



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Great Plains Region

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

GP Policy Memorandum PRM-01

MEMORANDUM

To: Deputy Regional Directors
Attention: GP-1100, GP-1200, GP-1240, GP-1270, GP-1500
Manager, Human Resources
Attention: GP-1250
Manager, Information Technology
Attention: GP-1260
Manager, Infrastructure and Engineering Service Group
Attention: GP-2000
Manager, Business Resources Group
Attention: GP-3000
Manager, Resource Services Group
Attention: GP-4000
Manager, Acquisition Services
Attention: GP-5000
Area Managers
Attention: DK-1000 (DBreitzman), DK-3000 (BSherwood-Widman),
EC-1000 (MCollins), EC-1100 (CHuelker), MT-100, MT-500,
NK-100 (AThompson), NK-200 (TSalter), TX-Trevino, TX-Parish,
WY-1000, WY-5000

From: Michael J. Ryan
Regional Director

For

Subject: Responsibility and Control of Government Property

At least annually, the Accountable Officer is required to issue a reminder to employees of their responsibility to care for and safeguard Government property entrusted to them, and to avoid situations that could result in personal financial liability due to negligence. The burden of this responsibility is essentially on designated Custodial Officers. However, proper use and care is passed on to equipment users under their supervision. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, failure to take minimum (reasonable and prudent) precautions when using Government property is considered negligence on the part of the user.

All employees should read carefully the statements of policy and procedures that follow. In some cases the employee involved is unaware of regulations pertaining to the control and use of the equipment and inadvertently bypasses procedures intended to prevent the occurrence of loss, theft, and damage.

All cases of loss, theft, or damage to Government property are reviewed by a Survey Officer/Board of Survey for evidence of negligence. In cases where negligence is involved, if financial liability cannot be fixed with the using employee or the designated Custodial Officer, the Accountable Officer is ultimately responsible.

Policy: The following statements of policy, procedures, and regulations are furnished to Survey Officers/Boards of Survey as guidelines to aid in determinations of negligence, and to provide a better understanding of roles in assuring adequate control of non-expendable Government property. Timely reporting of equipment loss, theft, or damage to the property management unit upon first knowledge is essential to prudent controls.

1. **Loan of Equipment** - Equipment is assigned to a Custodial Officer for the purpose of use in accomplishing program work under their supervision. Equipment may not be loaned to other employees, any other accountable offices within the Region or Reclamation, or other agencies without the knowledge and consent of designated property management personnel. "Knowledge" means a documented transaction in the form of a property completed Receipt of Property, Form 7-803. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in a finding of negligence by a Survey Office/Board of Survey in the event of loss, theft, or damage. Use of equipment by others within the same work unit of a Custodial Officer does not constitute a loan. Equipment on loan longer than six months should be transferred.
2. **Transfer of Equipment** - All transfers of Government property are the responsibility of property management personnel. No transfers of Government property will be made without the knowledge of property management personnel and their full participation.

Presumed transfer of Government property without the knowledge and participation of property management personnel could result in a finding of negligence against the transferor by a Survey Officer/Board of Survey in the event of loss, theft, or damage.

3. **Assuming Responsibility for Property** - An employee may not assume formal responsibility for Government property unless he/she has been designated in writing by the Accountable Officer as a Custodial Officer.

No employee should assume formal responsibility for Government property without first personally inspecting the property to ensure that it in fact exists and is properly described. Failure to inspect the property prior to assuming responsibility could result in a finding of negligence by a Survey Officer/Board of Survey in the event the property cannot be located at a later date.

4. **Relief from Responsibility** - Once a Custodial Officer signs for a particular item, they cannot be relieved of responsibility for that item without one of the following: a signed

transfer receipt to another Custodial Officer (Form 7-803), a signed transfer document (Form SF-122) to another office outside the region/project, a Report of Survey (Form 7-778) documenting the loss, damage, theft, or approving the scrapping or cannibalizing of the item, or a Property Voucher (Form 7-763) administratively dropping the item from their accountability record. A Custodial Officer should never assume these actions are being carried out; rather, they should be sure to obtain a copy of all such documents to prove their relief from accountability.

5. **Use of Non-expendable Government Property** - Non-expendable equipment (property which has a continuing use, is not consumed in use, and has an expected service life of one or more years, and has an acquisition cost of \$300 or more) may not be used for any purpose other than for which it was intended by design. Damage or destruction of a piece of equipment resulting from improper use is negligence. Inexpert use of equipment resulting in damage, however, is not negligence and should probably result in a recommendation of training for the employee.

Non-expendable equipment may not be altered, changed, or modified without the knowledge and concurrence of property management personnel.

Non-expendable equipment may not be incorporated as an integral part of any other equipment or permanently installed on real property without the knowledge and consent of property management personnel. Failure to comply with the above is negligence.

6. **Safeguarding of Government Property** - Special care should be exercised to safeguard small or sensitive equipment, such as calculators, cameras, binoculars, chain saws, hand tools, cell phones, laptops, and other equipment. Such equipment should not be left unattended in vehicles or offices. Leaving such equipment in plain view invites theft.

In an office, items of small equipment subject to pilferage should be stored in a desk or cabinet when not in use and should be locked up during nonworking hours.

In a vehicle, items of small equipment subject to pilferage should never be left unattended or visible to pedestrian traffic. All such equipment must be locked in the glove box, luggage compartment, tool box, or covered with a blanket, canvas, etc., when not in use or when the vehicle is unattended. These items should be removed from the vehicle when it is parked overnight, if feasible.

Failure to properly safeguard Government equipment by not observing the above listed precautions is negligence and could result in a finding of negligence by a Survey Officer/Board of Survey in the event of loss or theft.

7. **Use of Government-Owned Property Restricted to Official Purpose** - Employees will be strictly responsible for the prevention of misuse of property in their custody or chargeable to their custody.

