

DAVIS-BACON AND RELATED ACTS (DBRA)

- A. Force Account - Under most Davis-Bacon statutes, only employees of contractors or sub-contractors are subject to Davis-Bacon wage requirements. In some instances, rather than contracting or sub-contracting out construction work, a grant recipient performs the construction in-house, with its own "force account" employees. Such force account work is not subject to Davis-Bacon wage requirements under statutes that cover only employees of contractors and sub-contractors. Furthermore, the USDOL does not consider a state or local government to be a contractor, even if it enters into a contract to perform construction work (see 29 CFR Section 5.2(h)). However, under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, a private firm that receives federal assistance funds indirectly from a recipient pursuant to a written procurement contract of sub-grant agreement that provides for the performance of construction work is considered a contractor or sub-contractor, and the force account exception **does not** apply to construction activity performed by employees of such a firm.

Laborers and mechanics employed by a local or state agency PHA (Public Housing Authority only), even though not employed by a contractor, are subject to Davis-Bacon when performing development work financed by the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, as amended. Davis-Bacon federal wage requirements are not applicable where such employees are used in work defined as major repairs (deferred maintenance) pursuant to 24 CFR 868.3 and 868.9(h), which constitute project operation rather than development.

- B. Compliance and Certification Parameters - HUD policy clearly affords federal wage protection for all laborers and mechanics, regardless of contractual relationship. There is no exception to this protection for self-employed laborers or mechanics, including owners of businesses, sole proprietors, partners, corporate officers, or others. Laborers and mechanics may not certify to the payment of their own federal wages except where the laborer or mechanic is the owner of a business working on the site of the work with his/her own crew.

Accordingly, HUD and program participants responsible for labor standards administration and enforcement **may not** accept certified payrolls reporting single or multiple owners (e.g., partners) are certifying that they have paid to themselves the prevailing wage for their craft. A sole proprietor may not submit a payroll reporting himself or herself as simply "Owner" signing the certification as to his/her own wage payment from "draws" or other payment methods. Nor may several mechanics submit a payroll reporting themselves as "partners" with one or more certifying as to the payment of their wages or salaries. Such mechanics must instead be carried on the certified payroll of the contractor or sub-contractor for whom they are working and with whom they have executed a "contract" for services.

In these cases, maintenance of an accurate accounting of weekly work hours including any overtime hours for such mechanics is essential. Whatever method of compensation computation is utilized (piecework, weekly contract draw performance), the amount of weekly compensation divided by the actual hours of work performed for that week must result in an "effective" hourly wage rate for that week that is not less than the prevailing hourly rate for the type of work involved. This computation must take into account overtime pay rates (i.e., one and one-half) for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week, pursuant to the CWHSSA, where applicable, and pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act where CWHSSA is not applicable.

The name, work classification, actual hours of work, effective hourly wage rate, and wage payment for each such mechanic and laborer must be reported and certified on the responsible employer's weekly payroll. Note that the effective hourly wage rate for such mechanics and laborers may fluctuate from week to week. However, the effective hourly wage rate may not be less than the minimum prevailing wage rate for the respective craft.

In any case, where the effective rate falls below the corresponding craft prevailing wage rate, the responsible employer must compensate the mechanic at no less than the prevailing wage rate on the wage determination for the craft.

- C. Business Owners Working with Their Crew - Owners of businesses working with their crew on the same HUD-assisted job site **may** certify to the payment of their own federal wages in conjunction with the prevailing wages paid to their employees. This exception to compliance standards **does not** suggest that

such owners are not likewise entitled to prevailing wages for their labor. Rather, it accepts the wage payment certification on weekly payroll reports by the owner of his/her own wages as that certification **accompanies** the certification offered for payment of prevailing wages to his/her employees. On weekly payroll reports, include the owner's name, identifying him/her as "owner," and the daily and total hours worked on the covered project for the week. Omit the Rate of Pay and Amount Earned.

