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CHAPTER 7 - CONSTRUCTION AND ALTERATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

7.0 Purpose and Scope

This Chapter prescribes the policy and procedures for the construction and alteration of public buildings.

7.1 Authority for Chapter

This Chapter implements the applicable provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, 41 U.S.C. 251 et seq. as amended, the Public Buildings Act of 1959 (40 U.S.C. 601-615, as amended), as well as other regulations identified in 41 CFR 102-74 and 102-76.

7.2 Principal Governing Regulations

The principal regulations governing the construction and alteration of public buildings are the Federal Management Regulation 41 CFR 102-74 and 102-76, "Real Property"; and the GSA Acquisition Regulations, 48 CFR 570.5, "Special Aspects of Contracting Lease Alterations". All DOC construction and alteration activities must be performed in accordance with these provisions.

7.3 Definitions

Public Buildings - A "public building" is a building, whether for single or multi-tenant occupancy, which is generally suitable for office or storage space or both for the use of one or more Federal agencies or mixed ownership corporations, and include, but are not limited to, Federal office buildings, border inspection facilities, warehouses, records centers, and any other buildings as identified in 41 CFR 102-74 and 102-76.

Buildings leased by the Government are not "public buildings" within the meaning of the Public Buildings Act of 1959.

Alteration Project - An alteration project requiring compliance with Section 7 of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, (40 U.S.C. 601-615, as amended) is a project to alter a public building which is estimated to cost in excess of \$500,000 and is: (a) estimated to be completed in 5 years for the continued use and

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occupancy of the building, (b) occasioned by a space reassignment, or (c) occasioned by an emergency.

Alteration - Remodeling, improving, extending, or making changes to a facility. The term includes planning, engineering, architectural work, and other similar actions.

Complete Definitions of Terms -

- (a) The definitions of terms used in conjunction with 41 CFR 101-19, "Construction and Alteration of Public Buildings", are described in 41 CFR 101-19.003, and include the following terms:
 - (1) Alter (41 CFR 101-19.003-1)
 - (2) Alteration Project (41 CFR 101-19.003-2)
 - (3) Construct (41 CFR 101-19.003-3)
 - (4) Executive Agency (41 CFR 101-19.003-4)
 - (5) Prospectus (41 CFR 101-19.003-5)
 - (6) Public Building (41 CFR 101-19.003-6)
 - (7) United States (41 CFR 101-19.003-7)

- (b) The definitions of terms used in conjunction with 41 CFR 101-20, "Management of Buildings and Grounds", are described in 41 CFR 101-20.003.

7.4 Basic Policy

It is the responsibility of GSA to provide or otherwise arrange for all services required to house occupant agencies, including space alterations. FPMR Amendment D-95, dated January 8, 1997, states that modifying the FPMR provisions to tie to the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT) authority gives occupants increased flexibility in accomplishing alteration tasks and fully delegates the authority to do the work. (41 CFR 102-74)

7.4.1 Government-owned buildings

GSA will provide space alterations, repairs, and improvements sufficient to meet the mission requirements of occupant agencies. GSA may, by agreement with occupant agencies, delegate authority to perform specified functions

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with respect to the operation, maintenance or repair of GSA-assigned space. (41 CFR 102-74)

7.4.2 Leased buildings

Alterations, improvements and repairs in leased buildings shall be performed by GSA to the extent of the Government's responsibility under the lease. Occupant agencies are not authorized to negotiate with lessors or to place orders for alterations, except where such authority has been specifically delegated by GSA. (41 CFR 102-74)

7.4.3 Reimbursable Services

GSA can provide or arrange for construction and/or alterations on a reimbursable basis. GSA may delegate this authority to agencies, upon request. (41 CFR 102-74)

7.4.3.1 Placing orders for reimbursable alterations

- (a) Where GSA has indefinite quantity contracts and/or unit price agreements available for accomplishment of space alterations in Government-owned and leased buildings, agencies may order against these contracts and agreements following authorization by GSA. (41 CFR 102-74)
- (b) No individual order, or combinations of orders for a single alteration project, can exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$100,000), as defined in 41 U.S.C. 252a, and agencies must not split orders so as to circumvent this limitation. (41 CFR 102-74)
- (c) For all orders placed against GSA contracts or agreements, agency ordering officials must obtain prior written project review by GSA and provide a copy of the ordering document and final payment document to the GSA buildings manager.
- (d) Agencies may not negotiate with contractors for items not specifically priced under indefinite

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quantity contracts and/or price agreements, unless otherwise authorized.

