

PPD ALERT

Section 508

What is Section 508?

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as revised by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, can be defined as follows:

EMPLOYEE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DATA: Section 508 now requires that when Federal agencies develop, procure, maintain, or use

Electronic and Information Technology (EIT), they shall ensure that the acquired EIT allows employees with disabilities to have access to and use of information or data that is comparable to the access and use of information or data by employees without disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DATA: Section 508 also requires that individuals with disabilities, who are members of the public seeking information or services from a Federal agency, have access to and use of information or data that is comparable to that provided to the public who are not individuals with disabilities, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency.

EIT – equipment used for communication, duplication, computing, storage, presentation, control, transport, production, etc.. It includes computer hardware, software, networks, and peripherals as well as many electronic and communications devices commonly used in offices.

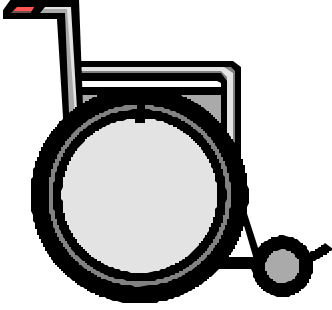
Undue Burden – Will be addressed in the final Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) rule addressing Section 508.

What does Section 508 mean to me?

- P It is anticipated that the final standards for Section 508 and the FAR rule will be issued in the **fall of 2000**. Federal agencies will have to meet the final accessibility standards **6 months** after they are issued.
- P The FAR will be changed to include the requirements of the Section 508 standard. Contract terms will be provided to address issues regarding the need to provide EIT meeting the standard, the need for the contractor to use EIT meeting the standard, offering alternative EIT, and other issues.
- P **To enforce Section 508, Contracting Officers (COs) shall only purchase EIT products that comply with Section 508.** Only purchase card (micropurchase) transactions will be exempt from the final FAR rule. *To ensure compliance, the COs must have verification from the cognizant EIT specialist that the equipment is 508 compliant or an exemption has been approved.*
- P Employees and members of the public have the right to file complaints alleging non-compliance with the Act, 6 months after the Section 508 standards are finalized.

What Should I do now?

Nothing. The final standards for EIT equipment and final FAR rule are currently being developed and are expected to be issued this fall. As a result of this predicament, the Procurement and Property Division will await the final standards and FAR rule before drafting applicable REE policy guidance. To obtain further guidance see <http://www.usda.gov:80/oo/target.htm> and <http://www.section508.gov/>.



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