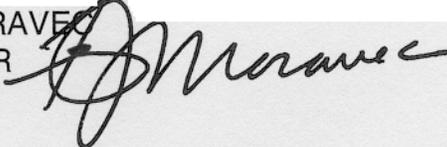




MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS FOR
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE
1P, 2P, 3P, 4P, 5P, 6P, 7P, 8P, 9P, 10P, WP

FROM: F. JOSEPH MORAVEC
COMMISSIONER 

DATE: April 26, 2002

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Interagency Security Committee (ISC)
Design Criteria Regarding Site Selection.

As you know, the events of September 11, 2001 reemphasized the importance of our implementation of the ISC design criteria, signed by the Administrator on May 30, 2001. It should be noted that the document was disseminated prior to the horrific events in New York and Northern Virginia. This is truly an indication that the GSA has and continues to serve as a leader in our nation's efforts to protect the American people and the Federal workforce. I appreciate your continuing support, collaboration, and leadership during this most difficult period.

Following the events of September 11, I signed a PBS Instructional Letter- PBS-IL-02- 1 on October 15, 2001, Subject: Implementation of the Interagency Security Committee Security Design Criteria for New Federal Office Buildings and Major Modernization Projects. Although the ISC design criteria, and the PBS instructional letter are primarily performance based, there are certain recommendations and requirements that are somewhat prescriptive and subject to interpretation. Sometimes too "wide a range" of interpretation can be counterproductive to the intent of the criteria as we try to work with our clients to implement the objectives. Standoff distance recommendations in the ISC criteria fall into this category.

The ISC criteria "recommends" that new buildings achieve a standoff distance from a potential point of explosion of at least 50 feet. The absolute minimum distance required is 20 feet. However, we know from our exhaustive research on this subject, that each foot that a building is further removed from the center of the blast, there is less damage to human life and property. We also know that it costs us less in bricks and mortar to protect our buildings as the standoff distance is increased. Currently, the Office of the Chief Architect is working with expert consultants to try to quantify cost and lifesafety issues associated with different standoff distances. Since some of this research is

actually based on real field testing it will take more time than we would prefer. The results of this effort will be provided to you as soon as it is completed.

We all recognize that GSA will not be able to always achieve the recommended 50 foot standoff distance for new Federal Buildings; particularly in extremely urbanized and dense Central Business Districts in major cities. However, there are very few American cities that have densities comparable to New York or San Francisco. Therefore, the need to select a site that does not conform to the ISC criteria should be the exception, not the norm. We also recognize that annexes or modifications to Historic Buildings present a host of additional challenges regarding blast criteria.

All this in perspective, we cannot ignore the importance of this factor on the site selection process; not only regarding the safety of our Federal workforce and the thousands of visitors to our Federal Buildings each day, but on the construction cost to mitigate the effects of blast on a new building that cannot achieve the ISC recommendations. We consider this an issue which can have severe impact on the delivery of the nationwide Capital Program.

As such, effective immediately, if a Regional Office cannot recommend a site for a new Federal Construction or Lease/Construction project that will achieve the 50 foot standoff distance, an exemption must be issued by the Commissioner of PBS. The "achievement" of this standoff distance must be based on the feasibility of the site to accommodate a pragmatic, efficient, reasonable, cost effective, and well designed Federal facility. All exemption requests will be processed by the Office of the Chief Architect in consultation with the Office of the Federal Protective Service.

I expect that there will be very few exemptions since I know that you, our associates and our clients will make every possible effort to identify and select sites that will conform to this important requirement. I thank you for your support. **If** you have any questions please call either Ed Feiner or Wendell Shingler.