

THE BUYERS NETWORK

MARCH 2014

VOL. 24, ISSUE 3

THE BUYERS NETWORK
is Published Monthly
by the Purchasing Division
of the West Virginia Department
of Administration to Promote
Better Value in Public Purchasing

It's Official! March is Purchasing Month in WV



Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin has proclaimed that March 2014 be recognized as “**Purchasing Month**” throughout the state of West Virginia.

The Purchasing Division is pleased to be part of the initiative for this annual proclamation, which is part of an annual nationwide recognition initiated by NIGP. The proclamation highlights the initiatives which develop, support and promote public procurement practitioners through educational and research programs.

Public purchasers perform a vital function toward the operation of state government. The integrity and professionalism of state purchasers are valued by the public, who entrusts the spending of its tax dollars.

The official proclamation is on display at the Purchasing Division office in Building 15.

“It is gratifying to see the governor recognize this vital part of state government. In my 30-plus years of working for the Purchasing Division, one thing that always has been consistent is the hard work and dedication of this staff to being good stewards of the public’s money,” said Purchasing Director Dave Tincher. “This proclamation also reflects upon our many peers in other state agencies with whom we work closely to maintain the public’s trust. We are all grateful to Gov. Tomblin for the recognition.”

HONORING OUR PROFESSION

During the month of March, purchasing professionals nationwide will join together to be honored for the vital role we play in the efficiency of our government operations.



Save the Date: Purchasing Division Sets its Annual Open House for Tuesday, May 6th

Open House

The event is set for 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6, at the Purchasing Division office at 2019 Washington Street East.

The date for this year’s annual Purchasing Division **Open House** has been set for Tuesday, May 6th. The event will take place from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the agency’s office at 2019 Washington Street East. This is the seventh consecutive year the Purchasing Division has been host to this event.

This year’s **Open House** will offer many opportunities to meet with the Purchasing Division staff and learn more about forthcoming changes in the public procurement process when the state enterprise resource system – known as *wvOASIS* – goes live later this year.

The Open House will offer three 40-minute information

Please see **OPEN HOUSE**, Page 5

INSIDE...

- **Director's Comments:** Celebrating Purchasing Month in March to Recognize our Profession
- Purchasing Division's Bob Kilpatrick Named as Administration's *Employee of the Month*
- Procurement Officer Profile: Becky Jones Hit the Jackpot Working with the Lottery Commission

Celebrating Purchasing Month in March to Recognize the Value in Our Profession

By Purchasing Director Dave Tincher

As the tradition continues, the Purchasing Division is pleased to announce that Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin has declared March as “*Purchasing Month*” in the state of West Virginia. This recognition by our highest state official demonstrates the importance of the work we all perform each and every day.

I encourage us all to join together to celebrate with pride our role in state government and for our profession, in general. We are a small, yet vital group of professionals who make a difference in the efficiency and transparency of our government.

The National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, an international procurement organization with thousands of members, created the concept of designating this one month of each year when all public purchasing professionals are recognized throughout the country for the contributions that they provide to their respective organizations.

As part of our jobs, we have many re-

sponsibilities that impact government operations. In order to perform our jobs effectively, we must have a full knowledge and understanding of statutory and regulatory requirements affecting state purchasing practices.

Professional development is crucial in order to keep up with changes to those laws, rules and procedures that direct our actions in public procurement. Similar to other professionals, the roles that we play in state government are not constant; therefore, it is a good practice to frequently review the requirements and processes that we must follow.

Equally important is maintaining successful communication among our fellow agency procurement officers, those in management, and the Purchasing Division. Procurement officers must have an understanding of the responsibilities of educating and informing others in your



organization of procurement practices and procedures.

As serving as the gatekeeper for documentation and processing issues, the procurement officers must also ensure that those in the procurement field as well as our leaders in our organizations are properly trained on the purchasing process.

Another component of public procurement is continuing to enhance vendor relations. We must always look at the vendor community as potential suppliers to state government and enhancing our relationships with vendors will result in participation in the competitive bid process. And, as we are all fully aware, competition among the vendor community ultimately results in savings to the state.

Join me and my staff in celebrating the entire month of March as *Purchasing Month* in West Virginia!

