

**American Iron & Steel (AIS) Requirement of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014
(Public Law 113-76)**

Q&A Part 2

PRODUCT QUESTIONS

1. Q: Do all fasteners qualify for de minimis exemption?

A: No. There is no broad exemption for fasteners from the American Iron and Steel (AIS) requirements. Significant fasteners used in SRF projects are not subject to the de minimis waiver for projects and must comply with the AIS requirements. Significant fasteners include fasteners produced to industry standards (e.g., ASTM standards) and/or project specifications, special ordered or those of high value. When bulk purchase of unknown-origin fasteners that are of incidental use and small value are used on a project, they may fall under the national de minimis waiver for projects. The list of potential items could be varied, such as big-box/hardware-store-variety screws, nails, and staples. The key characteristics of the items that may qualify for the de minimis waiver would be items that are incidental to the project purpose (such as drywall screws) and not significant in value or purpose (such as common nails or brads). See the following: http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/upload/Deminimis-Waiver-04-15-14.pdf.

EPA also clarifies that minor components of two listed products – valves and hydrants -- may not need to meet the AIS requirements if the minor components comprise a very small quantity of minor, low-cost fasteners that are of unknown origin. See EPA's questions and answers on the subject at the following: http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/upload/AIS-QandA-Part-1-Valves-and-Hydrants-final.pdf.

2. Q: Does PCCP pipe have to be domestically produced?

A: Yes. Pre-stressed concrete cylinder pipe (PCCP) or other similar concrete cylinder pipes would be comparable to pre-cast concrete which is specifically listed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 as a product subject to the AIS requirement.

3. Q: If the iron or steel is made from recycled metals will the vendor/supplier have to provide a certification document certifying that the recycled metals are domestically produced?

A: No. Recycled source materials used in the production of iron and steel products do not have to come from the U.S. Iron or steel scrap, for instance, are considered raw materials that may come from anywhere. While certification is not required for the raw material, EPA does recommend that additional final processing of iron and steel be certified to have occurred in the U.S.

4. Q: Do tanks used for filtration systems, if delivered to the construction site separately and then filled with filtration media onsite, have to be domestically produced?

A: No. Tanks that are specifically designed to be filters, or as parts of a filtration system, do not have to be domestically produced because these parts are no longer simply tanks, even if the filter media has not been installed and will be installed at the project site, as is customary to do for shipping purposes. These parts have only one purpose which is to be housing for filters and cannot be used in another fashion.

5. Q: Can a recipient use non-domestic flanged pipe?

A: No. While the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 does not specifically mention flanged pipe, since it does mention both pipe and flanges, both products would need to be domestically produced. Therefore, flanged pipe would also need to be domestically produced.

6. Q: Can a recipient use non-domestic couplings, expansion joints, and other similar pipe connectors?

A: No. These products would be considered specialty fittings, due to their additional functionality, but still categorized under the larger “fitting” categorization. Fittings are defined as a material that joins pipes together or connects to a pipe (AWWA, The Drinking Water Dictionary, 2000). Therefore, these products must comply with the AIS requirements and be produced domestically.

7. Q: Can a recipient use non-domestic service saddles and tapping sleeves?

A: No. These products are necessary for pipe repair, to tap a water main, or to install a service or house connection. Therefore, they are included under the larger “pipe restraint” category which is a specifically identified product subject to the domestic preference in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014.

8. Q: The AIS guidance does not appear to cover reused items (i.e., existing pipe fittings, used storage tanks, reusing existing valves). How should reused items be addressed?

A: The AIS guidance does not address reuse of items. Reuse of items that would otherwise be covered by AIS is acceptable provided that the item(s) was originally purchased prior to January 17, 2014, the reused item(s) is not substantially altered from original form/function, and any restoration work that may be required does not include the replacement or addition of foreign iron or steel replacement parts. EPA recommends keeping a log of these reused items by including them on the assistance recipient’s de minimis list, and stating therein that these items are reused products. The donation of new items (such as a manufacturer waiving cost for certain delivered items because of concerns regarding the origin of a new product) is not, however, considered reuse.

9. Q: What does “time needed” mean in the AIS guidance, in reference to the definition of “Reasonably Available Quantity”?

A: For considering whether a product would meet reasonably available quantity, “time needed” is based on the construction schedule. If the item is delayed and there is substantial impact on the overall construction schedule, this would not be according to the “time needed.”

