Office of the Secretary of Labor

§ 5.20 Scope and significance of this subpart.

The 1964 amendments (Pub. L. 88–349) to the Davis-Bacon Act require, among other things, that the prevailing wage determined for Federal and federally-assisted construction include: (a) The basic hourly rate of pay; and (b) the amount contributed by the contractor or subcontractor for certain fringe benefits (or the cost to them of such benefits). The purpose of this subpart is to explain the provisions of these amendments. This subpart makes available in one place official interpretations of the fringe benefits provisions of the Davis-Bacon Act. These interpretations will guide the Department of Labor in carrying out its responsibilities under these provisions. These interpretations are intended also for the guidance of contractors, their associations, laborers and mechanics and their organizations, and local, State and Federal agencies, who may be concerned with these provisions of the law. The interpretations contained in this subpart are authoritative and may be relied upon as provided for in section 10 of the Portal-to-Portal Act of 1947 (29 U.S.C. 359). The omission to discuss a particular problem in this subpart or in interpretations supplementing it should not be taken to indicate the adoption of any position by the Secretary of Labor with respect to such problem or to constitute an administrative interpretation, practice, or enforcement policy. Questions on matters not fully covered by this subpart may be referred to the Secretary for interpretation as provided in §5.12.
§ 5.22 Effect of the Davis-Bacon fringe benefits provisions.

The Davis-Bacon Act and the prevailing wage provisions of the related statutes listed in § 1.1 of this subtitle confer upon the Secretary of Labor the authority to predetermine, as minimum wages, those wage rates found to be prevailing for corresponding classes of laborers and mechanics employed on projects of a character similar to the contract work in the area in which the work is to be performed. See paragraphs (a) and (b) of § 1.2 of this subtitle. The fringe benefits amendments enlarge the scope of this authority by including certain bona fide fringe benefits within the meaning of the terms “wages”, “scale of wages”, “wage rates”, “minimum wages”, and “prevailing wages”, as used in the Davis-Bacon Act.

§ 5.23 The statutory provisions.

The fringe benefits provisions of the 1964 amendments to the Davis-Bacon Act are, in part, as follows:

(b) As used in this Act the term “wages”, “scale of wages”, “wage rates”, “minimum wages”, and “prevailing wages” shall include—

(1) The basic hourly rate of pay; and
(2) The amount of—

(A) The rate of contribution irrevocably made by a contractor or subcontractor to a trustee or to a third person pursuant to a fund, plan, or program; and

(B) The rate of costs to the contractor or subcontractor which may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits to laborers and mechanics pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program which was communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected, for 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, for unemployment benefits, life insurance, disability and sickness insurance, or accident insurance, for vacation and holiday pay, for defraying costs of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or for other bona fide fringe benefits, but only where the contractor or subcontractor is not required by other Federal, State, or local law to provide any of such benefits **.*.

§ 5.24 The basic hourly rate of pay.

“The basic hourly rate of pay” is that part of a laborer’s or mechanic’s wages which the Secretary of Labor would have found and included in wage determinations prior to the 1964 amendments. The Secretary of Labor is required to continue to make a separate finding of this portion of the wage. In general, this portion of the wage is the cash payment made directly to the laborer or mechanic. It does not include fringe benefits.

§ 5.25 Rate of contribution or cost for fringe benefits.

(a) Under the amendments, the Secretary is obligated to make a separate finding of the rate of contribution or cost of fringe benefits. Only the amount of contributions or costs for fringe benefits which meet the requirements of the act will be considered by the Secretary. These requirements are discussed in this subpart.

(b) The rate of contribution or cost is ordinarily an hourly rate, and will be reflected in the wage determination as such. In some cases, however, the contribution or cost for certain fringe benefits may be expressed in a formula or method of payment other than an hourly rate. In such cases, the Secretary may in his discretion express in the wage determination the rate of contribution or cost used in the formula or method or may convert it to an hourly rate of pay whenever he finds that such action would facilitate the administration of the Act. See § 5.5(a)(1)(i) and (iii).

§ 5.26 ** * * contribution irrevocably made * * * to a trustee or to a third person”.

