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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION
Wage and Hour Division
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20210

JUL 14 1978

ALL AGENCY MEMORANDUM NO. 131

TO: ALL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING AGENCIES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FROM: XAVIER M. VELA
ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJECT: Clarification of All Agency Memorandum No. 130

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify Memorandum No. 130, dated March 17, 1978. Although the Wage and Hour Division has received a positive reaction from most contracting agencies who work regularly with the issues raised, some questions have arisen over specific aspects of the memorandum.

Memorandum No. 130 is intended to be a guide to categories of projects in a construction sense and is to be applied uniformly by the contracting agencies in the absence of specific direction on the wage determination or advice by the Wage and Hour Division. However, the Wage and Hour Division is aware that in some circumstances the category of a project may appear to be unclear or a literal application of the guidelines may be inappropriate. For example, questions frequently arise over pumping stations, which may vary greatly in sophistication and construction techniques. Therefore, if the contracting agency has any questions regarding application of the guidelines in a specific case, or if a question is raised with the agency by interested parties, the issue of application of the wage rate schedules should be referred to the Wage and Hour Division. This referral should include a complete description of the project, any evidence available of area practice regarding wages paid on similar projects, comments by interested parties which may have been submitted to the agency, and- the agency's recommendation. Where the nature of the project in a construction sense is not clear, area practice regarding wages paid will be taken into consideration together with other factors such as construction techniques and classifications of workers required on the project. See WAB Case No. 77-23 (December 30, 1977).

Questions have also arisen regarding the circumstances in which multiple schedules of wage rates are issued for a project which includes construction items that in themselves would be

different categories of construction. Because of the complexities in application of multiple schedules, the contracting agency should consult with the Wage and Hour Division whenever it appears that more than one schedule of rates is appropriate for a project, unless the wage decision(s) as issued indicates that multiple schedules are applicable.

Generally, multiple schedules are issued if the construction items are substantial in relation to project cost -- more than approximately 20 percent. Only one schedule is issued if construction items are "incidental" in function to the over-all character of a project (e.g. paving of parking lots or an access road on a building project), and if there is not a substantial amount of construction in the second category. Note, however, that 20 percent is a rough guide. For example, when a project is very large, items of work of a different character may be sufficiently substantial to warrant a separate schedule even though these items of work do not specifically amount to 20 percent of the total project cost.

Although the example given is that of incidental paving and utilities, the same principles are applied to other categories, such as building construction on a heavy or highway project. Thus, in a recent case, the Wage and Hour Division deleted the building schedule when it learned that a small building under a contract primarily for runway construction was approximately 4 percent of project cost. Another example of general interest is the applicability of the building schedule to a building in a rest area of a highway. In this situation, applying the principles of MARTA, WAB Case No. 75-5, for extensive projects, the project for comparison purposes is the rest area itself, rather than the entire highway.

These principles regarding incidental construction are not in conflict with the Wage and Hour Division's recognition in certain circumstances (WAB Case No. 77-19) of a clearly established practice of paying different wage rates on specific portions of building projects. For example, different rates may be paid for incidental paving and utilities than are paid in the construction of buildings on building projects. These projects are building projects, and the wage rates issued by the Wage and Hour Division for incidental paving and utilities reflect wages paid on such work on building projects.

Contracting agencies are reminded of their responsibility to advise contractors on the application of multiple wage schedules issued by the Wage and Hour Division or obtained by the agency from the Federal Register. If any questions arise regarding application of the schedules to the project in accordance with these guidelines, or if it appears that a

wage schedule may have been issued in error, a ruling should be requested from the Wage and Hour Division. On these issues, as in all other matters in the administration of the Davis-Bacon and related acts, we will continue to work cooperatively with the contracting agencies. For convenience, Memorandum No. 130 is attached.

Attachment