10. Q: If a product is not specifically included on the list of AIS covered products, must it comply with AIS?

A: Possibly. The AIS requirements include a list of specifically covered products, one of which is construction materials, a broad category of potential products. For construction materials, EPA’s AIS guidance includes a set of example items that it considers construction materials composed primarily of iron and steel and covered by the Act. This example list in the guidance is not an all-inclusive list of potential construction materials. However, the guidance also includes a list of items that EPA specifically does not consider construction materials, generally those of electrical or complex-mechanical nature. If a product is similar to the ones in the non-construction material list (and it is also not specifically listed by the Act), it is not a construction material. For all other items specifically included in the Act, coverage is generally self-evident.

11. Q: If a listed iron and steel product is used as a part for an assembled product that is non-domestic, do the AIS requirements apply?

A: AIS requirements only apply to the final product as delivered to the work site and incorporated into the project. Other assemblies, such as a pumping assembly or a reverse osmosis package plant, are distinct products not listed and do not need to be made in the U.S. or composed of all U.S. parts. Therefore, for the case of a non-covered product used in a larger non-domestic assembly, the components, even if specifically listed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, do not have to be domestically produced.

12. Q: Is cast iron excluded from the AIS requirements?

A: No. Cast iron products that fall under the definition of iron and steel products must comply with the AIS requirements.

13. Q: The guidance states that “construction materials” do not include mechanical equipment, but then identifies ductwork as a construction material. Please clarify.

A: Ductwork is not mechanical equipment, therefore it is considered a “construction material” and must comply with the AIS requirements.

14. Q: Do “meters” mentioned in EPA’s guidance as non-construction materials include both flow meters and water meters?

A: Yes. “Meters” includes any type of meter, including: flow meters, wholesale meters, and water meters/service connections.

15. Q: Must coiled steel be domestic?

A: Yes. Coiled steel is an intermediate product used in the production of steel pipe and must come from a U.S. source or subject to a waiver in order to comply with the AIS requirements.

16. Q: Are pig iron, direct reduced iron (DRI), and ingot considered raw materials?

A: No. These are considered intermediate products used in the production of iron or steel and must come from a U.S. source or subject to a waiver in order to comply with the AIS requirements.

17. Q: Can assistance recipients rely on a marking that reads, “Made in the USA,” as evidence that all processes took place in the U.S.?

A: No. This designation is not consistent with our requirements that all manufacturing processes of iron and steel products must take place in the U.S.

18. Q: When determining what constitutes a product made “primarily” of iron or steel, who makes this determination?

A: The manufacturer will show if its product qualifies as primarily made of iron or steel. The recipient should expect the manufacturer to provide documentation/ certification that its product is AIS compliant.

19. Q: Do aerators need to be produced domestically in order to comply with AIS?

A: No. Aerators, similar to pumps, are mechanical equipment that do not need to meet the AIS requirements. “Blowers/aeration equipment, compressors” are listed in EPA’s guidance as non-construction materials.

20. Q: Are Sluice and Slide Gates considered valves?

A: No. Valves are products that are generally encased / enclosed with a body, bonnet, and stem. Examples include enclosed butterfly, ball, globe, piston, check, wedge, and gate valves. Furthermore, “gates” (meaning sluice, slide or weir gates) are listed in EPA’s guidance as non-construction materials.

AIS PROCESS QUESTIONS

21. Q: Will notices of waiver applications be published in the federal register?

A: No. Applications for waivers will be published on EPA’s website (http://water.epa.gov/grants_funding/aisrequirement.cfm). EPA will provide 15 days for open public comment, as noted on the website.

22. Q: Will states be collecting the step certification paper trail, as presented in the AIS guidance?

A. No. Assistance recipients must maintain documentation of compliance with AIS. EPA recommends use of the step certification process. This process is a best practice and traces all manufacturing of iron and steel products to the U.S. If the process is used, the state does not have to collect the documentation. The documents must be kept by the assistance recipient and reviewed by the state during project reviews.

23. Q: Why is it considered a best practice for states to conduct site visits, when it is the assistance recipient's responsibility to meet the AIS requirements?

A: It is both the assistance recipient's and the state's responsibility to ensure compliance with the AIS requirements. The state is the recipient of a federal grant and must comply with all grant conditions, including a condition requiring that the AIS requirements be adhered to. Therefore, it is recommended that states conduct site visits of projects during construction and review documentation demonstrating the assistance recipient's proof of compliance.

24. Q: Please further define the state's role in the waiver process.

A: The state's role in the waiver process is to review any waiver requests submitted to the state in order to ensure that all necessary information has been provided by the assistance recipient prior to forwarding the request to EPA. If a state finds the request lacking, the state should work with the assistance recipient to help obtain complete information.

