



## **APD ALERT**

### **TELECOM PURCHASES – HURRICANE KATRINA**

The Chief Information Officer for Telecommunications has issued a temporary waiver of the Department of Agriculture Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) Advisory 58A, Prohibitions on Using Purchase Cards or Convenience Checks to Acquire Telecommunications. The waiver allows for the purchase of telecom services and equipment to be made with a purchase card. This waiver was issued to support purchases in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Until further notice, any of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agencies that have recurring telecom bills normally paid through Telephone Vendor's System (TELE) may use a purchase card to pay these bills regardless of the dollar amount. The convenience check may be used if the phone company refuses to accept the card, but be sure to obtain the company's Taxpayer Identification Number/Employer Identification Number (TIN/EIN). Purchase card and convenience check transactions should cite Budget Object Classification Code "2328" in the Purchase Card Management System. Include the applicable Debt Collection Improvement Act waiver number if a convenience check is issued.

Although the National Finance Center (NFC) and TELE/Telephone & Utilities Maintenance System (TUMS) are not operational, NFC is working to pay telecom bills as soon as possible. The bills are being re-routed from the Post Office Box 60000, New Orleans, Louisiana, to an alternate work site in Grande Prairie, Texas.

If you normally send your telecom bills to NFC for payment, it is your choice whether to continue to do so or to pay those bills via a purchase card. If you choose to send them to NFC, continue to send them to: USDA, NFC, Attn: Miscellaneous Payment Section, Post Office Box 60000, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70160. Please contact your vendor to let them know that they may expect a delay in payment and cite the reason for the delay.

If your telecom vendor normally sends your bills to NFC for payment, please contact them to let them know that that they may expect a delay in payment and cite the reason for the delay.

When communicating with your vendor, do not offer to pay the bills via a purchase card unless continuing service is in jeopardy. Let NFC eventually pay the bills via TELE. This will avoid double payment on a bill--one from NFC via TELE and one from you via a purchase card.

Cell phone vendors are more likely to demand immediate payment in order to continue service. If this occurs, you should definitely pay via a purchase card and reconcile the billing with NFC later.

For each telecom charge over \$350 made with a purchase card, within 15 days, individuals should forward the following information to Brenda Katulski, ARS Office of Chief Information Officer, (bkatulski@ars.usda.gov):

1. Date of purchase;
2. Item(s) purchased;
3. Total amount of purchase; and,
4. Reason for purchase.

The subject line of the email should state "Telecom Purchase-Hurricane Katrina."

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