

OA&L Monthly Conference Call
Wednesday, January 23, 2008

1. Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) Inventory – James Teal

As everyone is aware, there is a wall to wall IT inventory underway through out Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at this time. The purpose of the inventory is to acquire an accurate accounting of all IT assets within the Department. This requirement will also assist in answering Government Accountability Office inquires and will inform VA as to where they stand regarding their IT equipment accountability. In assisting with this effort, collaboration among all effected areas at a facility must be established and implemented to ensure this process runs smoothly. IT equipment will be inventoried, assigned to the appropriate service or department and tracked throughout its life expectancy; disposal procedures will ensure the protection of any personally identifiable information and the security of sensitive data; the date of data cleaning and disposal activities will be documented and the related inventory file archived as appropriate. Individual serial numbers will be entered in the Automated Engineering Management System/Medical Equipment Reporting System (AEMS/MERS) for each IT equipment item; each item considered sensitive defined by VA Handbook change 7127/4 will be entered into AEMS/MERS and will appear on the appropriate EIL as a separate entry. All personnel associated with this wall to wall inventory will be informed of these requirements and their responsibility to ensure that all IT equipment is recorded by property management. Service chief's or department heads responsible for IT equipment within their areas are responsible for validating their EIL's. They will sign the EIL for the IT equipment under their purview and the IT items that have been officially inventoried. They will also acknowledge, by signing the EIL, as of that date, they have accounted for and documented any overages or shortages identified as a result of the inventory. These service chiefs and department heads will remain responsible for such property until properly relieved of their individual responsibilities as provided for in VA Handbook 7125. The property management division at a facility is still responsible for the inventory and data entry of all IT equipment items located at a facility. Property management will provide inventory schedules and designate surveying officials to investigate missing property. Property management must collaborate with OI&T, ISOs, and security within their facility to ensure effective implementation of supporting processes are fulfilled to complete this wall to wall inventory.

2. Proposed Notice for Report of Survey – James Teal

As a result of the recent GAO audit concerning IT equipment, the Office of Acquisitions and Logistics (OA&L) has identified a need for establishing specific timelines for the report of survey (ROS) process. The establishment of timelines for the ROS process has also been requested by field operations personnel and property managers. The timelines contained in the proposed policy were developed

collaboratively between OA&L and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics. The proposed policy will provide the field with cut and dry time frames throughout the entire ROS process. The overall process should not exceed 60 days unless there is an ongoing law enforcement activity requiring additional time. If the process does exceed 60 days, the ROS should be noted and acknowledged by the facility director. OA&L believes the establishment of specific time frames for each function contained with the ROS process will greatly assist facilities with eliminating extraneous reasons for not completing a ROS in a timely manner.

3. VA Notice for Asset Sales Within The Department of Veterans Affairs – Nelson Gonzalez

Within the next couple of weeks the Office of Acquisition and Logistics will be issuing a VA Notice for Asset Sales Within The Department of Veterans Affairs. The new notice has been signed by the VA Assistant Secretary for Management and concurred by the Office of General Counsel. The notice will enable VA to be in compliance with the President's Management Agenda e-Gov initiative regarding the Federal Asset Sales program. Federal agencies or departments are not authorized to conduct local sales individually. The goal of the Federal Asset Sales (FAS) program is to maximize government sales, increase return on investment through its property sales, and to provide a secure, efficient and effective on-line e-marketplace for public use. There are only four designated sales centers in the FAS program authorized to conduct sales (U.S. Treasury and U.S. Marshals Service for seized property, Department of Agriculture for local Washington, D.C. facilities, and the General Services Administration (GSA) for national property sales). The Department of Veterans Affairs has selected GSA to execute sales of surplus and exchange sales of VA property.

The FAS process for VA begins when the facility property manager enters the property in the VA's Agency Asset Management System (AAMS). Once the property is entered into AAMS, the process enables agencies to conduct internal screenings prior to the property being offered to other federal agencies and programs. When there are no takers for the property in AAMS, the property is automatically turned over to other federal agencies for utilization. When the property is surplus to the federal government, it is then turned over for federal sales and bidding by the public. Are there any questions related to FAS at this time? The minutes will contain several websites associated with the GSA FAS and AAMS programs.