- (e) Where no GSA contracts or agreements are in effect, an agency may contract directly for services up to the simplified acquisition threshold per project after written review by GSA. Agencies contracting directly must provide GSA with complete documentation of the scope of work and contract specifications at the time of submission. Each project must include appropriate reviews by the regional safety staff.

7.4.3.2 Limitations on provision of reimbursable service by GSA

In order to reduce processing costs of documents and to improve efficiency of service delivery, requests for reimbursable work to be performed or arranged by GSA may be subject to various requirements. (41 CFR 102-74)

7.4.4 Delegations of Construction and Alteration Authority

The authority and responsibilities of the Administrator of General Services under the provisions of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended (40 U.S.C. 3301-3315), may, upon request, be delegated to the agency where the estimated cost of the project does not exceed \$100,000. Also, at the Administrator's discretion, authority may be delegated in cases exceeding \$100,000.

The principal types of delegations related to facility management are:

- (a) Real Property Management and Operation Authority - With this delegation, agencies have the authority to operate and manage buildings day to day, including minor alterations. (41 CFR 102-72.50) See 41 CFR 102-72.55 for requirements for obtaining this type delegation.
- (b) Individual Repair and Alteration Project Authority - With this delegation of authority, agencies have the

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responsibility to perform individual repair and alterations projects up to the simplified acquisition threshold, under 41 CFR 101-20.106. (41 CFR 102-72.60) See 41 CFR 102-72.65 for requirements for obtaining this type delegation.

- (c) Lease Management Authority - When an agency does not exercise its delegated leasing authority mentioned in 41 CFR 102-72.30(b) to lease general purpose space itself, the agency may be delegated, upon request, lease management authority to manage the administration of one or more lease contracts awarded by GSA. Administrative functions include, but are not limited to, contracting for alterations as otherwise authorized. See 41 CFR 102-72.75 for requirements for obtaining this type delegation.

7.4.4.1 Conditions Justifying Delegation

When the estimated cost of the project exceeds \$100,000, GSA will apply the following criteria in determining whether a delegation will be made:

- (a) The staff capability of the requesting agency to negotiate and administer contracts for the various types of work involved; and
- (b) Whether such a delegation will promote efficiency and economy. (41 CFR 101-19.501)

7.4.4.2 Exercise of Delegations

Delegated work must be performed according to standards established by the Administrator of General Services. No such delegation of authority shall exempt the person to whom it is made, or the exercise of such authority, from any provision of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended (40 U.S.C. 3301-3315).(41 CFR 101-19.502)

7.5 Accommodations for the Physically Handicapped

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41 CFR 101-19.6 prescribes the standards for the design, construction, lease and alteration of buildings to ensure, whenever possible, that physically handicapped persons will have ready access to and use of, such buildings. This regulation contains the following sections:

- (a) Authority and applicability (101-19.601)
- (b) Definitions (101-19.602)
- (c) Standards (101-19.603)
- (d) Exceptions (101-19.604)
- (e) Waiver or modifications of standards (101.19-605)
- (f) Recordkeeping (101-19.606)
- (g) Reporting (101-19.607)

7.5.1 Waiver or Modification of Accessibility Requirements

The applicability of the standards set forth in 41 CFR 101-19.6 may be modified or waived on a case-by-case basis if such waiver or modification is clearly necessary. The authority to waive or modify the handicapped accessibility requirements is delegated to the ASC Directors.

7.5.2 Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS)

The UFAS sets standards for facility accessibility by physically handicapped persons for Federal and Federally-funded facilities. These standards are to be applied during the design, construction and alteration of buildings and facilities to the extent required by the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended. The UFAS are contained in 41 CFR 101-19.6. The UFAS should be followed in all DOC design, construction and alteration projects.

7.5.3 Reporting Requirement

Annually, the DOC construction Contracting Officer, in coordination with the appropriate Departmental elements, shall prepare a GSA Form 2974, "Status Report for Federally Funded or Leased Buildings-Accommodation of the Physically Handicapped" (see Appendix B), covering all projects subject to the Uniform Accessibility Standards for which DOC-funded construction is underway or for which lease contracts have

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been awarded. The form should be completed as provided in 41 CFR 101-19.607 and the instructions accompanying the form. The reports should be sent to the DOC Office of Real Estate Policy and Major Programs for Departmental coordination and then forwarded to GSA Central Office.