25. Q: How much time does EPA have to evaluate the waiver during the evaluation step?

A: At a minimum, EPA is required to provide 15 days for open public comment. There is no specific deadline or time limit for EPA to review waiver requests. Each waiver request will come with its own specific details and circumstances and may require a different amount of time for review and analysis. For example, public interest waivers in general may take longer to review than availability waivers which are typically more straightforward. However, EPA understands that construction may be delayed while waiting for a waiver and will make every effort to review and issue decisions on waiver requests in a timely manner.

PROJECT QUESTIONS

26. Q: What if a project is funded by another funding entity (i.e., United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development) where AIS is not required and begins construction after January 17, 2014 but then applies to the SRF to refinance the project? Are they ineligible?

A: The project is not ineligible. AIS requirements will apply to any construction that occurs after the assistance agreement is signed, through the end of construction. If construction is complete, there is no retroactive application of the AIS requirements.

27. Q: If the assistance recipient can demonstrate through market research that the AIS requirement will exceed the 25 percent cost threshold, is the entire project exempt from the AIS requirement?

A: If the waiver application shows that the inclusion of American iron and steel products causes the entire cost of the project to increase by more the 25 percent, a waiver may be granted for the entirety of the project.

28. Q: Can the recipient use non-SRF funds to pay for the non-compliant item.

A: No. It is not an acceptable to use non-SRF funds to pay for a non-compliant item. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 requires that all iron and steel products, no matter the source of funding, must be made in the U.S. if SRF funds are used in the project.

29. Q: What constitutes “satisfactory quality” as defined in the AIS guidance, in reference to the availability waiver process.

A: “Satisfactory quality” means the product meets the project design specifications. A waiver may be granted if a recipient determines that the project plans and design would be compromised because there are no American made products available that meet the project design specifications.

30. Q: The guidance states that the AIS requirement applies to any project “funded in whole or in part” by an SRF. Where is this in the Act?

A: The Act states that, “None of the funds made available by a ... [State SRF program] ... shall be used for a project for the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of a public water system or treatment works unless all of the iron and steel products used in the project are produced in the United States.” This sentence clearly states that no SRF program may use its funds for a project unless all of the iron and steel products used in the project are made in the U.S. This is true even if only \$1 of SRF funding is used in the project.

31. Q: There is always an expectation on the part of an assistance recipient that the construction phase of a planning and/or design only loan will be funded through the SRF. If the original planning and/or design only loan was executed prior to a January 17, 2014, does this mean the entire project will be exempt from the AIS requirement?

A: If the original loan includes construction, and was executed prior to January 17, 2014, then the AIS provision does not apply to the project. If the original loan was only for planning and/or design, then a written commitment or documented “expectation” is needed to show exemption from the

requirements. Appearance on a priority list in an Intended Use Plan along with written reasonable assurance from the state that the recipient will receive SRF funding for project construction could provide sufficient evidence of “expectation of funding”.

32. Q: What if there has been a change order or redesign requiring new plans and specifications to be approved and they were approved after January 17, 2014: does the project now have to comply with AIS?

A: In most cases, no. Change orders are typically small enough changes that the original plan and specification date will still hold true. For example, if a pipe alignment has to be changed for a block or two due to unforeseen conditions, but new plans and specifications had to be submitted for this section of the project, then that could be considered a minor change. However, if there has been a major redesign, perhaps the whole project had to be redesigned starting from scratch, then the new plans and specification approval date would apply.

33. Q: What if the bids on a project with plans and specifications approved before January 17, 2014 but the loan is signed after January 17, 2014 come in low, and there is significant funding remaining in the loan agreement, so the community designs a second project with the remaining funds: does that project have to comply with the AIS requirements?

A: If the second project is closely related in purpose, place and time to the first project, then the second project would be exempt from the AIS requirements. It is the assistance recipient’s responsibility (with state oversight) to show that a project is closely related, or not, in purpose, place and time.

34. Q: What if the assistance agreement was signed after January 17, 2014, state approval of plans for the first phase of the project was in place prior to January 17, 2014, but state approval of the plans for the second phase of the project was received after January 17, 2014?

A: In such a case, the AIS provision would not apply to the first phase of the project. If the second phase of the project is considered the same project as the first phase, due to its close relation in purpose, place and time, the entire project may be exempt. It is the assistance recipient’s responsibility (with state oversight) to show that phases of a project is closely related, or not, in purpose, place and time.

35. Q: Do products purchased through procurement-only contracts have to be comply with AIS?

A: Yes. For projects funded by SRF, the products procured under any form of contract must comply with AIS. A procurement-only contract generally involves the bulk purchase of common items (such as pipe, concrete, and/or pumps) of independent timing from a set of planned projects. If products which are purchased through a procurement-only contract are being installed under another contract, the procurement-only contract would probably not be considered a separate project in purpose, place and time; and therefore, would have to comply with the AIS requirements.