Maximum Budgeted Amount Required on All Purchasing Requisitions

Upon submitting a Purchasing Requisition form (WV-35) to the Purchasing Division, agency procurement officers are reminded that it is necessary to submit a maximum budgeted amount, in accordance with *West Virginia Code of State Rule 148.1*, Section 7.11.1

“There are two primary reasons for this requirement. One, it is the law. And second, if a maximum budgeted amount is not listed on the WV-35, then the Purchasing Division is unable to negotiate a lower price with the lowest bidder meeting specifications that exceeds the agency’s budget for the solicitation,” noted Mike Sheets, Assistant Purchasing Director. “When an agency includes a maximum budgeted amount on its WV-35, then two options are possible if bids exceed that figure. First, an agency has the option to secure additional funds to proceed with the procurement or, if the agency cannot come up with addition-

al funds, the state may have the ability to negotiate the price down to the maximum budget amount.”

Sheets added that if a maximum budgeted amount is not listed, the solicitation process may have to begin again, per *Code of State Rule*. If a maximum budget amount is noted, the opportunity may exist to negotiate a lower price. To read more about this and the Purchasing Division section of the *Code of State Rule*, please visit: www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/rule_148-01.pdf.



Interested in past issues of *The Buyers Network*? Be sure to check them out at on the Purchasing Division’s website at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/BN/bnlist.html

The Power of Words...As Proven in Specifications

How You Say It...

Specifications can either enhance or inhibit competition.

Be careful on how you describe what your agency needs.

The importance and power of words are never more validated than in the specifications that we prepare and include in our solicitations. As noted in the **Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook**, specifications can either enhance or inhibit competition.

In accordance with *West Virginia Code* §5A-3-11, competition must be sought, whenever possible. This can be accomplished by describing products and services in a manner which meets the agency's needs and encourages competition.

Our buying staff, Buyer Supervisor Frank Whittaker, Senior Buyer Tara Lyle and former Buyer Laura Hooper, addressed the topic of writing specifications at the 2013 Agency Purchasing Conference. Since specifications derive from the word, "specific," it is essential for agency purchasing agents to do their homework prior to creating the foundation of your solicitation, *the specifications*. With so many resources at your fingertips, gathering information is easier than ever by scouring the Internet and other resources that may be of assistance.

"A well-researched and -written specification will greatly affect the entire bidding and award process, by both reducing the time and effort required to get to the successful award of the Purchase Order," said Whittaker. "It is always better to spend a little extra time to

IMPORTANT QUALITIES TO A GOOD SPECIFICATION

A good specification should contain language that is the following:

- Clearly understandable to both the buyer and the seller
- Complete
- Concise
- Identifiable wherever possible with some brand or specification already on the market
- Verifiable
- Reasonable
- Legible

Ask the questions: *What do you need? how much do you need? what size does it need to be? where do you want it delivered? when will you accept delivery? and what type of resulting contract do I need?*

research and write a complete and accurate specification than to rush an incomplete or poorly written specification through the process that may result in vendor submissions that are difficult to evaluate and award."

A specification is a concise statement explaining the type of product or service, the quality level, special requirements in design, performance, delivery and usage, Hooper

Please see SPECIFICATIONS, Page 7

Bob Kilpatrick Named Administration's March *Employee of the Month*

Bob Kilpatrick, a Senior Buyer with the Acquisition and Contract Administration Section of the Purchasing Division, has been selected as the Department of Administration's **Employee of the Month** for March.

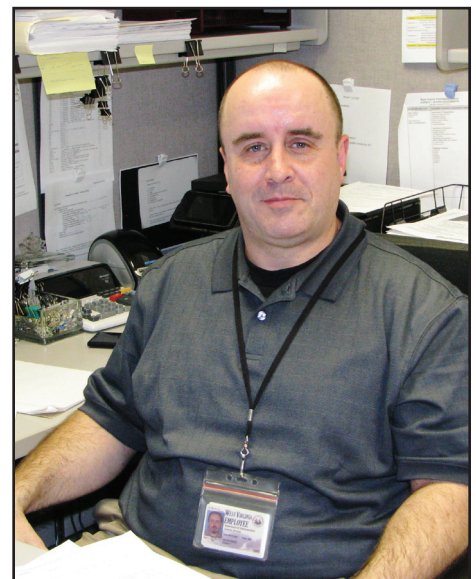
A state government employee for more than 17 years, Kilpatrick is responsible for processing purchases exceeding \$25,000. He is assigned to processing formal acquisitions on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Resources. Prior to joining the Purchasing Division in October, Kilpatrick served as the agency procurement officer for the General Services Division.

