

**File Code:** 6500**Date:** JUN 05 2015**Route To:** 6300; 1580**Subject:** National Safety Boot Reimbursement Program**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors**REPLY DUE JULY 1, 2015**

This letter provides updated and clarifying information regarding the Safety Boot Reimbursement program (national program) that started on January 1, 2015. Currently, there are two separate processes for purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) based on the two categories of PPE and eligibility under the national program:

- Non-specialty PPE: The purpose of the national program is to offset costs (up to \$300) incurred by employees who purchase PPE for work that is not required by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards (www.osha.gov). This type of employee purchased PPE is referred to as non-specialty PPE. Examples of non-specialty PPE footwear covered by the national program include: steel-toe shoes or boots, snow or rain boots, and normal work boots. Under the national program, employees who meet the program requirements may seek reimbursement from the Forest Service.
- Specialized PPE: OSHA requires employers (Forest Service) to pay for and provide specialized PPE used to protect employees from workplace hazards that can cause injury or illness. Examples of government-furnished footwear considered specialized PPE include: caulk boots, Kevlar boots, and waders. Government purchase instruments (e.g., purchase cards) may only be used for government-furnished equipment that remains the property of the Forest Service. Specialized PPE is not covered under the national reimbursement program.

If your unit has negotiated a local agreement that provides for reimbursement of fire and field-going safety boot expenses, you should seek reimbursement only through ASC-B&F, Miscellaneous Pay. Without regard to any existing agreement to the contrary, government purchase instruments (e.g., purchase cards) may only be used for government-furnished equipment.

The electronic Safety Boot Reimbursement Module (SBRM), which went live May 26, 2015, is intended only for use with the national program and should not be used to comply with units' existing local agreements. After your unit's existing local agreement expires or is terminated, all safety boot reimbursements are subject to the national program and its SBRM process. Units shall not negotiate any new local safety boot reimbursement agreements.



Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

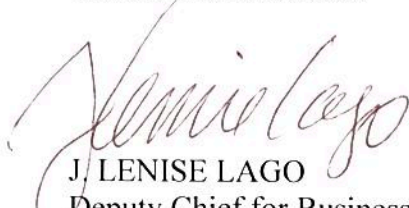
2

An employee must be in an active pay status to request and receive reimbursement through SBRM, and must also certify that they are not knowingly leaving the Agency within 45 days. Any refund of monies obtained under the national program must be returned to the Agency if not used as intended. Ongoing audits will monitor controls for such potential misuse of funds, which may also lead to disciplinary and/or collection action.

This letter stands as policy for the matters contained herein until these changes are incorporated into FSH 6509.11k Chapter 40. These changes have been approved by the established Agency-wide working group, which includes participating Union members. Any exemption to this letter, FSH 6509.11k Chapter 40, or related directions such as the Safety Boot Reimbursement FAQs (Enclosure), must be approved by the CFO. Exemption requests must include a supervisor's written justification.

You may view additional information about the national safety boot reimbursement program via this link: [https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/fs-cfo-fp/safety boot](https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/fs-cfo-fp/safety%20boot). Examples of additional footwear that may be considered as specialized PPE, including descriptive information, should be sent to Rico Clarke by no later than July 1, 2015. If you have any questions, please contact Rico Clarke, Director, Financial Policy, via phone at 703.605.4938, or via email at relarke@fs.fed.us.


THELMA J. STRONG
Chief Financial Officer


J. LENISE LAGO
Deputy Chief for Business Operations

Enclosure