7.6. Site Selection Policy

7.6.1 Intergovernment Consultations on Federal Projects

"Federal projects" are defined as public buildings construction projects or lease construction projects that are required to be authorized in accordance with the provisions of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended, and projects involving a significant change in the use of federally-owned property. 41 CFR 101-19.100 describes Federal projects in further detail and requires that there be consultations between GSA, appropriate Federal agencies, planning agencies, and local and state officials to coordinate Federal projects with development plans and programs of the State, region and locality in which the project is located. This is done to ensure that all national, regional, State, and local viewpoints are fully considered and taken into account to the extent possible in planning Federal projects. See 41 CFR 101-19.100 for additional information.

7.6.2 Socioeconomic Considerations

When determining the location of federally constructed buildings and the acquisition of leased buildings, the Government must consider, to the maximum possible extent, the availability of low- and moderate-income housing for Federal employees without discrimination because of race, color, religion, or national origin and to influence the improvement in social and economic conditions in the area of Federal buildings. See 41 CFR 101-19.101 for the systematic process to ensure this requirement is met, including the following:

- (1) Location of buildings (101-19.101-1)
- (2) Agreement with Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (101-19.101-2)

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- (3) Consultation with HUD (101-19.101-3)
- (4) Affirmative Action Plan (101-19.101-5)
- (5) Agency compliance (101-19.101-5)

7.6.2.1 Memorandum of Understanding

An illustration of the memorandum of understanding between HUD and GSA concerning low- and moderate-income housing is contained in 41 CFR 101-19.4801.

7.7 Selection and Approval of Projects by GSA

7.7.1 Determination of Need

The Administrator of General Services will select construction and alteration projects based on a continuing investigation and survey of the public building needs of the Federal Government. (41 CFR 101-19.201)

7.7.2 Priority of Projects

Construction and alteration projects must be equitably distributed throughout the United States with due regard for the comparative urgency of the need for each project, as determined by the Administrator of General Services. (41 CFR 101-19.202)

7.7.3 Approval of Projects

All public buildings construction and alteration projects involving an expenditure in excess of \$500,000 require approval by the Committees on Public Works of the Senate and House of Representatives. Federal agencies with construction or alteration needs of this magnitude must provide the necessary information to GSA. GSA will submit prospectuses for approval to the Committees on Public Works of the Congress. (41 CFR 101-19.203)

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7.7.4 Cooperation and Assistance of Federal Agencies

Federal agencies must advise and cooperate with GSA in the compilation of information supporting a construction or alteration project. See 41 CFR 101-19.204 for additional information.

7.8 DOC Policy

- (a) To the maximum extent practical, DOC will plan the construction and alteration of Federal facilities when such action can be shown to be the most prudent and economic means of meeting Federal space requirements.
- (b) In the alteration of existing buildings, DOC will maintain architectural integrity and compatibility with existing structures.
- (c) In the design of new public buildings, and to the extent feasible in the alteration of existing buildings, DOC will:
 - (1) ensure that such buildings and attendant facilities will be accessible to and usable by the physically handicapped; and
 - (2) utilize, to the maximum extent, modern methods and techniques for the control of air and water pollution.
- (d) In the siting and locating of buildings on selected sites, DOC representatives will work directly with local officials in seeking to conform as closely as possible to local zoning regulations.
- (e) All DOC construction and alteration of public buildings will be executed in compliance with the basic policy considerations stated in 41 CFR 101-19.002.
- (f) All DOC construction and alteration projects will be executed in accordance with accepted energy conservation and efficiency techniques.

7.9 Roles and Responsibilities

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The roles and responsibilities for the construction and alteration of public buildings are contained in Chapter 2 of this Manual. They can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Each Operating Unit Head is responsible for determining its need for initiating construction and alteration actions. Within the Office of the Secretary, the need for initiating construction and alteration actions is determined by the Assistant Secretary for Administration, or his/her designee. Once a decision has been made to pursue such an action, the initiating Office shall forward the request to the appropriate Real Property Operations Office for execution. All construction and alteration actions involving the expenditure of \$500,000 or more must be approved by the DOC ASA/CFO, the General Services Administration and the Committees on Public Works of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- (b) In the field, the ASCs are responsible for either carrying out the requested construction or alteration action, or if it is beyond the scope of the authority given to DOC, for coordinating the action with GSA. In the National Capital Region (NCR), this execution/coordination role is performed for all non-NOAA Operating Units by the DOC Office of Real Estate Policy and Major Programs (OREPMP). For NOAA elements in the NCR, this function is carried out by NOAA's Office of Facilities.