"I was tasked with getting a Request for Quotation together on behalf of my agency. The state purchasing process was new to me and it seemed over-

whelming. Bob went beyond the call of duty in helping me put together the RFQ," said an employee with another state agency. "I have never worked with someone who truly cared as much as I did about getting a project completed in such a timely fashion."

Added a co-worker, "Bob has been an agency procurement officer and now he is a Purchasing Division buyer. That background, along with his keen attention to details, makes him very proficient at his job."

In his spare time, Kilpatrick likes to play basketball, fish and hike. He also coaches youth football. He will be joined by friends and co-workers at a special ceremony presented by Cabinet Secretary Ross Taylor on Thursday, March 6 at 11:15 a.m. at the Purchasing Division in Building 15.



Bob Kilpatrick is the March Employee of the Month for the Department of Administration.

Procurement Officer Profile

Becky Jones Hit the Jackpot Working with Lottery Commission

It has never been a simple matter of playing the odds for Becky Jones. As the contract manager and procurement officer for the West Virginia Lottery Commission, she has seen the fruits of hard work over the years.

A native of Charleston, Jones attended Miami University (Ohio), graduating with an associate's degree in business, she returned to Charleston to work in the private sector, operating a real estate development company. She began working in state government in 1997 as executive assistant to the director of the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.

Jones moved to the Lottery Commission in 2001 and has seen the organization grow dramatically over the years. "When I began, we had about 50 employees," she said. "We have grown to 184 employees with the addition of limited video lottery at retail outlets and table games at the racetracks, as well as gaming at the Greenbrier Resort casino."

Jones' initial responsibilities included contract management, purchasing, and facilities management of the department's previous building on MacCorkle Avenue, the back-up site in Fairmont, and the Weirton validations office. However, as the department has grown, so have Jones' duties. "My job now is to procure and manage multi-million dollar contracts and other acquisitions with supervision on P-card purchases," she said. "Periodically, I assist other agencies located in our building with purchasing queries."

The rules for gambling and lottery games have changed dramatically over subsequent years, and that means Jones frequently oversees expensive technological purchases to replace systems. This is in addition to maintenance contracts for systems such as the Lottery Commission's fingerprint system, connected to the State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, since all Lottery Commission employees, casino employees and Lottery vendors receive a background investigation.



"We also maintain contracts for facilities management services like HVAC maintenance, elevator maintenance, fire suppression equipment maintenance, as well as contracts with West Virginia Association of Rehabilitation Facilities for janitorial service for our renovated 13-story office building located on Pennsylvania Avenue in Charleston," Jones said. "Since the integrity of the Lottery Commission is of the utmost importance, we procure the services of outside auditors to review our records and system processes to certify accuracy and compliance with all laws and rules promulgated by the legislature."

Jones said working for the Lottery Commission has been rewarding as it has helped generate millions of dollars for senior citizen and education programs. "I enjoy working with the Lottery team and the Purchasing buyers and staff who inspire and teach me daily, and for this I am grateful," she said.

Jones' hard work was honored last year when she named the 2013 Procurement Officer of the Year at the Agency Purchasing Conference at Pipestem Resort State Park.

But she said her most important role in life has been as a wife and mother. "I have been married for 49 years in June to my husband, David," she said. "We have one son, Chuck, who has a beautiful wife, Angela and we have two lovely teenage granddaughters, Kami and Kenzi. I am very fortunate."

Becky Jones is shown holding her engraved clock she received when named Procurement Officer of the Year at the 2013 Agency Purchasing Conference at Pipestem Resort State Park.

Pictured with Becky are, left, Lottery Commission Director John Musgrave, and Lottery Commission Chairman Kenneth L. Greear.

Stringent Protocol Required When Seeking a Sole Source Procurement

What qualifies as a “sole source procurement” produced a fair amount of discussion during the question-and-answer session at the annual Agency Purchasing Conference conducted last fall.

“This was a productive work session because there was a lot of positive dialogue between the attendees and Purchasing Division staff,” recalled Senior Buyer Guy Nisbet who was the session’s presenter. “I think everyone had a good understanding of the procedures that needed to be followed in determining a sole source. The useful conversation centered around ‘what’ exactly constitutes a sole source.”

As Nisbet noted, the working definition commonly used by the Purchasing Division to determine a sole source is that the item sought meets the criteria that: it cannot be obtained through ordinary purchasing procedures; the item is unique and not available from any other source; and the item is available from a state spending unit or other institution with preference under the *West Virginia Code*, provided the price, availability, and quality are comparable to those in the open market.

