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Route To:

Subject: 2008 Solicitation Templates for Competitive Preseason EERA's and Use of EaTIS

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director and Deputy Chiefs

2007 was the first year of a four-year implementation plan for the competition of incident equipment and services procured through preseason Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA's). In 2008 the following equipment categories will be bid: faller module, GIS unit, mobile laundry, clerical office support module, tent, mechanic with service truck and refrigerator truck/trailer. These categories are part of the four-year strategy to compete preseason incident equipment in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) as recommended by OIG. The seven new templates are on the Incident Business Practices website (see link below) for Regions to solicit preseason equipment. The National Solicitation Plan for Competitive Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA's) established per 6300/5100/5700 memo dated January 26, 2007, has been updated and is also on the web.

A USDA Office of Inspector General Audit about EERA's (OIG Report No. 08601-40-SF, July 2005) has been a driving force behind many AQM and FAM incident process changes over the past couple of years. In August 2007 the USDA OGC completed a legal review of a FS source selection plan and solicitation template for preseason hiring of emergency response equipment for wildland fire suppression and other incidents. Additional process changes have been reflected in this year's solicitation templates for immediate implementation based on OGC's advice. They include:

- **Equipment Inspections** – The necessity of equipment inspections is based on potential risk balanced with the cost of doing inspections per type of equipment being solicited. The inspection policy now allows for pre-award, preseason, random, or no inspections. Final direction on future preseason equipment inspections will be developed once issues about augmentation of funds via MOUs and/or contracts for equipment inspections are resolved. No preseason inspections are needed for the equipment to be solicited this year.
- **Vendor Employee Training Inspections** - Two solicitations this year – the faller module and mechanic with service truck - will require review of training qualifications for fallers and mechanics, respectively. This is not needed prior to award. The vendor will self-certify when submitting its quote, then verification will occur before fire season. See Enclosure for details.
- **Geographic Restrictions** - The geographic restriction to which region a potential vendor can submit a quote is no more. The vendor can now choose or submit multiple quotes; however, the limit of one vendor per piece of equipment per EERA stands. CO's will need to coordinate when making awards.

Dispatch procedures have not changed for 2008. Dispatch centers are encouraged to be familiar with their Neighborhood Agreements; particularly with those that cross Geographic Area boundaries.



Other policy changes include:

- **Performance Evaluations** – The Contractor Performance System (CPS) will evaluate vendors working on incidents under an EERA. CPS is available on contracts government-wide, and is required of all USDA Agencies. It will provide a standardized method for evaluating and collecting performance data and facilitate interagency operations. Incident personnel will submit completed performance evaluations to the Contracting Officer responsible for entering data into the CPS. The CPS contractor evaluation form is on the web.

The Contract Equipment Task Group has recently been chartered as a task group of the Fire Equipment Working Team (FEWT) of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). Previously, each Region could provide representation from Fire Operations to the team along with a WO and field representative from AQM. Under the FEWT charter, representatives include the Forest Service, Department of Interior Bureaus (DOI), and States. This group's responsibility is to recommend standard equipment specifications and Choosing by Advantages (CBA) criteria to FEWT, which is then responsible to submit them to NWCG for adoption by the interagency wildland fire community. Approved standards for national use are then reflected in solicitation templates. Work on the specifications for equipment to be solicited in 2009 begins in January 2008.

As a reminder, until the year of competitive implementation, units may procure items as they have in the past using normal procurement tools. However, as directed in the 6300/5100 letters of February 9, 2006, and January 26, 2007, all regions must adhere to national standards for equipment typing and methods of hire for all incident procurement, preseason or at the incident. The method of hire chart and other documents referenced in the memo can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/ibp/acquisition/acquisition.html>

Questions about the solicitation templates should be directed to Laurie Sonju/R1/USDAFS (AQM) or Dick Reynolds/R5/USDAFS (Fire Operations).

The Equipment and Training Inventory System (EaTIS) has operated in a limited pilot mode in Regions 1, 5, and 6 for the past two years. As such EaTIS will be maintained through 2008 to allow pilot units to manage equipment previously solicited in EaTIS (engines, water tenders, and buses). Since R6 is a pilot region and has volunteered to solicit GIS units nationwide, it has chosen to use EaTIS.

The automated EERA program, used by many regions in past years, is available until it is replaced through the implementation of the Virtual Incident Procurement (VIPR) system. The policy changes outlined in this memo establish the foundation for a consistent, standard business procedure in preparation for VIPR. The workload associated with these changes will be offset by the automation provided with VIPR deployment.

The first release of VIPR, planned for November 2008, will focus on processes for EERA's. Additional functionality will be phased in as funding allows. More detailed information will be forthcoming.

We realize there is much change occurring within the Forest Service. We value your willingness to help implement these important steps for more consistency and contract compliance. Contact Laurie Sonju/R1/USDA/FS, Cheryl Emch/ WO/USDA/FS or Mary A. Szymoniak/WO/USDAFS with questions. System-specific (EaTIS or VIPR) questions can be directed to Terry Kiele/WO/USDAFS or Larry Bowser/WO/USDAFS.

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