

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

### HEAVY EQUIPMENT/TRANSPORTS

Q. Will a rate reduction apply for “standby” as it has been in the past when equipment is ordered and not used? See Section D.21.8.3

- **No; there is no language in the solicitation allowing for the reduction of rate for “standby”.**

Q. Will transport and equipment be “married up” by the Best Value, by Dispatch, or by the contractor? (For example, if a Dozer is needed and the best value dozer is selected but that contractor does not have the best value transport, how is the dozer transported?)

- **The solicitation specifications require that a dozer or excavator provide transportation for their heavy equipment (HE). If they are unable to, they will not be offered the resource order and should status their HE as unavailable with dispatch until such time as they are capable of fulfilling the transportation requirement.**

Q. Will 2 operators be considered a “Best Value” for the government?

- **Providing personnel for a double shift is not a requirement and will not be considered as an attribute when the dispatch priority list is established.**

Q. If the Forest Service requires one operator to reduce the transport costs, is the best value for the dozer or the best value for the transport used? Or, is the total cost used?

- **The Government does not have the authority to require the release of a transport driver, this is a decision made solely by the vendor. The solicitation asks for a daily rate for the Heavy Equipment and a daily rate and mileage rate for the transportation of the HE to and from the incident. If the operator of the HE is also the operator of the Transport then the daily rate of the transport will be reduced by 65%. The Dozer daily rate is the only rate used to set the DPL.**

Q. What happens when the operator is the same for both the transport and the heavy equipment?

- **When both pieces of equipment are being operated by the same person, the daily guarantee for the transport is reduced to 65%.**

Q. What is paid for 1<sup>st</sup> and last day?

- **When HE is ordered, the daily rate for the HE is paid (unless it falls under the half day, see D.21.8.1.c). The transport is paid EITHER the mileage or daily guarantee, whichever is greater. (the half day language also applies to the transport daily guarantee, see D.21.8.2.b)**

Q. Once the equipment on the lowboy has been delivered to the incident site, and the lowboy is released (not retained at the incident site), who pays for the return empty trip to the lowboy's home base?

- **The mobilization/demobilization mileage rate is for loaded miles; this is consistent with generally accepted commercial transport.**

Q. If the lowboy haul takes more than one "hours of service" turn (11 hours) and has to remain overnight, who pays for the return empty trip the following day?

- **Payment for transport is calculated upon the release time and date of the transport. If the heavy equipment is unloaded upon arrival and the transport is released, payment is calculated at that time based on mileage or guarantee and added to the heavy equipment use invoice.**

Q. Section D.6.2 discusses attributes that are given points in the best value ranking (i.e. winch). Will each dispatch center develop priority criteria, or each IC for each resource order, or either option?

- **Dispatch centers will utilize dispatch priority lists (DPL) developed based on the attribute points listed in the solicitation. Certain equipment attributes not given a value will also appear on the DPL. Incidents may specifically request a piece of equipment with a non-value attribute; dispatch will utilize the DPL in order, contacting the first vendor whose equipment meets the specific requirements of the incident.**

Q. Section D.2.2 Transportation states "The Contractor is responsible for transporting the dozer/excavator/tractor plow to and from "the incident". Is that transport compensable, or would an equipment contractor need to plan for that cost in the equipment price? For IA/Severity, transport is required to remain with the equipment. Will Best Value be determined for the dozer with transport, or by dozer and transport separately? Should contractors list both items together, separate and both ways?

- **The HE contractor will be responsible for transporting their equipment to the incident. The offer of dozer or excavator must include the transport mileage and guarantee cost. The transport cost will be included on the dozer use invoice for the HE.**

Q. Another example. You haul your equipment to the fire and then elect to use my low-boy to haul other equipment on the fire. What would I be paid under?

- **Transports being used by the incident to transport multiple pieces of equipment must have a transport award under this agreement. The incident becomes the point of hire. An E-number would be assigned and the transport would be paid on a separate use invoice.**

Q. We have never been able to sign up a piece of equipment twice with the same VIN number. If I sign up my transport and it is also signed up to haul my own equipment isn't this signing up twice?

