

FACT SHEET: DEBRIS OPERATIONS - CLARIFICATION: EMERGENCY CONTRACTING VS. EMERGENCY WORK

Response and Recovery Directorate Policy Number: 9580.4

Date Published: January 19, 2001

SUMMARY: Contracting for debris operations, even though it is "emergency work" in FEMA operations, does not necessarily mean the contracts can be awarded without competitive bidding.

Applicants should comply with State laws and regulations, but should be aware that non-competitive contracting is acceptable ONLY in rare circumstances where there can be no delay in meeting a requirement. In general, contracting for debris work requires competitive bidding. The definition of "emergency" in contracting procedures is not the same as FEMA's definition of "emergency work".

DISCUSSION: There appears to be some confusion regarding the awarding of some contracts, especially for debris, without competitive bidding. The reason cited for such actions is that the contract is for emergency work, and competitive bidding is not required.

Part 13 of 44 CFR is entitled "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments". These requirements apply to all grants and subgrants to governments, except where inconsistent with Federal statutes or regulations authorized in accordance with the exception provisions of Section 13.6. In essence, these regulations apply to all Federal grants awarded to State, tribal and local governments.

Non-competitive proposals awarded under emergency requirements are addressed as follows:

"Procurement by non-competitive proposals may be used only when the award of a contract is infeasible under small purchase procedures, sealed bids, or competitive proposals and one of the following circumstances applies:

(A)

(B) The public exigency or emergency of the requirement will not permit a delay resulting from competitive solicitation." (44 CFR Part 13.36(d)(4)(1)(B))."

Staff of the Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Inspector General have expressed concern that contracts are being awarded under this section without an understanding of the requirement.

Simply stated, non-competitive contracts can be awarded only if the emergency is such that the contract award **cannot be delayed by the amount of time required to obtain competitive bidding**. FEMA's division of disaster work into "emergency" and "permanent" is generally based on the period of time during which the work is to be performed, and not on the urgency of that work. Therefore, the award of non-competitive contracts cannot be justified on the basis of "emergency work", as defined by FEMA.

In some situations, such as clearing road for emergency access (moving debris off the driving surface to the shoulders or rights-of-way), or removal of debris at a specific site, awarding a non-competitive contract for site-specific work may be warranted; however, normally, non-competitive bid awards should not be made several days (or weeks) after the disaster or for long-term debris removal.

Obviously, the latter situations do not address a public exigency or emergency which "will not permit a delay resulting from competitive solicitation".

Regarding competitive solicitations, applicants can use an expedited process for obtaining competitive bids. In the past, applicants have developed a scope-of-work, identified contractors that can do the work, made telephone invitations for bids, and received excellent competitive bids. Again, applicants must comply with State and local bidding requirements.

Please remind applicants that no contractor has the authority to make determinations as to eligibility, determinations of acceptable emergency contracting procedures, or definitions of emergency work. Such determinations are to be made by FEMA.

Last Modified: Tuesday, 18-Apr-2006 12:11:55 EDT