



Why This Matters

Contracting practices that do not comply with Federal procurement regulations result in high-risk contracts that can cost taxpayers millions of dollars in excessive costs and that often do not provide full and open competition to all qualified bidders, including small firms and women- and minority-owned businesses. In addition, full and open competition helps prevent favoritism, collusion, fraud, waste, and abuse. Therefore, complete and accurate contracting guidance early in the Public Assistance process is crucial to ensuring Public Assistance applicants comply with Federal procurement regulations and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines.

DHS Response

FEMA officials agreed with our finding and recommendations. FEMA stated that they will develop and deliver a training curriculum to field personnel, and update Appendix D of the Public Assistance Program Field Operations Pocket Guide.

FEMA's Dissemination of Procurement Advice Early in Disaster Response Periods

What We Determined

FEMA personnel provided incomplete and, at times, inaccurate information to Public Assistance applicants regarding Federal procurement standards during their response to the Oklahoma tornadoes (FEMA Disaster Number 4117-DR-OK), which occurred May 18 through June 2, 2013. FEMA's dissemination of inaccurate procurement information has been a recurring problem that includes FEMA providing incomplete information to Hurricane Katrina applicants as far back as 2005. We also determined that FEMA's draft Public Assistance Program Field Operations Pocket Guide, dated September 2012, contributed to the problem because Appendix D: Kickoff Meeting Checklist includes incomplete contracting guidance.

What We Recommend

We recommend that FEMA's Associate Administrator, Response and Recovery (1) provide training to FEMA Joint Field Office Public Assistance and Office of the Chief Counsel staff on Federal procurement standards to ensure FEMA provides complete and accurate guidance to applicants consistent with 44 CFR 13.36 and 2 CFR 215.40 through 48; and (2) correct the FEMA draft Public Assistance Program Field Operations Pocket Guide, Appendix D: Kickoff Meeting Checklist to more accurately and completely describe the Federal contracting standards outlined in 44 CFR Part 13, 2 CFR Part 215, and FEMA guidelines.

For Further Information:

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