Under the fringe benefits provisions (section 1(b)(2) of the Act) the amount of contributions for fringe benefits must be made to a trustee or to a third person irrevocably. The “third person” must be one who is not affiliated with the contractor or subcontractor. The trustee must assume the usual fiduciary responsibilities imposed upon trustees by applicable law. The trust or fund must be set up in such a way that in no event will the contractor or subcontractor be able to recapture any of the contributions paid in or any way
§ 5.28 Unfunded plans.

(a) The costs to a contractor or subcontractor which may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits of the types described in the act pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program, are considered fringe benefits within the meaning of the act (see 1(b)(2)(B) of the act). The legislative history suggests that these provisions were intended to permit the consideration of fringe benefits meeting, among others, these requirements and which are provided from the general assets of a contractor or subcontractor. (Report of the House Committee on Education and Labor, H. Rep. No. 308, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4.)

(b) No type of fringe benefit is eligible for consideration as a so-called unfunded plan unless:

(1) It could be reasonably anticipated to provide benefits described in the act;

(2) It represents a commitment that can be legally enforced;

(3) It is carried out under a financially responsible plan or program; and

(4) The plan or program providing the benefits has been communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.)

(c) It is in this manner that the act provides for the consideration of unfunded plans or programs in finding prevailing wages and in ascertaining compliance with the Act. At the same time, however, there is protection against the use of this provision as a means of avoiding the act's requirements. The words “reasonably anticipated” are intended to require that any unfunded plan or program be able to withstand a test which can perhaps be best described as one of actuarial soundness. Moreover, as in the case of other fringe benefits payable under the act, an unfunded plan or program must be “bona fide” and not a mere simulation or sham for avoiding compliance with the act. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.)

The legislative history suggests that in order to insure against the possibility that these provisions might be used to avoid compliance with the act, the committee contemplates that the Secretary of Labor in carrying out his responsibilities under Reorganization...
Plan No. 14 of 1950, may direct a contractor or subcontractor to set aside in an account assets which, under sound actuarial principles, will be sufficient to meet the future obligation under the plan. The preservation of this account for the purpose intended would, of course, also be essential. (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.) This is implemented by the contractual provisions required by §5.5(a)(1)(iv).

§ 5.29 Specific fringe benefits.

(a) The act lists all types of fringe benefits which the Congress considered to be common in the construction industry as a whole. These 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, or accident insurance, vacation and holiday pay, defrayment of costs of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or other bona fide fringe benefits, but only where the contractor or subcontractor is not required by other Federal, State, or local law to provide any of such benefits.

(b) The legislative history indicates that it was not the intent of the Congress to impose specific standards relating to administration of fringe benefits. It was assumed that the majority of fringe benefits arrangements of this nature will be those which are administered in accordance with requirements of section 302(c)(5) of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 5).

(c) The term "other bona fide fringe benefits" is the so-called "open end" provision. This was included so that new fringe benefits may be recognized by the Secretary as they become prevailing. It was pointed out that a particular fringe benefit need not be recognized beyond a particular area in order for the Secretary to find that it is prevailing in that area. (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6).

(d) The legislative reports indicate that, to insure against considering and giving credit to any and all fringe benefits, some of which might be illusory or not genuine, the qualification was included that such fringe benefits must be "bona fide" (H. Rep. No. 308, p. 4; S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6). No difficulty is anticipated in determining whether a particular fringe benefit is "bona fide" in the ordinary case where the benefits are those common in the construction industry and which are established under a usual fund, plan, or program. This would be typically the case of those fringe benefits listed in paragraph (a) of this section which are funded under a trust or insurance program. Contractors may take credit for contributions made under such conventional plans without requesting the approval of the Secretary of Labor under §5.5(a)(1)(iv).

(e) Where the plan is not of the conventional type described in the preceding paragraph, it will be necessary for the Secretary to examine the facts and circumstances to determine whether they are "bona fide" in accordance with requirements of the act. This is particularly true with respect to unfunded plans. Contractors or subcontractors seeking credit under the act for costs incurred for such plans must request specific permission from the Secretary under §5.5(a)(1)(iv).