- D. Owner-operators of Power Equipment - Frequently, owner-operators of power equipment (e.g., backhoes, front-end loaders) will contract for services at a rate for both "man and machine." In these cases, the owner-operator includes liability, equipment maintenance, and salary in an hourly or contract rate for services. Because of the prevalence of such practice and the inherent difficulty in ascribing costs for liability and maintenance costs versus hourly labor salary, HUD and its program clients may accept a combined ("man and machine") hourly rate on the responsible contractor's certified payroll provided that such hourly rate may not be less than the rate on the wage determination for the respective power equipment operator. **Note:** Owner-operators of power equipment, like self-employed mechanics, **may not** submit their own payrolls certifying to the payment of their own wage **but** must be carried on the responsible contractor's certified payroll report. Include the name, work classification, and actual hours worked. Upon completion of the contract, verify the pay by taking the amount paid to the sub-contractor (documented with copies of all invoices identified for this job) and divide by the hours reported on the certified payrolls. Compare the actual hourly wage rate with the rate in the Wage Determination. If the actual hourly wage is less than the Davis-Bacon Wage Rate, collect and disburse the wage underpayments.

- E. "Owner Operator" Truck Drivers - A USDOL administration policy excludes bona fide owner-operators of trucks who are independent contractors from Davis-Bacon/CWHSSA provisions concerning their own hours of work and rate(s) of pay. These truck "owner-operators" can certify to their own weekly payrolls **but** the payrolls do not need to show the hours worked or rates allegedly paid - only the notation "Owner-operator." **Note** that any laborers or mechanics, including truck drivers, employed by the owner-operator/independent contractor are subject to Davis-Bacon/CWHSSA provisions in the usual manner.

This policy **does not** pertain to owner-operator of other equipment such as backhoes, bulldozers, cranes and scrapers (i.e., power equipment as noted in the paragraph titled "Owner-operators of Power Equipment," above).

"Contractor's" Truck Drivers Based on the decision made in the Midway Excavating trial, (Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO vs. USDOL Wage Appeals Board "Midway") truck drivers employed by contractors are only covered by federal wage requirements when they are performing labor on the site of the work. (e.g. if the UGLG is building a highway and the truck driver is loading, unloading, spreading, or driving material back and forth on the site, then the truck driver is covered). Conversely, hauling materials to/from the site, from/to an off-site location that is not exclusively established for the project is not DBA covered time. HUD has advised that they currently believe unloaded trucks are likewise not covered.

Contractors must report hours worked, and pay at least the DBA wage rate for any time the truck driver spends on the work site if the driver is making multiple trips throughout the day that cumulatively challenge a *de minimus* determination. *De minimus* may be interpreted as time spent on the job site that is not sufficient nor consequential enough to be tracked as an itemizable job function. However, if a series of *de minimus* qualifying site visits by truck drivers cumulatively exceed the 20% threshold for any given day, DBA applies to the on-site hours worked.

- F. Determining Proper Classification for Various Work - Questions as to the proper classification of a laborer or mechanic for various types of work are resolved by making an area-practice determination. In determining the proper classification for work performed on a project, it is immaterial whether the contractor is union or nonunion.

On projects where the federal wage rate for the classifications in question within the applicable wage determination is based on negotiated rates, the prevailing practice concerning work performed in those classifications is to follow the practice observed on projects built by contractors who are a signatory to the collective bargaining agreements. Therefore, unless there is a jurisdictional dispute between the crafts, the

duties ascribed to any job classification will be the same as those outlined in the appropriate collective bargaining agreements. If the collective bargaining agreements are silent on this issue, the local unions involved must be consulted. Conversely, in areas where open shop (non-union) rates are determined to prevail for the classifications in question, those prevailing job practices followed on projects by open shop contractors in the same area become area practice.

