



U.S. General Service Administration (GSA)

GSA Order: GSA Metric Program

8000.1D ADM

Office of Government-wide Policy

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Purpose

This Order establishes policies and assigns responsibilities for implementing the metric system of measurement within the General Services Administration (GSA).

Background

1. The Metric Conversion Act of 1975 (Pub. L. 94-168, 15 U.S.C. 205a, et seq.), as amended by the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (Pub. L. 100-418), established the modern metric system (System International, or SI) as the preferred system of measurement in the United States and directed that, to the extent economically feasible, the metric system be used in all Federal procurements, grants, and business-related activities by September 30, 1992.
2. This statute was implemented by Executive Order 12770, signed on July 25, 1991.
3. The Savings in Construction Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-289) prohibits Federal contract documents from solely specifying hard metric concrete block and hard metric recessed lighting fixtures unless the agency makes the written determination required by 15 U.S.C. 205l. This Act also requires each executive agency that awards construction contracts to designate a senior agency official to serve as construction metrication ombudsman.

Applicability

This Order applies to all GSA offices.

Cancellation

This Order does not cancel or supersede any previous Order.

Roles and Responsibilities

The SPE, Construction Metrication Ombudsman, Chief Architect, and HSSOs, in coordination with appropriate officials, must initiate all actions necessary to implement this Order.

1. Definitions

- 1.1. Metrication. Any act that increases the predominate use of the metric system, including metric training and conversion of measurement-sensitive processes and products, to the metric system, especially in business-related activities.
- 1.2. Metric system. The International System of Units of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures, as interpreted or modified from time to time for the United States by the Secretary of Commerce. The units are listed in the current version of Federal Standard 376B, "Preferred Metric Units for General Use by the Federal Government."
- 1.3. Hard metric. The use of only metric (SI) measurements in specifications, standards, supplies, and services measurement, design, and manufacture using the metric system of measurement, but does not include measure, design and manufacture using English system measurement units which are subsequently re-expressed in the metric system of measurement.
- 1.4. Soft metric. The result of mathematical conversion of English system measurements to metric equivalents in specifications, standards, supplies, and services. The physical dimensions are not changed.
- 1.5. Dual systems. The use of both English and metric systems. For example, an item is designed, produced, and described in inch-pound values with soft metric values also shown for information or comparison purposes.
- 1.6. Hybrid systems. The use of both English system and hard metric values in specifications, standards, supplies, and services; e.g., an engine with internal parts in metric dimensions and external fittings or attachments in English system dimensions.
- 1.7. Metric usage. The use of hard metric (preferred), soft metric, dual systems or hybrid systems in lieu of traditional English system measurements.
- 1.8. Business-related activities. Measurement sensitive commercial or business directed transactions or programs, i.e., standard or specification development, publications, or agency statements of general applicability and future effect designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describing the procedure or practice requirements of an agency. "Measurement sensitive" means the choice of measurement unit is a critical component of the activity, i.e., an agency rule/regulation to collect samples or measure something at specific distances or to specific depths, specifications requiring intake or discharge of a product to certain volumes or flow rates, guidelines for clearances between objects for safety, security or environmental purposes, etc.

2. Policies

- 2.1. GSA will implement the metric system in a manner consistent with the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, as amended.
- 2.2. GSA will support Federal use of the metric system through appropriate participation in applicable intergovernmental organizations, subcommittees, panels, and working groups.
- 2.3. GSA offices will use, to the extent economically feasible, the metric system in procurements, grants, and other business-related activities. Exceptions to metric usage may be made on an individual or class basis (see section 7.c.(3) and 7.d.(4)), when the use of the metric system is impractical or is likely to cause significant inefficiencies, harm to the program mission, or loss of markets to United States firms.
- 2.4. Specifications and standards for Federal or GSA procurement will be developed in metric when metric is the accepted industry system. Commercially developed metric specifications and internationally or domestically developed voluntary standards using metric will be adopted whenever possible.
- 2.5. The measurement units in which a system is originally designed may be retained for the life of that system, unless conversion is necessary or advantageous.
- 2.6. For the construction of Federal facilities, specifications will comply with the PBS Metric Design Guide (PBS PQ260) and Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (PBS P100), including requirements related to concrete masonry units and recessed lighting fixtures in accordance with Pub. L. 104-289.

3. Coordination with the private sector

- 3.1. Because the private sector has an essential role in the use of metric measurements, its needs and capabilities must be considered along with those of the Federal Government. The U.S. Metric Association (USMA) has traditionally been regarded as the principal representative of private sector metric interests, plans, and conversion actions. Federal agencies, including GSA, work closely with the USMA to aid in exchanging ideas, plans, and methods needed to fulfill the intent of the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, as amended. Coordination with other private sector organizations involved in metrication activities also may be beneficial.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. The Senior Procurement Executive will work collaboratively with Heads of Services and Staff Offices (HSSOs) or their delegates, the Chief Architect, Office of Design and Construction, Public Buildings Service, and the Construction Metrication Ombudsman to ensure GSA's implementation of

the metric system of measurement is consistent with Pub. L. 100-418 the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, as amended, and the policy and guidance of the Secretary of Commerce.

- 4.2. The Construction Metrication Ombudsman appointed by the SPE will:
 - 4.2.1. Ensure the agency is not implementing the metric system of measurement in a manner that is impractical or likely to cause significant inefficiencies or loss of markets to United States firms pursuant to 15 USC 205I (f)(2).
 - 4.2.2. Review and respond to complaints from prospective bidders, subcontractors, suppliers, or their designated representatives related to PBS guidelines and regulations on the use of the metric system in PBS contracts for construction of Federal facilities or for services and materials required for incorporation in individual PBS projects to construct Federal facilities.
- 4.3. The Chief Architect, Office of Design and Construction (PCA), Public Buildings Service will:
 - 4.3.1. Develop and maintain the PBS Metric Design Guide (PBS PQ260) and Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (PBS P100).
 - 4.3.2. Ensure appropriate GSA office representation on applicable intergovernmental organizations, subcommittees, panels, and working groups.
 - 4.3.3. Approve waivers and metric exceptions for construction, in accordance with section 5.c and GSA PBS policies for granting exceptions.
- 4.4. Heads of Services and Staff Offices will:
 - 4.4.1. Designate an organizational element to monitor metric activities for which they are responsible;
 - 4.4.2. Develop and maintain guidelines and policies regarding metric use applicable to their specific mission and responsibility. Guidelines will be consistent with this Order and current National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) guidance.
 - 4.4.3. Ensure appropriate GSA office representation on applicable intergovernmental organizations, subcommittees, panels, and working groups.
 - 4.4.4. Approve metric exceptions for other than construction on an individual or class basis, in accordance with section 5.c.
- 4.5. The Chief Human Capital Officer (C) will identify and coordinate appropriate metrication training programs for GSA employees.

- 4.6. The Office of Strategic Communications (Z) will advise and coordinate appropriate publications to inform other Federal agencies or the public of metric use in GSA programs.