7.10 Procedures

DOC's right to alter its space is dependent on whether the space is an owned public building or a leased facility. If the space is owned, there is an absolute right to make alterations provided they are determined to be necessary to accommodate program needs, are found to be the most efficient and effective method of accommodating the program needs, and are in the best interests of the Government. However, in a leased facility, DOC's right to alter space depends on the terms of the lease contract. Generally, the Government has a contractual right to alter its leased space.

7.10.1 Requests for Delegations of Authority

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In its role of either executing or coordinating construction and alterations contracts for Departmental elements, the Real Property Operations Office is responsible for determining the need to acquire delegated authority for construction and alterations projects (41 CFR 101-19.5). Once the decision is made to request such a delegation, the Real Property Operations Office (RPOO) should prepare the request package to the GSA Administrator for the signature of the DOC Assistant Secretary for Administration. The package should be forwarded to the Assistant Secretary's Office for submission to GSA.

7.11 Alteration Projects

7.11.1 Evaluation of Alterations

All alteration activities in GSA-controlled, DOC-owned, or DOC-leased space should be pursued by Departmental elements after a careful review of existing space holdings and program needs. Prior to initiating an alteration action, the Departmental element should explore alternative means of accommodating the program needs, and evaluate the proposed alteration request to ensure that it is the most efficient and effective method of meeting the program needs. Alteration actions should only be pursued after it has been determined that they are in the best interests of the Government.

7.11.2 Applicable Alterations Regulations

When initiating and/or executing alteration actions on behalf of DOC, the RPOO must comply with the following regulations:

- (a) 41 CFR 101-19.3, "Alteration Projects", which addresses emergency alteration projects and prospectuses for reimbursable alteration projects;
- (b) 41 CFR 101-20.1, "Building Operations, Maintenance, Protection, and Alterations", which addresses repairs, initial space alterations and reimbursable services; and

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- (c) 48 CFR 570.5, "Special Aspects of Contracting for Lease Alterations", which prescribes policies and procedures for contracting for alterations of real property either leased by GSA or pursuant to a delegation of GSA's leasing authority.

7.11.3 Altering DOC-Occupied Space in GSA-Controlled Buildings

- (a) In situations when DOC has submitted a request for space to GSA, GSA is responsible for providing initial space alterations comparable to nationally recognized standards, when applicable. DOC is responsible for alterations costs above the established tenant improvement allowance. It is also GSA's responsibility to provide initial space alterations for forced moves and as necessary to protect the building and its occupants. (41 CFR 101-20.002)
- (b) Once situated in GSA-controlled space, DOC is not authorized to negotiate with lessors or to place orders for alterations without prior permission of GSA. (41 CFR 101-20.002-2)
- (c) Alterations that do not fall within the categories described in paragraph (a) above shall be provided, or arranged for, by GSA on a reimbursable basis. Generally, this requires that the Departmental element requiring the alteration submit a requirements package to the appropriate Real Property Operations Office. The Real Property Operations Office will, in turn, forward a GSA Form 2957, "Reimbursable Work Authorization" to the appropriate GSA Regional Office for execution. (41 CFR 101-20.106)
- (d) Pursuant to the GSA delegations specified in 41 CFR 101-20.106, DOC may be authorized to order special space alterations from GSA indefinite quantity contracts or unit price agreements, or to contract directly for special space alterations. Further details on these delegations can be found in the referenced CFR, as well as in the GSA publication entitled, "RWA Guide."

7.11.4 Altering DOC-Owned Space

In situations where DOC owns the space in need of alteration and has responsibility for its custody and maintenance, alterations should be accomplished as follows:

- (a) The request for alterations should be initiated by forwarding a package containing the justifications and approvals for the action to the appropriate Real Property Operations Office. The justifications and approvals should be consistent with 48 CFR 570.502-1 (for lease alterations).
- (b) Upon receipt of the alteration request package, the Real Property Operations Office must decide whether the work can be performed by available Federal employees or if it should be contracted out. The process of contracting for alterations must comply with the standard contracting procedures that apply to a construction contract. (See FAR Part 36). Throughout the alteration process, the real property contracting officer should coordinate activities with the requesting Departmental element.

7.11.5 Altering DOC-Leased Space

Alterations to DOC-leased space must be accomplished as follows:

- (a) The Departmental element shall initiate the request for alteration by submitting a written request summarizing the scope of work to the appropriate Real Property Operations Office (RPOO).
- (b) Upon receipt of the request for alterations, the RPOO must determine whether or not the alterations fall within the general scope of the lease.

7.11.5.1 Alterations Within the Scope of the Lease

- (a) The RPOO must determine that the lessor is willing to perform the proposed alterations at a fair and reasonable price, and it is in the Government's

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interest to acquire the alterations from the lessor.