- **The Government does not enter into an agreement for the transport of HE, the cost of transporting the HE is now paid to the HE vendor. Signing up your transport separately indicates that the vendor is willing, capable, insured and licensed to haul commercial cargo. If a vendor elects only to transport their own equipment, they would not sign their transport up under this agreement.**

Q. If I have my transport listed, then dispatch can call me and have me transport someone's equipment?

- **Yes, if a stand-alone resource order for a transport was issued the dispatch priority list for transports would be used. It will be up to the Transport owner to either accept or decline the order.**

- Q. On transports, can you have anyone haul your equipment?
- **Yes; however, all transports must meet DOT rules and requirements including correct load ratings. See D.2.1.2.4**
- Q. Does the driver of transport need RT-130?
- **Yes, see D.3.1**
- Q. Are there radio requirements for lowboy and a dozer?
- **No; the radio requirements listed in D.2.1.2.2 apply only to tractor plows – which are not being solicited for in the Northern Rockies.**
- Q. Does Best Value apply to Initial Attack?
- **The ordering protocols will utilize the established dispatch priority lists with the following exceptions: Initial attack, Tribal preference, and circumstances or conditions that mandate deviation for normal procedures. See D.6**
- Q. On the transports, if we plan on hauling our own equipment, do we still need to do the solicitation for just the transport or is that covered under our dozer contract?
- **The cost is covered under your heavy equipment; you do not need to fill out the resource sheet for transportation.**
- Q. How will transports work with some equipment still on EERA's?
- **Protocols are being developed for the 2011 fire season. The preference for hire in the Northern Rockies will be that ALL heavy equipment, both competed and non-competed with provide transportation. Direction will be provided in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook, Northern Rockies supplement.**
- Q. What happens when there is a tie for best value?
- **VIPR generates a tie breaker.**
- Q. What happens if we run out of best value equipment? Are we back to Standard Rates and EERA's?
- **For a particular type of equipment, an Incident Only Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement (EERA) may be issued. The incident only EERA rate will be based upon 90% of the lowest competitive bid for the particular type of equipment.**
- Q. What are the requirements for Operator Deflectors.
- **Log loaders are a good example of what type of protection system is needed. Polycarbonate windows would be considered as a deflector.**
- Q. Would a "sun roof" on excavators be considered an escape hatch?
- **There should be 2 ways of exit for machine and a sun roof would be considered an exit.**

Q. Is a backup alarm required for excavators.

- **A travel alarm on equipment is required by OSHA.**

Q. If equipment was purchased without a rock guard do we need them?

- **Yes, they should have rock guard.**

Q. If you have an “early cab” what is it you need for the front?

- **It has to have a complete cab on the front. ROPS and FOPS are required. Screens to the rear and sides per OSHA logging standards 1910.266.**
- **Each machine manufactured after August 1, 1996, shall have a cab that is fully enclosed with mesh material with openings no greater than 2 inches (5.08 cm) at its least dimension. The cab may be enclosed with other material(s) where the employer demonstrates such material(s) provides equivalent protection and visibility. Exception: Equivalent visibility is not required for the lower portion of the cab where there are control panels or similar obstructions in the cab, or where visibility is not necessary for safe operation of the machine.**

Q. If you don't sign up your lowboy on the transport are you able to next year?

- **No, this is a 3 year solicitation; late submittals will not be accepted.**

Q. Do you need Operating Authority for all States in Region 1?

- **Vendors offering transports for interstate travel are considered commercial carriers and must meet all interstate regulations.**

Q. If someone else is hauling your equipment in Montana, are they required to have cargo insurance or not?

- **Yes, cargo insurance is required commensurate to the load that may be potentially hauled.**

Q. If I haul a dozer into say, Wyoming, how does that make it hazmat?

- **DOT rules and hauling across state lines govern this. Because of the gasoline or diesel and the internal combustion engine, you become a hazmat carrier.**

Q. Do we have to enroll in other states workman's comp?

- **If a vendor accepts a resource order for an incident in another state, that vendor must be prepared to comply with that states insurance and license requirements.**

Q. On these 3 year awards, we get to re-do our price every year, does that change the dispatch list?

- **Yes, these are blanket purchase agreements on the multi year award. FAR mandates to annually evaluation of price – we accomplish this during a “rollover” period. Any price adjustment during the rollover period will affect the priority list for that year.**

Q. With the rumors of fuel costs maybe going up to 5-6 dollars a gallon, will there be something to let us adjust at mid season if this does happen?

- **No, a mid season rollover of agreements would be very difficult to accomplish, especially during our fire season. Vendors are not obligated to accept an order. Dispatch will utilize the priority list until all resources are on the list are exhausted. At that time, incident only agreements may be issued, and vendors wishing to renegotiate rates to adjust for fuel costs may enter into an individual agreement per each assignment.**

Q. What do we get back after we complete the bidding process?

- **When you successfully submit your offer, you will immediately see a screen that indicates you successfully submitted an offer and you will receive an e-mail indicating the same.**

Q. Are you asking us to make copies of refreshers, Workman's comp or anything like that?

- **Training and insurances will be inspected at the time of hire. A copy of all certificates should be carried with the resource at all times.**

Q. Can a person update or get a different dozer in the 3 year period?

- **Yes, resources may be replaced at any time during the three year award period. Replacement resources should be on a "like for like or better" basis. "Like for like" includes typing; a piece of equipment must meet the same standards within the type that is currently awarded, i.e. you may not replace a Type 2 dozer with a Type 1 dozer.**