- G. Helpers - The **classification of Helper in any trade will be very difficult to have approved by the USDOL**. If the contractor wants to pursue a helper classification through the USDOL, they should contact the Labor Standards Specialist at DOA.
- H. Relatives - There are no exceptions made in the enforcement of Davis-Bacon on the basis of family relationship for relatives who are performing the work of laborers or mechanics. They **must be paid the federal wage rate for the classification of work performed and be included on the certified payrolls**.
- I. Volunteers - HUD allows for the waiver of Davis-Bacon wage rates for volunteers that are **not otherwise employed** at any time of the work for which the individual volunteers. Contact DOA's Labor Standards Specialist for more details if the community plans on using volunteers on the construction site.
- J. Job Corps Workers - USDOL staff in Washington, DC has informed HUD staff that Job Corps workers are not exempt from Davis-Bacon wage when they are working on a job subject to the Davis-Bacon Act.
- K. Employees of a Governmental Body - The USDOL has taken the position that the prevailing wage requirements does not apply to employees of a state or political subdivision of a state, but shall apply to employees of a private contractor who is sub-contractor of the state or political subdivision. This rule does not apply to the Public Housing Authority (PHA) employees under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 (see paragraph A. in this section). **Employees of utilities are exempt providing they are only extending existing service to the property.**
- L. Employees Performing Work in More than One Classification - (Split Classification) if the UGLG/contractor has employees who perform work in more than one trade during a work week, it can pay the wage rates specified for each work classification in which work was performed **only** if maintaining accurate time records showing the amount of time spent in each classification. If the UGLG does not maintain accurate time records, it must pay these employees the highest wage rate of all the classifications of work performed. **Work, which is normally performed as part of the mechanic's craft, is not separable.**
- M. Laborers and Mechanics – Definition - The terms "laborers" and "mechanics" are construed to include at least those workers whose duties are manual or physical in nature as distinguished from mental or managerial. Since the classifications of laborers and mechanics to who specified wage rates are payable are identified in the Davis-Bacon wage rate, there is ordinarily no need to distinguish between laborers and mechanics. However, **mechanics are generally considered to include any worker who uses tools, or who is performing the work of a trade.**
- N. Precutting of Parts and Prefabrication of Assemblies - The precutting of parts and/or the prefabrication of assemblies are not covered unless conducted in connection with and at the site of the project, or in a temporary plant set up elsewhere solely to supply the needs of the project.
- O. Supply and Installation Contracts - The manufacturing or furnishing of materials, articles, supplies, or equipment is not subject to prevailing wages unless conducted in connection with and at the site of the project, or in a temporary plant set up elsewhere solely to meet the needs of the project.
- P. Start of Construction - "Start of Construction," as that term is used in connection with labor standards and prevailing wage requirements, means the beginning of initial site clearance and preparation, provided those activities are pursued diligently and are followed without appreciable delay by other construction activity.
- Q. Site of Work - The "site of work" is limited to the physical place or places where the construction called for in the contract will remain when work on it has been completed and to other adjacent or nearby property used by the contractor in such construction which can reasonably be said to be included in the "site" because of proximity. **Operations of a commercial or material supplier established in the proximity of but not on the active site of work prior to the opening of bids are not covered by the Act even if dedicated exclusively to the federal project for a time.**

- R. Fringe Benefits – Funded Plans - A contractor may credit contributions for “bona fide” fringe benefits regardless of whether the USDOL has found the particular benefits to be prevailing in the area. Such fringe benefits must be “bona fide.” Ordinarily, bona fide benefits are those common to the construction industry and are paid directly to the employee in cash or into a fund, plan, or program on the employee’s behalf. Contractors may take credit for contributions made under such conventional plans without requesting approval of the USDOL.
- S. Fringe Benefits – Unfunded Plans - Where fringe benefit plans are not of the conventional type, it will be necessary for the USDOL to determine if the benefits are “bona fide.” **Contractors seeking approval of unfunded plans must obtain approval from the USDOL.** Contact DOA for more details.
- T. Fringe Benefits – General
1. Contributions to funded plans must be made at least quarterly.
 2. When the cash paid and the per-hour contribution for benefits do not equal the total rate set forth in the wage determination, the difference must be paid to the employee in cash.
 3. Fringe benefits must be paid for straight time and overtime; however, fringe benefits are not included when computing the overtime rate.
 4. Employees who are excluded from funded plans for whatever reason must be paid fringe benefits in cash.
 5. **Note:** Vacation and sick leave plans are generally unfunded, paid from the contractor’s own account, and require USDOL approval before a contractor takes credit toward meeting the fringe benefit obligation.
 6. In determining the cash equivalent credit for fringe benefits payments, the period of time to be used is the period covered by the contribution. For example, if an employer contributes to a plan on a weekly basis, the total hours worked each week (federal and nonfederal) by each employee should be divided into the contribution made by the employer.
 7. Acceptable fringe benefits include the following: medical or hospital care; pensions on retirement or death; compensation for injuries or illness resulting from occupational activity; or insurance to provide any of the foregoing, unemployment benefits, life insurance, disability and sickness insurance, accident insurance, vacation and holiday pay, defrayment of cost of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or other bona fide fringe benefits; but only where the contractor to sub-contractor is not required by other federal, state, or local law to provide any of such benefits. The Act excludes fringe benefits that a contractor or sub-contractor is obligated to provide under other federal, state, or local law. No credit may be taken for such benefits. For example, payment for workmen’s compensation insurance under either a compulsory or elective state statute is not considered payments for fringe benefits under the Act. Payments made for travel, subsistence, or to industry promotion funds are not normally payments for fringe benefits under the Act.
- No type of fringe benefits is eligible for consideration as a so-call unfunded plan unless:
- a. It could be reasonably anticipated to provide benefits described in the act;
 - b. It represents a commitment that can be legally enforced;
 - c. It is carried out under a financially responsible plan or program; and
 - d. The plan or program providing the benefits has been communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected.
- U. Summer Youth Employment - Youth who are bona fide students and part of a bona fide “youth opportunity program” may be employed on Davis-Bacon projects on a temporary basis during the summer months and paid below the predetermined Davis-Bacon rates. USDOL All Agency Memoranda #71 and #96 provide policy guidance in this area. HUD requires that the following stipulations be met before summer youth may be employed at less than Davis-Bacon rates:

1. Where collective bargaining agreements representing workers performing similar or related activities at the worksite to which youth are out stationed exists, the union or unions representing those workers must provide concurrence as to the design of the employment project and the use of the youth;
2. Such employment must be provided in accord with statutory safety and minimum wage requirements (both state and federal);
3. Competent supervision must be provided to all youth employment on the project worksites. Ratios of youth to such supervisors should be no greater than four-to-one.

In order to ensure that the administration of summer youth employment complies with USDOL policies and regulations, request for exceptions to the application of Davis-Bacon must be made to the HUD Field Office Labor Relations Staff who will advise the requesting contractor of its decision. The specific provisions of the agreement (between management and labor) or the plan of employment must be submitted to the Department of Labor, Wage and Hour and Public Contracts Division, for enforcement purposes. The HUD Field Office Labor Relations Staff will send such plans to the Headquarters Office of Labor Relations.

V. Non-Covered Job Classifications - Workers performing the normal duties of the following job classifications are not subject to Davis-Bacon federal wage requirements:

1. Project Superintendent.
2. Project Engineer.
3. Project Foreman, as distinguished from a working foreman (working foremen, who devote more than 20 percent of their time during the workweek to mechanic or laborer duties, are laborers and mechanics for the time spent and must be paid the applicable rate for the hours so worked).
4. Watchman.
5. Water Carrier.
6. Messenger, Clerical Workers.

Financing of Construction Work – CDBG - Laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and sub-contractors on construction work financed in whole or in part with Title I assistance are subject to Davis-Bacon wage rates under Section 110 of Title I. To the extent that Part 570 requires broader Davis-Bacon coverage, e.g., on construction work “assisted” under that Part, the regulations shall govern unless an individual waiver is requested and granted by the Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development. The use of Title I funds for any of the following items is an example of financing construction work, and Davis-Bacon wage rates shall apply to all construction work performed on the building or property in question: construction loans or grants; payment for construction materials; payment of interest (or part of the interest) on a construction loan; payment of construction loan origination fees; provisions of a Title I funded permanent loan, mortgage or grant on a structure constructed with a private construction loan when the parties contemplate such ultimate Title I financing at the time of construction; Title I

funded “collateral” or “default” accounts established with the lending bank which receive no interest or less than the interest payable on demand accounts. Questions as to whether a use of Title I funds constitutes financing of construction work shall be referred to HUD headquarters for determination.

W. Technical/Maintenance Wage Rates – Public Housing - Section 12 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 requires that wages prevailing in the locality shall be paid to all architects, technical engineers, draftsmen, and technicians employed in the development, and all maintenance laborers and mechanics employed in the operation of the project. Such wages are determined or adopted by HUD.

X. Payment of Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) assessments - In some projects federal funds are used to pay special assessments of LMI households, where those assessments are for the purpose of paying for a public improvement. This use of federal funds invokes the Federal Labor Standards Provisions and makes the construction subject to Davis-Bacon wage rates.

Y. Piecework - Roofers and dry-wall hangers are sometimes paid by piecework. Piecework is work paid for at a fixed rate (piece rate) per piece of work done.