contract completion dates for all other portions of the work will not be altered. The change order also may provide an equitable readjustment of liquidated damages under the new completion schedule.

(End of clause)

9. Revise section 52.222-4 to read as follows:

52.222-4 Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act—Overtime Compensation.

As prescribed in 22.305, insert the following clause:

Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act—Overtime Compensation (Date)

(a) *Overtime requirements.* No Contractor or subcontractor employing laborers or mechanics (see Federal Acquisition Regulation 22.300) shall require or permit them to work over 40 hours in any workweek unless they are paid at least 1½ times the basic rate of pay for each hour worked over 40 hours.

(b) *Violation; liability for unpaid wages; liquidated damages.* The responsible Contractor and subcontractor are liable for unpaid wages if they violate the terms in paragraph (a) of this clause. In addition, the Contractor and subcontractor are liable for liquidated damages payable to the Government. The Contracting Officer will assess such liquidated damages at the rate of

\$10 per affected employee for each calendar day on which the employer required or permitted the employee to work in excess of the standard workweek of 40 hours without paying overtime wages required by the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act.

(c) *Withholding for unpaid wages and liquidated damages.* The Contracting Officer will withhold from payments due under the contract sufficient funds required to satisfy any Contractor or subcontractor liabilities for unpaid wages and liquidated damages. If amounts withheld under the contract are insufficient to satisfy Contractor or subcontractor liabilities, the Contracting Officer will withhold payments from other Federal or federally assisted contracts held by the same Contractor that are subject to the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act.

(d) *Payrolls and basic records.* (1) The Contractor and its subcontractors shall maintain payrolls and basic payroll records for all laborers and mechanics working on the contract during the contract and shall make them available to the Government until 3 years after contract completion. The records shall contain the name and address of each employee, social security number, labor classifications, hourly rates of wages paid, daily and weekly number of hours worked, deductions made, and actual wages paid. The records need not duplicate those required for construction work by Department of Labor regulations at 29 CFR 5.5(a)(3) implementing the Davis-Bacon Act.

(2) The Contractor and its subcontractors shall allow authorized representatives of the Contracting Officer or the Department of Labor to inspect, copy, or transcribe records maintained under paragraph (d)(1) of this

clause. The Contractor or subcontractor also shall allow authorized representatives of the Contracting Officer or Department of Labor to interview employees in the workplace during working hours.

(e) *Subcontracts.* The Contractor shall insert the provisions set forth in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this clause in subcontracts exceeding \$100,000 and require subcontractors to include these provisions in any lower tier subcontracts. The Contractor shall be responsible for compliance by any subcontractor or lower tier subcontractor with the provisions set forth in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this clause.

(End of clause)

[FR Doc. 00-738 Filed 1-12-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6820-EP-P