CONTRACTORS’ DUTIES
UNDER MODIFICATIONS TO THE PREVAILING WAGE LAWS;
USE OF THE NEW AGC OF CALIFORNIA FORM

With the passage of new legislation (Senate Bill (“SB”) 1328) effective January 1, 1998, the duties and responsibilities of both prime contractors and subcontractors under California’s prevailing wage statutes have undergone considerable modification. AGC contractor members acting in the capacity of a subcontractor, a prime contractor, or engaging the services of a subcontractor under them on California public works projects are affected by the changes in the law.

The California courts had previously held prime contractors responsible for their subcontractors’ prevailing wage violations and for statutory penalties for those violations, even if the prime contractor not aware of the violations until after the project had been completed. Under the terms of SB 1328, prime contractors will no longer be liable for statutory penalties, if they comply with a variety of new requirements designed to ensure that their subcontractors fulfill their prevailing wage obligations.

These requirements are:

1. The contract executed between the contractor and the subcontractor for the performance of work on the public works project must include a copy of the provisions of Labor Code Sections 1771, 1775, 1777.5, 1813 and 1815.

2. The prime contractor must monitor the payment of the specified general rate of per diem wages by the subcontractor to his or her employees, by periodically reviewing the certified payroll records of the subcontractor.

3. Upon becoming aware of the failure of any subcontractor to pay its workers the specified prevailing rate of wages, the prime contractor must take corrective action to halt or rectify the failure, including, but not limited to, retaining sufficient funds due the subcontractor for work performed on the public works project to cover the prevailing wage shortfall, and

4. Prior to making final payment to the subcontractor for work performed on the public works project, the prime contractor must obtain an affidavit, signed under penalty of perjury from the subcontractor, stating that the subcontractor has paid the specified general prevailing rate of per diem wages to its employees on the public works project.

Unless all of these requirements are met, prime contractors will continue to be liable for the prevailing wage violations of their subcontractors. Also, if a prime contractor has knowledge of a subcontractor’s failure to pay prevailing wages, it will still be liable even if it otherwise complies with the above requirements. Prevailing wage violations carry statutory penalties of up to $50.00 per worker per day in addition to the wage shortfall, making the potential liability for failing to comply with SB 1328 considerable.

AGC contractor and specialty members performing as subcontractors on California public works projects should not be too inconvenienced by the new law. However, they are likely to receive more frequent requests from prime contractors for certified payroll records, and will likely see in their subcontracts a requirement that they execute an affidavit regarding payment of prevailing wages on the project as a precondition to payment of retention.

Prime contractors engaging subcontractors under them on California public works projects are now faced with the considerable burdens of: (1) modifying their contracts, (2) periodically reviewing their subcontractors’ certified payroll records, (3) taking corrective action where prevailing wage violations are found, and (4) seeking affidavits from their subcontractors before final payments are made. The potential reward, however, for accepting these burdens is considerable: no longer will the prime contractor face liability for violations of the prevailing wage law of which the prime contractor had no knowledge and could not prevent.

AGC of California is now selling a new form, “Public Works Subcontract Addendum,” (Form AGCC - 22) which contains the relevant California Labor Code sections and a Subcontract Affidavit. This form, if attached to a prime contractor’s subcontract, can protect prime contractors against liability for a subcontractor’s failure to pay prevailing wages (provided the prime contractor complies with the other requirements of the California Labor Code discussed above). These forms are available from AGC of California’s Sacramento office; please call (916) 371-2422.
The following provisions of California Labor Code sections 1771, 1775, 1776, 1777.5, 1813 and 1815 are incorporated into this Subcontract. Subcontractor agrees to comply with all of the above-referenced provisions applicable to the performance of its work on the project described in this Subcontract.

Prior to receiving final payment for work performed on this project, Subcontractor must sign and deliver to Contractor the attached affidavit, stating under penalty of perjury that Subcontractor has paid the specified general prevailing rate of per diem wage to all of Subcontractor’s employees on the project and any amounts due pursuant to Section 1813.

Subcontractor agrees to indemnify and hold the contractor harmless from any fines, forfeitures, damages, liabilities, losses, penalties, assessments, attorneys’ fees, costs and any other expenses arising out of, or connected in any way to, the Subcontractor’s alleged or actual failure to comply with the above-referenced California Labor Code provisions.