Q. Are you going to put graders in this solicitation next year?

- **The Northern Rockies is planning on soliciting for graders in 2012.**

Q. How do we get to the eAuthentication?

- **The easiest way to find the eAuthentication home page is to "Google" eAuthentication. Follow the instructions for creating an account. You must have a "Level 2" account to be able to submit your offer into VIPR. To activate your Level 2 eAuthentication, after you fill in the electronic application and verify the information through the e-mail that will generate, you must bring a picture ID to a Local Registration Authority (LRA) for the final activation. To find the closes LRA, click on the "Find an LRA" button on the tool bar on the eAuthentication home page.**

Q. Why no Pre-bid inspections on Heavy Equipment?

- **While the government reserves the right to inspect at any time, full inspections prior to award are both cost and time prohibitive. A full pre-use inspection will occur for all equipment.**

Q. Is the solicitation only filled out on line or hard copies?

- **All offers must be made electronically and be submitted to the VIPR program prior to the close of the solicitation.**

Q. On a 14 day assignment, we would change lowboy drivers out every 5 days. How does that work with hours of service?

- **As long as you're on the fire, off public roads, incident personnel must meet the work/rest guideline of no less than 8 hours of rest per day or mitigate during the assignment. If you're hauling to the fire, unless the governor or the president has declared an emergency, you are subject to the hours of service. If you are less than 100 miles of home you're not required to carry a log. If you're working 14 hours you're still under the 70 hour rule.**

Q. Would a fire time or shift ticket do for documenting hours?

- **There is a simple document to use. Just a seven day sheet to certify amount of hours worked for those days. Sign it and carry it with you. If there are 2 of you, each retains their copy for 6 months.**

Q. Does the Formatta software work with a MAC computer?

- **No.**

Q. Do we need a new Level 2 if we have one from last year?

- **No, you only need one Level 2 eAuthentication profile.**

Q. As far as solicitation goes the solicitation is due by April, on insurance mine is due and new policy will be ready July 1<sup>st</sup> so do I send in what we have now? Do you need a new copy come July 1?

- **There is no requirement for insurance submittal requirements. List your expiration date on your offer. Insurances will be inspected at time of hire. .**

Q. If a heavy equipment contractor already has an agreement with a transport, can another contractor still pick him for use of his transport for other equipment use hauling?

- **Yes, the HE is not required to use the dispatch priority list but is able to contact any transport company they choose.**

Q. For contractors who have upgraded their equipment, does that piece of new equipment get changed in the priority list after awards have already been awarded, or does it stay in the same spot?

- **Once the dispatch priority list is developed, the list will remain static for the season. The Dispatch Priority List (DPL) will only change if after the annual rollover of all agreements when pricing may have changed.**

Q. Are performance evaluations for fire experience only, or does other past experience with that piece of equipment count as well?

- **All past performance documentation dated within the last 36 months; whether for general contract work or fire experience, is welcome. Submit this documentation hard copy to the contracting officer at the address listed on the front of the solicitation.**

Q. If you already have a contract set-up with water handling equipment, do you have to do anything for the heavy equipment solicitation?

- **This is a new solicitation; you must submit your offer following the solicitation requirements as stated.**

Q. If you have Skidgines and Transports already signed up on EERA's, do you have to do another EERA for the Transports with the Heavy Equipment Solicitations?

- **Transports will no longer be listed on local EERA's. The Skidgines have the same self transport requirement that the dozer and excavator equipment now has. Transports for all competed heavy equipment will be paid through the heavy equipment unless the incident is utilizing a single transport to move multiple pieces of equipment.**

Q. Are Feller Bunchers under the Excavator rules right now?

- **A Feller Buncher can be designated as a "Steep Ground Excavator" as long as the saw is removed and replaced with a bucket and thumb or clamshell bucket.**

Q. Do Transport costs come into factor for priority ranking for the Dozer and Excavators on the Solicitations?

- **No, the transport cost for dozers and excavators is not utilized in the ranking of the priority list for dispatch. For award purposes; the contracting officer must make a reasonable price determination on ALL prices offered by a vendor. An offer of an unreasonable transport rate may not be accepted for award.**

Q. Has ROSS been modified to accept the new system "VIPR" that we are using?

- **ROSS is simply a dispatch data base utilized to order and track resources assigned to incidents. ROSS and VIPR are two separate and distinct systems with no connection.**

Q. Is a Chipper attachment for an Excavator an attribute, or another EERA?

- **The chipper or Masticator attachment would be placed on the resource availability list and could be called and issued an EERA if the incident needed one.**

Q. Do operators for heavy equipment need to be verified like the water handling equipment operators?

- **No.**

Q. What is the purpose of a past performance evaluation for heavy equipment, since the solicitations are new this year?

- **Past performance is considered on a pass/fail basis for award purposes. Vendors are welcome to submit performance evaluations from the previous 36 months.**

Q. Is there a location where it shows the insurance levels for heavy equipment?

- **The solicitation requires a commercial liability policy be in place but does not list a minimum amount. Other agencies may have minimum coverage requirements though; DOT standards for surety Bonds and Policies of Insurance for Motor Carriers found in the Federal Motor Carrier handbook that must be adhered to.**

Q. When choosing a dispatch center to be dispatched from, will they still be dispatching from closest forces first, before going to the overall priority list?