For FAS:

<http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/channelView.do?pageTypeId=8211&channelPage=%252Fep%252Fchannel%252FgsaOverview.jsp&channelId=-17683>

For AAMS:

http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_BASIC&contentId=20536&noc=T

Thank you very much for your time.

4. License Plates on Government Vehicles – Jesse Beaman

Twice this month I have received inquiries from the field asking, “How do I obtain license plates for my new government vehicle?” Title 41 CFR 102-34.155 is the mandating authority for VA facilities’ vehicle licensure. It directs that each government agency must keep a central record of all US government license plates issued and used for each field office’s motor vehicle purchases and leases. (The General Services Administration (GSA) Fleet must keep the same record for GSA Fleet vehicles). The record must identify the motor vehicle to which each set of plates is assigned, the complete history of any reassigned plates, and a list of destroyed or voided license plate numbers. Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive 2004-008, VHA Vehicle License Plate Action Request, was issued March 15, 2004, and requires all VHA license plates to be ordered in accordance with existing laws, regulations and VA policy. The VHA Deputy Under Secretary for Health designated the Center for Engineering & Occupational Safety and Health (CEOSH) in St. Louis, MO as the central location for managing the VA on-line vehicle license program.

To obtain a new license plate you must submit an on-line vehicle license plate action request form provided by CEOSH (Intranet web site <http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov>). The vehicle license plate coordinator is Mr. Stan Taylor. Mr. Taylor can be reached by calling (314-543-6726). Information required for completion of request for a license plate is as follows:

- Field Office Address Information (POB Addresses are not acceptable)
- Responsible Field Office Person Information (phone, office symbol/mail code, etc.)
- Federal Express number (for billing purposes). (The plates are free of charge; billing is for cost of shipping costs only).
- Vehicle Information (year, make, model, and Vehicle Identification Number (VIN))

Additional questions should be addressed to the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N).

5. Standards Compliance Requirements – Bridget Canada

The Office of Acquisition and Logistics is the key organization working with several “Organizations” on standards compliance requirements in accordance with OMB Circular A-119, and Public Law 104-113. These organizations develop criteria to

eliminate duplicating government standards, eliminate waste, decrease the cost of goods, and provide incentives and opportunities to establish consensus standards. We will be posting the Standard Developing Organizations on our website in the future to assist with standards from the conference call. The Standards Organizations that pertain to VA are the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the American Society for Testing of Materials (ASTM), the National Institute Standards Technology (NIST), the Interagency Committee on Standards Policy (ICSP), and the International Standards Organization (ISO).

6. VA Acquisition Regulation (VAAR) Rewrite Final Rule – Barbara Latvanas

The VA Acquisition Regulation (VAAR) rewrite final rule (Regulatory Identification Number (RIN) 2900-AK78) was published on January 15, 2008 in Part III of the Federal Register. The final rule will be effective on February 14, 2008. A copy of the final rule has been added to VA's eCMS Acquisition Resource Library. Much of the VAAR has not been updated since it was originally published in 1984. The publication of this document represents a complete revision and update of VA's supplement to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) so it will conform to plain language principles. The proposed rule was published for public comment in the Federal Register on January 13, 2006. The public comment period ended on March 14, 2006. Comments were received from public entities as well as internal VA organizations. All comments were considered and minor corresponding changes were made to the rule where appropriate.

The VAAR rewrite final rule streamlines the codified portions of the VAAR to be consistent with and non-duplicative of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). The revised VAAR updates delegations of authority. It deletes obsolete material, and makes changes in format, arrangement, and numbering to make the VAAR parallel to the FAR. The final rule sets forth or revises procedures for: providing notice and hearing to resolve issues regarding possible violations of the Gratuities clause (803); establishing qualified products lists (809); suspending or debaring a contractor (809); expediting payments to small businesses (832); and reducing or suspending payments upon a finding of contract fraud (832). The revised VAAR updates commercial acquisition provisions and requirements for obtaining cost or pricing data audits (842). It incorporates some class deviations approved by VA's Deputy Secretary over the past several years. The revised VAAR notes that the VA Board of Contract Appeals (833) was terminated and its contract adjudication functions were transferred to the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals (CBCA) on January 6, 2007.