§ 1771. Payment of general prevailing rate

Except for public works projects of one thousand dollars ($1,000) or less, not less than the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for work of a similar character in the locality in which the public work is performed, and not less than the general prevailing rate of per diem wages for holiday and overtime work fixed as provided in this chapter, shall be paid to all workers employed on public works.

This section is applicable only to work performed under contract, and is not applicable to work carried out by a public agency with its own forces. This section is applicable to contracts let for maintenance work.

§ 1775. Penalties for violations; action against contractor to recover penalties

(a) The contractor and any subcontractor under him or her shall, as a penalty to the state or political subdivision on whose behalf the contract is made or awarded, forfeit not more than fifty dollars ($50) for each calendar day, or portion thereof, for each worker paid less than the prevailing wage rates as determined by the director for the work or craft in which the worker is employed on public works.

(b) If a worker employed by a subcontractor on a public works project is not paid the general prevailing per diem wages by the subcontractor, the prime contractor of the project shall have knowledge of that failure of the subcontractor to pay the specified prevailing rate of wages to those workers or unless the prime contractor fails to comply with all of the following requirements:

(1) The contract executed between the contractor and the subcontractor for the performance of work on the public works project shall include a copy of the provisions of Sections 1771, 1775, 1776, 1777.5, 1813, and 1815.

(2) The contractor shall monitor the payment of the specified general prevailing rate of per diem wages by the subcontractor to the employees, by periodic review of the certified payroll records of the subcontractor.

(3) Upon becoming aware of the failure of the subcontractor to pay his of her workers the specified prevailing rate of wages, the contractor shall diligently take corrective action to halt or rectify the failure, including, but not limited to, retaining sufficient funds due the subcontractor for work performed on the public works project.

(4) Prior to making final payment to the subcontractor for work performed on the public works project, the contractor shall obtain an affidavit signed under penalty of perjury from the subcontractor that the subcontractor has paid the specified general prevailing rate of per diem wages to his or her employees on the public works project and any amounts due pursuant to Section 1813.
The Division of Labor Standards Enforcement shall notify the contractor on a public works project within 15 days of the receipt by the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement of a complaint of the failure of a subcontractor on that public works project to pay workers the general prevailing rate of per diem wages. If the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement determines that employees of a subcontractor were not paid the general prevailing rate of per diem wages and if the body awarding the contract under which the employees performed work did not retain sufficient money under the contract to pay those employees the balance of wages owed under the general prevailing rate of per diem wages, the contractor shall withhold an amount of moneys due the subcontractor sufficient to pay those employees the general prevailing rate of per diem wages if requested by the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. The contractor shall pay any money retained from and owed to a subcontractor upon receipt of notification by the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement that the wage complaint has been resolved. If notice of the resolution of the wage complaint has not been received by the contractor within 180 days of the filing of a valid notice of completion or acceptance of the public works project, whichever occurs later, the contractor shall pay all moneys retained from the subcontractor to the awarding body. The moneys shall be retained by the awarding body pending the final decision of an enforcement action, and be forwarded to the Labor Commissioner for disbursement pursuant to subdivision (d) if the subcontractor does not prevail in the action. Wages for workers who cannot be located after diligent search by the Labor Commissioner shall be deposited in the Industrial Relations Unpaid Wage Fund pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 96.7. Penalties shall be paid into the General Fund.

If the subcontractor prevails in the enforcement action, the awarding body shall release any funds retained pursuant to this subdivision to the contractor within 10 working days from the date of the final decision of the court.

To the extent that there is insufficient money due a contractor to cover all penalties and amounts due in accordance with this section or Section 1813, and in all cases where the contract does not provide for a money payment by the awarding body to the contractor, the awarding body shall notify the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement of the violation and the division, if necessary with the assistance of the awarding body, may maintain an action in any court of competent jurisdiction to recover the penalties and the amounts due provided in this section. This action shall be commenced not later than 180 days after the filing of a valid notice of completion in the office of the county recorder in each county in which the public work or some part thereof was performed, or not later than 180 days after acceptance of the public work, whichever last occurs. No issue other than that of the liability of the contractor and subcontractor for the penalties allegedly forfeited and amounts due shall be determined in the action, and the burden shall be upon the contractor and subcontractor to establish that the penalties and amounts demanded in the action are not due. The contractor and subcontractor shall be jointly and severally liable in an enforcement action for any wages due. Following entry of a judgment for joint and several liability, the division shall first exhaust all reasonable remedies to collect the amount due from the subcontractor before pursuing the claim for wages against the contractor. From the amount collected from the subcontractor, the wage claim shall be satisfied prior to the amount being applied to penalties.