“There were excellent questions from various agency procurement officers on how the brands of certain products they were currently using were the ones most desired. However, as also discussed, state law dictates that if a solicitation includes a brand name, it must be followed with the words, ‘or equal,’ to ensure a competitive bid process,” Nisbet said.

Nisbet said an agency must first formally request in writing and receive approval from the Purchasing Division to initiate a sole source procurement. The written request is to be made on a Sole Source Request for Consideration (WV-65) form. The information must



Senior Buyer Guy Nisbet talks to a group of procurement officers during a workshop focusing on the sole source procurement process at the 2013 Agency Purchasing Conference.

include the basis for the sole source procurement and the specific efforts made to determine the availability of other sources. Included in this request must be the Purchasing Requisition, marked as “Sole Source,” with a general description of the commodity and service, and the vendor’s quote.

If granted approval, procurement officers must then submit the Purchasing Affidavit, Non-Conflict of Interest Certification, an electronic copy of the language for the sole source determination advertisement, and the Purchasing Master Terms and Conditions

At this point, the Purchasing Division will advertise the potential sole source purchase with the respective terms and conditions in the **West Virginia Purchasing Bulletin** to ensure no other vendor may provide this commodity or service.

“It is the Purchasing Division’s preference that agencies seek competition rather than pursue a sole source request but if it is necessary, it is crucial that procurement officers adhere to the sole source requirements,” Nisbet said.

For more information relating to sole source procurements, go to the Purchasing Division’s website and view Section 4: Acquisition Planning in the **Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook** at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/handbook.



In-House Training: March - April

March

- Wednesday, March 12: Best Value Procurements – 9 a.m. - noon
- Wednesday, March 26: Solicitation Process: From Pre-Planning to Award – 9 a.m. - noon

April

- Wednesday, April 9: Surplus Property & Fixed Assets - 10 – 11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, April 30: Travel Management - 10 – 11 a.m.

Location

Purchasing Division’s first floor conference room.

Registration

For more information or to register, visit www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/training/inhouse.html. First-come, first-served basis.

For more information

Staff Development Specialist
Samantha Knapp at (304) 558-7022
or Samantha.S.Knapp@wv.gov.

OPEN HOUSE

Continued from Page 1

sessions where procurement officers can meet and discuss specific topics with our staff who will be available throughout the event to meet one-on-one as well to discuss general topics or specific situations. Refreshments will also be available.

Please see the April issue of the *Buyers Network* for a more detailed list of **Open House** activities and events.

Digital Video System Provides West Virginia State Police with a Valuable Legal Resource

The best way to resolve a conflict when a disagreement occurs between two parties is through an impartial third party observer.

For the West Virginia State Police, that third party observer has been secured with the awarding of a contract for a digital mobile video system contract that was procured through the Purchasing Division.

The state-of-the-art camera and its related accessories will provide the State Police with a critical tool with its many daily law enforcement tasks, especially when incidents are decided in a court of law.

“This system is designed to help us with liability issues,” said Joe Harless, an Information Systems Specialist III with 25 years of service with the State Police who wrote the contract specifications. “We have had many instances when an officer pulls over a driver and later there is an issue that arises about the incident. Unless you have some kind of unbiased evidence source, it becomes an issue of who is telling the truth. A video system like this takes a lot of that out of the mix and allows the courts to see exactly what took place. They say videos don’t lie. That is certainly the truth.”

Harless said the State Police

currently has in-car cameras for said reasons but they are becoming outdated. The new digital camera system offers more functions and greater ease of use by state troopers.

“We build our own State Police cars. We install the radios, antennas, and the consoles that control the lights and sirens. We are limited in the space that is left to work with. What we procured to meet this need was a system that has a miniature camera mounted on the inside portion of the windshield and its console is mounted in the rearview mirror,” he said. “It still functions as a rearview mirror but a small portion of the mirror displays exactly what the camera is focused on.”

The camera is always on, Harless said, and it begins recording when a trooper turns on the vehicle’s emergency lights. The system also records audio from a wireless microphone on the trooper’s uniform. Another feature of the new system, Harless said, includes the ability to wire a second auxiliary camera to the system which can be pointed at the back seat of the patrol car.

