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DECISION



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-177610
MATTER OF:

DATE: AUG 1 1978

Employee Improvements - Forest Service Mobile Pads

DIGEST:

Since Forest Service Regulation R-6 now requires upgrading the electrical hookups at mobile home pads to 200 amperes, GAO will not object to agency agreement with three of its employees, who moved onto the trailer pads prior to the promulgation of the regulation and who incurred personal expenses in enlarging the electrical hookups which served their respective mobile homes, for the purchase of the improvements at a price reflecting their value to the Government, since, if employees removed their improvements, which they may do in the alternative, the Forest Service would have to replace them.

Mr. George D. Breitmeyer, Authorized Certifying Officer, Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture, (his reference 6540), asks whether he may certify the vouchers of three Forest Service employees who seek reimbursement of personal expenditures for enlarging the electrical hookups which served their respective mobile homes.

When the employees elected to move their mobile homes on to trailer pads at the Naches Ranger Station, Naches, Washington, there was electrical service but at a much lower amperage than was needed to operate their mobile homes adequately. At the time of their moves, the employees were apparently told that the trailer pads were available but if the electrical service was not adequate, they would have to bear the expense of installing the additional service themselves. Also, according to the record, the employees were apparently advised that the facilities installed would be their personal property and would not revert to the Government. The three claimants then upgraded the service to 200 amperes at their own expense.

Subsequently, the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service promulgated standards, (R-6 Supplement No. 67 to Forest Service Manual 6445.31-3 (February 1978)(regulation R-6)) which established minimum requirements for trailer parking spaces. These included, among other things, 200 ampere electric service to a meter head.

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Because the Forest Service now requires a 200 ampere service as a minimum, the employees seek reimbursement for the costs of their improvements, since as a result of their effort the spaces rented now meet the prescribed standards.

At least two of the employees have transferred elsewhere and have no need for the improvements. Nevertheless, if not reimbursed for their costs, they maintain that they have the right to retain their improvements since they were advised that any facilities installed would be their personal property and would not become property of the United States. We agree with this contention, as we understand the electrical equipment is easily removed and, hence, is not a fixture. If, on the other hand, the employees choose to leave the electrical equipment behind, the GAO will not object if the Forest Service decides to purchase the equipment from the employees.

We also believe that the remaining employee should be offered the same option; i. e., a chance to sell the equipment to the Government. The new standard now requires trailer parking spaces to include 200 ampere electric service to a meter head and the trailer pad rental fee on the spaces improved by the employee has been increased to equal the fee charged for Forest Service improved pads elsewhere. Since the claimant could remove the improvements, and the Forest Service would have to upgrade the electrical service to the pad, payment may be made to the claimant for purchase of the improvements.

The amount which is allowable on each claim should be measured by the value of the improvements to the Government. The purchase price should be limited to the present value of the improvements, provided the price does not exceed the cost the Forest Service would incur to enlarge the electrical service on each trailer pad if the improvements were not already installed or the amount claimed, whichever is the lesser. We have not examined the accounts of the individual claims in detail but might note that inspection charges should probably be disallowed as we have been informally advised these are costs that an employee is normally required to pay in conjunction with the hookup of his trailer to a meter head.

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In accordance with the above, the vouchers, which we are returning to the certifying officer, may be paid if otherwise correct.

R. F. KELLER
Comptroller General
of the United States
Deputy }