- **Each dispatch center will utilize their resource lists for dispatch purposes. Closest forces may apply to initial attack.**

Q. What makes you fail on a performance evaluation, if the solicitation is new and you don't have any past fire experience?

- **A history of poor performance on contract work may be considered for award purposes under this solicitation.**

Q. How do you prefer to receive past performance evaluations?

**Fax to 406-329-3682 or mail to;**

**USDA Forest Service  
Northern Region  
C/O Debby Wesselius  
P. O Box 7669  
Missoula, MT. 59807**

Q. When dispatching resources to fires, and after exhausting all agency and local government, will dispatch centers go out of region to get agency resources as well, or will they start using the contract equipment on the priority lists?

- **Agencies always reserve the right to use Agency resources first.**

Q. If a vendor owns multiple pieces of equipment, do they have to be dispatched out of one center?

- **No; a vendor with multiple resources may choose to locate their equipment within various dispatch center areas.**

Q. How does response time play into the dispatch process?

- **A vendor being offered a resource order must meet the date and time needed before accepting the offer. Dispatch MAY at their discretion, give vendors time to make a resource available, but this is strictly at the discretion of dispatch. Vendors not answering the phone or returning calls within given time frames may forfeit the offer of award – dispatch is not required to give time for response from vendor. Dispatch will document all actions when moving to the next resource on the DPL due to lack of response.**

Q. What is the number of hours for the daily rate shift?

- **Section B addresses hours of service. Generally, a shift is stated on the incident action plan and is generally 12 hours plus travel to and from the assigned division of the fire. A double shift generally is a day and night shift in a 24 hour period but may cross calendar days. Shifts at or exceeding 16 hours must meet special requirements and may be mitigated.**

Q. Dozers. There is no "U" blade listing. Are they acceptable?

- **Yes**

Q. Will transports require a fire shelter?

- **Only if required to go to the fireline.**

## **Mobile Food Unit Equipment**

Q. What will the government provide? For example there is no mention for a requirement for dining tents, tables and chairs for diners.

- **The government will provide tents, tables and chairs for diners.**

Q. Will the government be providing camp crew assistance and fuel?

- **The government will not provide camp crew assistance and fuel.**

Q. There was no size requirement for potable water storage tanks or gray water storage tanks.

- **The size of the potable water storage tank and the gray water storage tank are not specified due to the variety of equipment that may be proposed.**

Q. For Type 3 Caterers, do you need to have your insurance in place before submitting your solicitation?

- **This is currently a requirement stated in the solicitation.**

## WEED WASHER UNITS

Q. For weed washers, there are no points given for performance so, are we required to turn them in?

- **No, vendors are not required to submit past performance evaluations.**

Q. One vendor with two weed washing units – how will dispatch know they have multiple units?

- **If two units are offered and awarded, they will both appear separately on the dispatch priority list (DPL).**

Q. When does the wash water have to be filtered for weed washing stations?

- **Wash water must be filtered prior to reusing as a wash or rinse and before releasing the water. Seeds need to be concentrated for collection.**

Q. Since there are no advantage points for weed washing stations, and inspections are not required, what is the basis of award?

- **Weed washing units must meet minimal specifications stated in the solicitation, have good or neutral past performance and offer a reasonable price to be offered an award. During the development of the specifications, the Government determined that no additional attributes for the two types of weed was units listed were required. The Government reserves the right to inspect weed wash units at any time.**

6. Is there a pre- inspection on Weed Wash Units?

- **The Government reserves the right to inspect weed wash units prior to award. Should this occur, the Government will work with vendors setting up an inspection schedule.**

## MISC EQUIPMENT QUESTIONS

Q. Do portable toilet & gray water vendors need the Annual Safety Refresher Training?

- **Yes, as they are often required to go to the fireline.**

Q. Are the Helicopter Support Trailers an annual agreement or every three years?

- **The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, (State of Montana) awards annual agreements.**

Q. Where do you go to find the Solicitations for Helicopter Support Trailers?

- **The NRCG website lists the link to the DNRC site.**

Q. Where can you find the phone number for the Contracting Officer for the Helicopter Support Trailers?

- **The cover of each solicitation lists the contact information for each contracting officer.**