

Dated: September 8, 2003.

**Jeffrey Shuren,**

*Assistant Commissioner for Policy.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

### Federal Emergency Management Agency

#### Open Meeting, Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy

**AGENCY:** U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), FEMA, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Homeland Security.

**ACTION:** Notice of open meeting.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with section 10 (a) (2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App. 2, FEMA announces the following committee meeting:

*Name:* Board of Visitors (BOV) for the National Fire Academy.

*Dates of Meeting:* October 2-4, 2003.

*Place:* Building H, Room 300, National Emergency Training Center, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

*Time:* October 2, 2003, 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

October 3, 2003, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

October 4, 2003, 9 a.m.-12 noon.

*Proposed Agenda:* October 2-4, Review National Fire Academy Program Activities.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The meeting will be open to the public with seating available on a first-come, first-served basis. Members of the general public who plan to attend the meeting should contact the Office of the Superintendent, National Fire Academy, U.S. Fire Administration, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727, (301) 447-1117, on or before September 26, 2003.

Minutes of the meeting will be prepared and will be available for public viewing in the Office of the U.S. Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727. Copies of the minutes will be available upon request within 60 days after the meeting.

Dated: September 5, 2003.

**R. David Paulison,**

*U.S. Fire Administrator, Director of the Preparedness Division.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-4728-N-03]

### Notice of Certain Operating Cost Adjustment Factors for 2004

**AGENCY:** Office of the Secretary, HUD.

**ACTION:** Publication of the 2004 Operating Cost Adjustment Factors (OCAFs) for Section 8 rent adjustments at contract renewal under section 524 of the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 (MAHRA), as amended by the Preserving Affordable Housing for Senior Citizens and Families into the 21st Century Act of 1999, and under the Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 (LIHPRHA) Projects assisted with Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments.

**SUMMARY:** This notice establishes annual factors used in calculating rent adjustments under section 524 of MAHRA as amended by the Preserving Affordable Housing for Senior Citizens and Families into the 21st Century Act of 1999, and under LIHPRHA.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** February 11, 2004.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Regina Aleksiewicz, Housing Project Manager, Office of Housing Assistance and Grant Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Multifamily Housing, 451 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20410-8000; telephone (202) 708-3000; extension 2600 (This is not a toll-free number). Hearing-or speech-impaired individuals may access this number via TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### I. Operating Cost Adjustment Factors (OCAFs)

Section 514(e)(2) of the FY 1998 HUD Appropriations Act, requires HUD to establish guidelines for rent adjustments based on an operating cost adjustment factor (OCAF). The legislation requiring HUD to establish OCAFs for LIHPRHA projects and projects with contract renewals under section 524 of MAHRA is similar in wording and intent. HUD has therefore developed a single factor to be applied uniformly to all projects utilizing OCAFs as the method by which rents are adjusted.

Additionally, section 524 of the Act gives HUD broad discretion in setting OCAFs—referring simply to “operating cost factors established by the Secretary.” The sole exception to this grant of authority is a specific

requirement that application of an OCAF shall not result in a negative rent adjustment. OCAFs are to be applied uniformly to all projects utilizing OCAFs as the method by which rents are adjusted upon expiration of the term of the contract. OCAFs are applied to project contract rent less debt service.

An analysis of cost data for FHA-insured projects showed that their operating expenses could be grouped into nine categories: wages, employee benefits, property taxes, insurance, supplies and equipment, fuel oil, electricity, natural gas, and water and sewer. Based on an analysis of these data, HUD derived estimates of the percentage of routine operating costs that were attributable to each of these nine expense categories. Data for projects with unusually high or low expenses due to unusual circumstances were deleted from analysis.

States are the lowest level of geographical aggregation at which there are enough projects to permit statistical analysis. Additionally, no data were available for the Western Pacific Islands. Data for Hawaii was therefore used to generate OCAFs for these areas.

The best current measures of cost changes for the nine cost categories were selected. The only categories for which current data are available at the state level are for fuel oil, electricity, and natural gas. Current price change indices for the other six categories are only available at the national level. The Department had the choice of using dated state-level data or relatively current national data. It opted to use national data rather than data that would be two or more years older (*e.g.*, the most current local wage data are for 1996). The data sources for the nine cost indicators selected were as follows:

*Labor Costs*—3/02 to 3/03 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Employment Cost Index, Private Sector Wages and Salaries Component at the National Level.

*Employment Benefit Costs*—3/02 to 3/03 BLS Employment Cost Index, Employee Benefits at the National Level.

*Property Taxes*—3/02 to 3/03 BLS Consumer Price Index, All Items Index.

*Goods, Supplies, Equipment*—3/02 to 3/03 BLS Producer Price Index, Finished Goods Less Food and Energy.

*Insurance*—3/02 to 3/03 BLS Consumer Price Index, Tenant and Household Residential Insurance Index.

*Fuel Oil*—Energy Information Agency, 2000 to 2001 annual average state prices for #2 distillate residential fuel oil (U.S. average change was used for states with too little fuel oil consumption to have values).

*Electricity*—Energy Information Agency, 2000 to 2001 annual average