Environmental Protection Agency

§ 13.20 Administrative offset of general debts.

This subpart provides for EPA’s collection of debts by administrative offset under section 5 of the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (31 U.S.C. 3716), other statutory authorities and the common law. It does not apply to offsets against employee salaries covered by §§13.21, 13.22 and 13.23 of this subpart. EPA will collect debts by administrative offsets where it determines that such collections are feasible and are not otherwise prohibited by statute or contract.

EPA will decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether collection by administrative offset is feasible and that its use furthers and protects the interest of the United States.

(a) Standards. (1) The Administrator collects debts by administrative offset if—

(i) The debt is certain in amount;

(ii) Efforts to obtain direct payment from the debtor have been, or would most likely be, unsuccessful or the Administrator and the debtor agree to the offset;

(iii) Offset is not expressly or implicitly prohibited by statute, regulation or contract;

(iv) Offset is cost-effective or has significant deterrent value;

(v) Offset does not substantially impair or defeat program objectives; and

(vi) Offset is best suited to further and protect the Government’s interest.

(2) The Administrator may, in determining the method and amount of the offset, consider the financial impact on the debtor.

(b) Interagency offset. The Administrator may offset a debt owed to another Federal agency from amounts due or payable by EPA to the debtor, or may request another Federal agency to offset a debt owed to EPA. The Administrator may request the Internal Revenue Service to offset an overdue debt from a Federal income tax refund due a debtor where reasonable attempts to obtain payment have failed. Interagency offsets from employee salaries will be made in accordance with the procedures contained in §§13.22 and 13.23.

(c) Multiple debts. Where moneys are available for offset against multiple debts of a debtor, it will be applied in accordance with the best interest of the Government as determined by the Administrator on a case-by-case basis.

(d) Statutory bar to offset. Administrative offset will not be made more than 10 years after the Government’s right to collect the debt first accrued, unless facts material to the Government’s right to collect the debt were not known and could not have been known through the exercise of reasonable care by the officer responsible for discovering or collecting the debt. For purposes of offset, the right to collect a debt accrues when the appropriate EPA official determines that a debt exists (e.g., contracting officer, grant award official, etc.), when it is affirmed by an