- (b) The RPOO must follow the procedures set forth in 48 CFR 570.5. These procedures include:
 - (1) preparing a scope of work;
 - (2) obtaining/preparing an independent Government cost estimate of the project;
 - (3) requesting an audit if the alterations will exceed \$500,000;
 - (4) providing the scope of work to the lessor, including any plans and specifications, and requesting a proposal with sufficient cost or price information to permit a price analysis;
 - (5) evaluating the proposal in accordance with the procedures identified in 48 CFR 570.502-2(e);
 - (6) negotiating the cost of the alterations;
 - (7) awarding the alteration contract using GSA Form 276, "Supplemental Lease Agreement", or its equivalent, or GSA Form 300, "Order for Supplies or Services";
 - (8) inspecting the alterations; and
 - (9) arranging for payment.

7.11.5.2 Alterations Outside the Scope of the Lease -

If the proposed alterations are outside the general scope of the existing lease, the RPOO must decide whether to acquire the alterations through either:

- (a) A supplemental lease agreement to the lessor without competition, if the alterations have been

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justified and approved for specific thresholds in accordance with 48 CFR 570.502-1 (48 CFR 570.501(b)(1)); or

- (b) Government performance or separate contract. The lease must first provide the Government the right to perform alterations to the leased space. (48 CFR 570.501(b)(2))

7.12 Construction Projects

7.12.1 Construction on Leased Property

OUs must avoid construction of permanent or valuable Improvements on leased real property unless authorized by statute or approved in writing by the OU Head, or designee, and the Office of General Counsel, as indicated in this paragraph. Proposals to construct improvements on leased real property must be reviewed by the DOC Office of General Counsel for sufficiency of Government interest in the real property to protect the Government investment in the cost of improvements prior to awarding a contract for construction.

7.12.2 Contracting for Construction

- (a) Contracting for construction services must be in accordance 41 CFR 102-74 and 76. The method used will be that most advantageous to the Government. (41 CFR 101-19.401)
- (b) GSA will provide technical services and guidance in the formulation and development of their programs for construction and alteration of special facilities.
- (c) Selecting sites for public buildings. (41 CFR 102-74 and 76)
- (d) The design of new buildings and their appurtenances should provide efficient and economical facilities in an architecture of distinction and quality, and respect local architectural characteristics. (41 CFR 102-74 and 76)

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- (e) In the design of new public buildings, the objectives of nationally recognized building and performance codes, standards, and specifications will be met and amplified according to the needs of the departmental unit and as necessary to conform with the accident and fire prevention policy objectives. In addition, special features of local codes directly related to local circumstances or practices will be, to the maximum extent practical, incorporated into the design. (41 CFR 102-74)
- (f) Parking for Government-owned, visitors', and employees' vehicles will be provided in the planning of public buildings with due regard to the needs of the agency to be housed, local zoning and parking regulations, availability of public transportation, and availability of planned and existing public and privately owned parking facilities in the locality. (41 CFR 102-74 and 76)
- (g) Security floodlighting, as appropriate, will be incorporated in the design of selected new public buildings. Such security floodlighting will be designed for minimum energy consumption and reflect and enhance the architectural esthetics of the building. (41 CFR 102-74 and 76)

7.12.3 Architectural and Engineering Services

GSA will develop or acquire, by contract, designs and specifications for suitable buildings that will provide space that can be economically utilized and operated, and which are in harmony with surrounding structures in the community.

Executive agencies may contract for professional engineering, architectural, and landscape architectural services for "public building" projects only when the Administrator of General Services has delegated responsibilities and authorities. (40 U.S.C. 614)

7.12.4 Lease Construction Projects

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Unless another acquisition procedure authorized by law is used, the two-phase design-build selection procedures in the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, 63 Stat.377, as amended, must be used for lease construction projects. This includes lease construction projects with options to purchase the real property leased.

7.13 Forms

The following forms and other GSA Forms referenced in this Chapter can be found at www.gsa.gov - Forms Library.

- (a) GSA Form 2957, "Reimbursable Work Authorization", shall be used to order reimbursable alterations, improvements or repairs.
- (b) GSA Form 2974, "Status Report for Federally Funded or Leased Buildings - Accommodation of Physically Handicapped", shall be used to comply with the reporting requirement set forth in 41 CFR 101-19.607.
- (c) GSA Form 184, "Construction Progress Report".
- (d) Standard Form 1442, "Solicitation, Offer and Award (Construction, Alteration and Repair)".
- (e) OP-1419, "Abstract of Offers - Construction".