Other non-substantive changes have been made, principally to reflect current VA organizational structure and to correct typographical, grammatical, and similar errors. Changes have been made to internal VA guidance to contracting officers. These include, but are not limited to, changes to correspond to recently issued Office of Federal Procurement Policy guidance regarding the Federal Acquisition

Certification in Contracting Program in 801.690. Internal VA procedures for establishing individual facility and staff office socioeconomic goals that were inadvertently left out of the proposed rule have been added back in at 819.202-5.

As specified in the preamble of the VAAR rewrite final rule, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-461) was issued subsequent to the proposed rule. It will be addressed in a future rulemaking.

A copy of the 82-page pdf version of the Federal Register document is available at the following web link:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E7-25380.pdf>

For more information, please contact me, Barbara Latvanas via e-mail at barbara.latvanas@va.gov

7. Flag Distribution Problems – Neal Kemp

The VA Service and Distribution Center in Hines, IL, is asking for assistance from the logistics community in solving the increasing distribution problems associated with providing burial flags to the families of deceased veterans. Under a long-standing working agreement with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the SDC annually ships approximately one-half million burial flags to VA medical centers (VAMCs) and other miscellaneous distribution points. Flags are requested by the next-of-kin of deceased veterans or cemeteries and funeral home directors, acting on their behalf, through U.S. post offices. Burial flags are issued by the post office upon receipt of a valid VA Form 21-2008, Application for a United States Flag for Burial Purposes. Questions often arise from post offices on how replacement flags are received. Briefly, the process depends on VAMCs to function as flag distribution centers, replenishing flags to post offices after receiving the VA Form 21-2008 directly from the post office or after receiving the lower “tear off” portion of the form from a VA Regional Office. The medical center then ships a replacement flag to the post office. With regard to organizational responsibilities for distribution of burial flags, every VAMC operates internally as directed by their local management so many of you on this call may not be directly involved; however, any assistance in disseminating this information is greatly appreciated. For those of you who do have a role in this process, here are some rules to remember:

1. Medical centers should not retain VA Form 21-2008s; any received directly should be forwarded to the nearest VA Regional Office for First Notification of Death (FNOD) processing. The VA Form 21-2008 is a VBA form and is not required to be maintained by the VAMC as part of the replenishment process.

2. Medical centers should not push flags to post offices in bulk, but ONLY send flags in response to a valid replenishment request for replacement of a flag issued.
3. Medical centers replenish their stock of flags by ordering from the VA Service and Distribution Center (SDC) utilizing the FPOrders system in LOG. On-hand stock levels are determined by each VAMC based on local service area demand.
4. Flags should normally only be issued by the VAMC to post offices; however, in those rare instances where a funeral home director or cemetery director requests a flag directly from a medical center, one may be issued with the receipt of a valid VA Form 21-2008. Only ONE flag is authorized per deceased veteran. There are no statutory provisions for issuing duplicate flags.

A new VA directive and handbook is under development which will provide more direct guidance and assistance to the field in support of this program. Most questions can be answered by viewing the SDC Intranet website at: <http://www1.va.gov/oamm/pmo/sdc/index.cfm>. For other questions or general assistance, you can always e-mail the SDC Operations staff at: Flags.Interment@va.gov

8. Independent Government Estimate Request Added Under High Tech Biomedical Equipment – Anthony Crumpton/Steven Thomas

The National Acquisition Center's (NAC) Direct Delivery Branch recently initiated a procedural change with the Veterans Affairs (VA) Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics Office wherein VA facilities are now required to ensure that an Independent Government Estimate (IGE) accompanies all modification requisitions to add extended installation or associated equipment construction costs. In accordance with FAR 36.203, the IGE shall be prepared in as much detail as though the Government were competing for the award. In doing so, NAC contract specialists will be provided meaningful supporting documentation to evaluate and negotiate fair and reasonable pricing terms and conditions.