(f) The act excludes fringe benefits which a contractor or subcontractor is obligated to provide under other Federal, State, or local law. No credit may be taken under the act for the payments made for such benefits. For example, payment for workmen's compensation insurance under either a compulsory or elective State statute are not considered payments for fringe benefits under the Act. While each situation must be separately considered on its own merits, payments made for travel, subsistence or to industry promotion funds are not normally payments for fringe benefits under the Act. The omission in the Act of any express reference to these payments, which are common in the construction industry, suggests that these payments should not normally be regarded as bona fide fringe benefits under the Act.
construction, such benefits are includable in any Davis-Bacon wage determination. Illustrations, contained in paragraph (c) of this section, demonstrate some of the different types of wage determinations which may be made in such cases.

(b) Wage determinations of the Secretary of Labor under the act do not include fringe benefits for various classes of laborers and mechanics whenever such benefits do not prevail in the area of proposed construction. When this occurs the wage determination will contain only the basic hourly rates of pay, that is only the cash wages which are prevailing for the various classes of laborers and mechanics. An illustration of this situation is contained in paragraph (c) of this section.

(c) Illustrations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Basic hourly rates</th>
<th>Fringe benefits payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health and welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumbers</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironworkers</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(If it should be noted this format is not necessarily in the exact form in which determinations will issue; it is for illustration only.)

§ 5.31 Meeting wage determination obligations.

(a) A contractor or subcontractor performing work subject to a Davis-Bacon wage determination may discharge his minimum wage obligations for the payment of both straight time wages and fringe benefits by paying in cash, making payments or incurring costs for "bona fide" fringe benefits of the types listed in the applicable wage determination or otherwise found prevailing by the Secretary of Labor, or by a combination thereof.

(b) A contractor or subcontractor may discharge his obligations for the payment of the basic hourly rates and the fringe benefits where both are contained in a wage determination applicable to his laborers or mechanics in the following ways:

(1) By paying not less than the basic hourly rate to the laborers or mechanics and by making contributions for "bona fide" fringe benefits in a total amount not less than the total of the fringe benefits required by the wage determination. For example, the obligations for "painters" in the illustration in paragraph (c) of §5.30 will be met by the payment of a straight time hourly rate of not less than $3.90 and by contributions of not less than a total of 45 cents an hour for "bona fide" fringe benefits; or

(2) By paying not less than the basic hourly rate to the laborers or mechanics and by making contributions for "bona fide" fringe benefits in a total amount not less than the total of the fringe benefits required by the wage determination. For example, the obligations for "painters" in the illustration in paragraph (c) of §5.30 will be met by the payment of a straight time hourly rate of not less than $3.90 and by contributions of not less than a total of 45 cents an hour for "bona fide" fringe benefits; or

(3) By paying in cash directly to laborers or mechanics for the basic hourly rate and by making an additional cash payment in lieu of the required benefits. For example, where an employer does not make payments or incur costs for fringe benefits, he would meet his obligations for "painters" in the illustration in paragraph (c) of §5.30, by paying directly to the painters a straight time hourly rate of not less than $4.35 ($3.90 basic hourly rate plus 45 cents for fringe benefits); or

(4) As stated in paragraph (a) of this section, the contractor or subcontractor may discharge his minimum wage obligations for the payment of straight time wages and fringe benefits by a combination of the methods illustrated in paragraphs (b)(1) thru (3) of
this section. Thus, for example, his obligations for "painters" may be met by an hourly rate, partly in cash and partly in payments or costs for fringe benefits which total not less than $4.35 ($3.90 basic hourly rate plus 45 cents for fringe benefits). The payments in such case may be $4.10 in cash and 25 cents in payments or costs in fringe benefits. Or, they may be $1.10 in cash and 20 cents in payments or costs for fringe benefits.

§ 5.32 Overtime payments.

