



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ACQUISITION AND MATERIEL MANAGEMENT
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To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Annual Metric Report, as required by Executive Order 12770 and the Metric Conversion Law (15 USC 205b).

The Metric Report for Fiscal Year 2006 identifies VA's metric conversion accomplishments, barriers, and current status. VA will continue to take an active role in implementing the metric system in its procurements, grants, and other business-related matters.

Your interest in VA is appreciated.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Roberson

Enclosure

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Annual Metrics Report
Fiscal Year 2007**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is pleased to report an increase in the awareness and use of metrics in its daily operations. Responses from field facilities indicate that metrics conversion (MC) initiatives are continuing throughout VA. The annual report shows the steps the Veterans Integrated Service Networks have taken to implement, train, and enforce the use of metrics within their facilities.

1. Scope. VA has seen an increase in the usage and awareness of metrics in its daily operations. VA has mandated its contracting department to solicit construction contracts in both metric and hard units. Each construction contract issued by the VA includes the following clause: "Products manufactured to metric dimensions will be considered on an equal basis with those manufactured using inch/pound units provided they fall within the tolerances specified using conversion tables contained in the latest revision of Federal Standard No. 376 and all other requirements of this document are met. If a product is manufactured to metric dimensions and those dimensions exceed the tolerances specified in the inch/pound units, a request should be made to the contracting officer to determine if the product is acceptable. The contracting officer technical representative (COTR) will accept or reject the product." Many medical supplies and most pharmaceuticals are provided in metric units. With nutrition and food service using prime vendor contracts, needed metric compliance has become standard practice. Field facilities utilizing VA's Generic Inventory Management software can find a complete list of products available by selecting "metric items." Many of our facilities have established metric task force committees to concentrate on compliance and enhancements to areas other than those previously mentioned.

To increase understanding of metrics, many facilities routinely provide links to the National Institute of Standards and Technology metrics conversion chart. Educational training sessions are being held with administrative, nursing, and executive staff to promote metric awareness.

Roadblocks to metric conversion still remain. The department still encounters difficulties with small, disadvantaged, and veteran-owned business. They usually do not have the resources or staff to perform metric conversion.

Due to the slow progress seen in the private sector to convert to the metric system, it is difficult to estimate a timetable for successful adoption by the department. The agency will continue to promote metric conversion contingent upon available financial resources.

2. Proposed Exceptions. VA continues to find that many smaller businesses do not have the capability to work in metrics and have difficulty providing metric materials. The use of metrics for construction drawings is not standard practice in the business community and often leads to confusion. Most construction supplies are not available in metric measurements. If small businesses are required to convert to metrics in order to do business with the federal government, many will simply drop out of competition. It is, therefore, anticipated that VA will request exemptions to meet our source 1 and economic goals if the small business partners fail to adopt the metric conversion system.

3. Initiatives. Interaction with other federal agencies has had minimal impact on the conversion process. VA continues to work with our Federal Supply Schedule contractors to require only metric use and prepare for the subsequent price fluctuations by imposing such a standard on the contractors. VA finds it more beneficial to utilize schedule contractors than to seek out contracts who deal in metric units of measure. To be successful, NIST needs to take the lead in publicizing the mandate to convert to the metric system. VA will continue to do what it can to implement the metrics program in all areas of operations where it is economically feasible.