Please see VIDEO, Page 7



Vehicle Video

The camera is always on, according to Joe Harless of the State Police, and it begins recording when a trooper turns on the vehicle’s emergency lights. The system also records audio from a wireless microphone on the trooper’s uniform. Another feature of the new system includes the ability to wire a second auxiliary camera to the system which can be pointed at the back seat of the patrol car.

Purchasing Division Announces Latest Certification Recipients

The Purchasing Division is pleased to recognize the latest recipients in the West Virginia Procurement Certification program.

Conda Collins of the West Virginia Veteran’s Home and Philip Farley of the Division of Corrections are the most recent individuals to receive West Virginia Procurement: *Basic Certification* since the program’s inception. Currently, there are 37 procurement officers who have achieved Basic Cer-

tification.

The most recent recipient of the West Virginia Procurement: *Advanced Certification* is Darlene Hovatter of the Division of Juvenile Services. Currently, there are 11 procurement officers who have achieved the Advanced Certification.

State agency procurement officials are encouraged to review the program’s requirements and consider enrollment. To review the requirements and steps

to enroll, visit www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/training/Certification/.

Procurement officials who may have questions or would like to express their interest in this program are encouraged to contact our training staff: Staff Development Specialist Samantha Knapp at (304) 558-7022 or at Samantha.S.Knapp@wv.gov or Assistant Purchasing Director Diane Holley-Brown at (304) 558-0661 or at Diane.M.Holley@wv.gov.

SPECIFICATIONS

Continued from Page 3

explains. Specifications must not be restrictive (locking in a specific brand or vendor and thereby limiting competition) or be vague (allowing a vendor to provide a lower than acceptable quality level product or service).

When defining an agency's need, there are several questions that must be asked, such as *what do you need? how much do you need? what size does it need to be? where do you want it delivered? when will you accept delivery? and what type of resulting contract do I need?*

To demonstrate the importance of the words we use in our specifications, the participants at the purchasing conference were asked to *describe* how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. By taking the *literal meaning* of the words of several participants, the presenters made a sandwich which yielded in disastrous results. The point to stress was the importance of being specific and not allow for any assumptions by potential bidders.

Part of being prepared is considering acquisition and delivery time up front in the early stages of your planning. Ask yourself the following questions to help establish a realistic timeframe.

- How long will it take to bid, evaluate and award my requisition?
- When does my current contract expire?
- When do I need the end result?

There are three types of specifications used separately and/or in combination to communicate requirements for goods and services to the vendor:

- A "Brand Name(s) or Equal" Specification is based upon one (1) or more manufacturer's commodity description(s), model number(s) and quality level. The manufacturer's commodity numbers must be easily identified in a current publication that is available to most vendors. Commodity descriptions must be sufficiently detailed, and

specify only the required features needed for the application. Unless a feature or requirement is specifically listed on the requisition, it shall not be used to disqualify a vendor.

- A Performance Specification is based upon the specific performance needs of the purchaser. The performance specification is less structured as to how the product is made, and more structured as to how well it performs. Total ownership cost for operating and maintaining the product may be an element of the specification.
- A Design Specification concentrates on the dimensional and other physical requirements of an item being purchased. The design specification is used when the commodity has to be specially made to meet the purchaser's unique needs.

Combinations of the above may be used to communicate clear specifications to vendors. A performance specification may refer to a nationally accepted testing procedure for a commodity; a design specification may indicate the physical size and dimension of the commodity; and a brand name or equal specification may be used to indicate a desired quality level.

Additionally, when external published specifications are referenced in a solicitation, a hard copy of those specifications must be included with the solicitation.

For more information on specifications, please refer to the presentation materials for this workshop at:

www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/training/2013ConfPPTs/13CONF_WritingSpecifications.pdf

Or, visit the **Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook** at:

www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/Handbook



What's Your Question?

Can I give away old or no longer needed property to employees or non-profits?

Answer: No. Though intentions may be noble, *West Virginia Code* §5A-3-45 states that the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property (WVSASP) is responsible for the disposition of commodities or expendable commodities no longer needed by the state, or more specifically, the owning state agency.

Accordingly, WVSASP must approve all methods of disposition related to commodities or expendable commodities regardless of the acquisition cost. All agencies desiring to dispose of assets must follow the disposition procedures as in the Surplus Property Operations Manual which can be reviewed at: www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/surplus/surplus_operations_manual.pdf.