(a) The act excludes amounts paid by a contractor or subcontractor for fringe benefits in the computation of overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, and the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act whenever the overtime provisions of any of these statutes apply concurrently with the Davis-Bacon Act or its related prevailing wage statutes. It is clear from the legislative history that in no event can the regular or basic rate upon which premium pay for overtime is calculated under the aforementioned Federal statutes be less than the amount determined by the Secretary of Labor as the basic hourly rate (i.e. cash rate) under section 1(b)(1) of the Davis-Bacon Act. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 7.) Contributions by employees are not excluded from the regular or basic rate upon which overtime is computed under these statutes; that is, an employee's regular or basic straight-time rate is computed on his earnings before any deductions are made for the employee's contributions to fringe benefits. The contractor's contributions or costs for fringe benefits may be excluded in computing such rate so long as the exclusions do not reduce the regular or basic rate below the basic hourly rate contained in the wage determination.

(b) The legislative report notes that the phrase "contributions irrevocably made by a contractor or subcontractor to a trustee or to a third person pursuant to a fund, plan, or program" was added to the bill in Committee. This language in essence conforms to the overtime provisions of section 7(d)(4) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended. The intent of the committee was to prevent any avoidance of overtime requirements under existing law. See H. Rep. No. 308, p. 5.

(c)(1) The act permits a contractor or subcontractor to pay a cash equivalent of any fringe benefits found prevailing by the Secretary of Labor. Such a cash equivalent would also be excludable in computing the regular or basic rate under the Federal overtime laws mentioned in paragraph (a). For example, the W construction contractor pays his laborers or mechanics $3.50 in cash under a wage determination of the Secretary of Labor which requires a basic hourly rate of $3 and a fringe benefit contribution of 50 cents. The contractor pays the 50 cents in cash because he made no payments and incurred no costs for fringe benefits. Overtime compensation in this case would be computed on a regular or basic rate of $3.00 an hour. However, in some cases a question of fact may be presented in ascertaining whether or not a cash payment made to laborers or mechanics is actually in lieu of a fringe benefit or is simply part of their straight time cash wage. In the latter situation, the cash payment is not excludable in computing overtime compensation. Consider the examples set forth in paragraphs (c)(2) and (3) of this section.

(2) The X construction contractor has for some time been paying $3.25 an hour to a mechanic as his basic cash wage plus 50 cents an hour as a contribution to a welfare and pension plan. The Secretary of Labor determines that a basic hourly rate of $3 an hour and a fringe benefit contribution of 50 cents are prevailing. The basic hourly rate or regular rate for overtime purposes would be $3.25, the rate actually paid as a basic cash wage for the employee of X, rather than the $3 rate determined as prevailing by the Secretary of Labor.

(3) Under the same prevailing wage determination, discussed in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, the Y construction contractor who has been paying $3 an hour as his basic cash wage plus 50 cents an hour as a contribution to a fund, plan, or program was added to the bill in Committee. This language in essence conforms to the overtime provisions of section 7(d)(4) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended. The intent of the committee was to prevent any avoidance of overtime requirements under existing law. See H. Rep. No. 308, p. 5.
Office of the Secretary of Labor

an hour. In this example the regular or basic hourly rate would continue to be $3 an hour. See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 7.

PART 6—RULES OF PRACTICE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS ENFORCING LABOR STANDARDS IN FEDERAL AND FEDERALLY ASSISTED CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS AND FEDERAL SERVICE CONTRACTS

Subpart A—General

§ 6.1 Applicability of rules.
This part provides the rules of practice for administrative proceedings under the Service Contract Act, the Davis-Bacon Act and related statutes listed in §5.1 of part 5 of this title which require payment of wages determined in accordance with the Davis-Bacon Act, the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, and the Copeland Act. See parts 4 and 5 of this title.

§ 6.2 Definitions.

(a) Administrator means the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, or authorized representative.

(b) Associate Solicitor means the Associate Solicitor for Fair Labor Standards, Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210.

6.43 Consent findings and order.
6.44 Decision of the Administrative Law Judge.
6.45 Petition for review.
6.46 Ineligible list.

Subpart E—Substantial Variance and Arm's-Length Proceedings

6.50 Scope.
6.51 Referral to Chief Administrative Law Judge.
6.52 Appointment of Administrative Law Judge and notification of prehearing conference and hearing date.
6.53 Prehearing conference.
6.54 Hearing.
6.55 Closing of record.
6.56 Decision of the Administrative Law Judge.
6.57 Petition for review.


SOURCE: 49 FR 10627, Mar. 21, 1984, unless otherwise noted.