VIDEO

Continued from Page 6

"You would be surprised at the type of things we find under the seats of our cars; drugs, knives, and other types of contraband. When someone is placed in the back of a cruiser, they will try to get rid of incriminating evidence by stuffing it in the seats. The camera would catch someone trying to hide something.

"This new system also has the option to allow us to wirelessly download video and audio information at any State Police detachment which can then be sent to a central location," he said. "This is much faster and less of a hassle than retrieving media cards from the cameras and having them sent to a specified location."

Harless said the agency's long-term goal is to have every State Police cruiser assigned to a trooper with a rank of sergeant or lower, i.e. those who are assigned primarily to patrol the roads.

Current Statewide Contract Update

(As of February 15, 2014)

This page includes a listing of current changes made to statewide contracts issued by the Purchasing Division. Information and dates listed in this **Current Statewide Contract Update** are subject to change. All statewide contracts are available online at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/swc. For more information, please contact your assigned agency buyer.

Out for Bid

Contract	Description	Bid Opening	Pre-bid?
FLT14002	Shortbed pickup trucks	03/05/2014	No

Contracts Reviewed

Statewide contracts are reviewed approximately three months prior to the actual expiration date. During this month, the following statewide contracts for which their expiration dates are approaching will be examined.

DWASH10 Dishwasher dispensing equipment and supplies
FUELTT12 Fuel truck transport
SECSVS11 Guard and security services
TEMP11 Temporary employee services

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Below is a list of Purchasing Division buyers assigned to specific state agencies.

FILE	BUYER	EMAIL	PHONE
21	Guy Nisbet	Guy.L.Nisbet@wv.gov	558-2596
22	Bob Kilpatrick	Robert.P.Kilpatrick@wv.gov	558-0067
23	Frank Whittaker	Frank.M.Whittaker@wv.gov	558-2316
31	Shelly Murray	Shelly.L.Murray@wv.gov	**
32	Tara Lyle	Tara.L.Lyle@wv.gov	558-2544
33	Crystal Rink	Crystal.G.Rink@wv.gov	558-2402
41	Dean Wingerd	Dean.C.Wingerd@wv.gov	558-0468
52	Evelyn Melton	Evelyn.P.Melton@wv.gov	558-7023
53	Beth Collins	Beth.A.Collins@wv.gov	558-2157
--	Krista Ferrell	Krista.A.Ferrell@wv.gov	**

** Temporarily assigned to the ERP Project

Mileage Reimbursement Rate Remains Same

Department of Administration officials announced in January that the state mileage reimbursement rate for privately-owned vehicles for state use will remain at 47 cents per mile. A bi-annual review of the state's mileage reimbursement rate for privately-owned vehicles is conducted in January and July of each year by Department of Administration Cabinet Secretary Ross Taylor. The state of West Virginia is not statutorily required to follow the federal mileage reimbursement rate set by the Internal Revenue Service.

Purchasing Division Sites Contain Updated Information for Procurement Officers

Agency procurement officers are advised to frequently visit the Purchasing Division's website and intranet page for the latest information about statewide contracts; terms and conditions; and purchasing forms.

The Buyer Assignment list on the Purchasing website notes which buyers are responsible for each statewide contract in addition to that buyer's respective agencies. To direct questions about statewide contracts to the proper buyer, visit: www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/by-rassign.pdf.

On the Purchasing Division internet site, procurement officers are encouraged to download Agency Master and Purchasing Master terms and conditions and related purchasing forms for use rather than download a form and make copies. Purchasing forms are occasionally modified, sometimes only slightly. Submitting an improper form can cause delays.

The Purchasing intranet can be located at: intranet.state.wv.us/form/default.htm.



Award Recommendation Letters Must Include Reason Should Low Bid Not Be Accepted

When sending its award recommendation to the Purchasing Division, agencies are reminded to explain in the recommendation letter its rationale for award. Senior Buyer Tara Lyle said the recommendation letter must be signed by the agency's designated procurement officer.

"The recommendation letter should list which vendor received the low bid," she said. "If the agency recommends awarding to the low-bid vendor, the letter should state the specifications were met and should include the Certification of Non-Conflict of Interest form."

However, in cases where the award recommendation is not issued to the vendor with the lowest bid, the agency recommendation letter must give clear, detailed justification as to why the lowest bid was not accepted. "Any factors such as vendor preference must be included in the recommendation letter," Lyle said.

For more on the award process, please refer to Section 7 of the **Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook** at: www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/Handbook.