Out of any money withheld, recovered, or both, there shall first be paid the amount due each worker, and if insufficient funds are withheld, recovered, or both, to pay each worker in full, the money shall be prorated among all workers.

This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2003, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2003, deletes or extends that date.

§ 1776. Payroll records; retention; inspection; noncompliance penalties; rules and regulations

(a) Each contractor and subcontractor shall keep accurate payroll records, showing the name, address, social security number, work classification, straight time and overtime hours worked each day and week, and the actual per diem wages paid to each journeyman, apprentice, worker, or other employee employed by him or her in connection with the public work. Each payroll record shall contain or be verified by a written declaration that it is made under penalty of perjury, stating both of the following:

(1) The information contained in the payroll record is true and correct.

(2) The employer has complied with the requirements of Sections 1771, 1811, and 1815 for any work performed by his or her employees on the public works project.

(b) The payroll records enumerated under subdivision (a) shall be certified and shall be available for inspection at all reasonable hours at the principal office of the contractor on the following basis:

(1) A certified copy of an employee’s payroll record shall be available for inspection or furnished to the employee or his or her authorized representative on request.

(2) A certified copy of all payroll records enumerated in subdivision (a) shall be made available for inspection or furnished upon request to a representative of the body awarding the contract, the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, and the Division of Apprenticeship Standards of the Department of Industrial Relations.

(3) A certified copy of all payroll records enumerated in subdivision (a) shall be made available upon request by the public for inspection or for copies thereof. However, a request by the public shall be made through either the body awarding the contract, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards, or the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement. If the requested payroll records have not been provided pursuant to paragraph (2), the requesting party shall, prior to being provided the records, reimburse the costs of preparation by the contractor, subcontractors, and the entity through which the request was made. The public shall not be given access to the records at the principal office of the contractor.

(c) The certified payroll records shall be on forms provided by the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement or shall contain the same information as the forms provided by the division.
(d) A contractor or subcontractor shall file a certified copy of the records enumerated in subdivision (a) with the entity that requested the records within 10 days after receipt of a written request.

(e) Any copy of records made available for inspection as copies and furnished upon request to the public or any public agency by the awarding body, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards, or the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement shall be marked or obliterated in a manner so as to prevent disclosure of an individual’s name, address, and social security number. The name and address of the contractor awarded the contract or the subcontractor performing the contract shall not be marked or obliterated.

(f) The contractor shall inform the body awarding the contract of the location of the records enumerated under subdivision (a), including the street address, city and county, and shall, within five working days, provide a notice of a change of location and address.

(g) The contractor or subcontractor shall have 10 days in which to comply subsequent to receipt of a written notice requesting the records enumerated in subdivision (a). In the event that the contractor or subcontractor fails to comply within the 10-day period, he or she shall, as a penalty to the state or political subdivision on whose behalf the contract is made or awarded, forfeit twenty-five dollars ($25) for each calendar day, or portion thereof, for each worker, until strict compliance is effected. Upon the request of the Division of Apprenticeship Standards or the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement, these penalties shall be withheld from progress payments then due. A contractor is not subject to a penalty assessment pursuant to this section due to the failure of a subcontractor to comply with this section.

(h) The body awarding the contract shall cause to be inserted in the contract stipulations to effectuate this section.

(i) The director shall adopt rules consistent with the California Public Records Act, (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250), Division 7, Title 1, Government Code) and the Information Practices Act of 1977, (Title 1.8 (commencing with Section 1798), Part 4, Division 3, Civil Code) governing the release of these records, including the establishment of reasonable fees to be charged for reproducing copies of records required by this section.

(j) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2003, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2003, deletes or extends that date.

§ 1777.5 Employment of registered apprentices; wages; standards; number; apprenticeship craft or trade; exemptions; contributions

Nothing in this chapter shall prevent the employment of properly registered apprentices upon public works.

Every apprentice shall be paid the standard wage paid to apprentices under the regulations of the craft or trade at which he or she is employed, and shall be employed only at the work of the craft or trade to which he or she is registered.

Only apprentices, as defined in Section 3077, who are in training under apprenticeship standards and written apprentice agreements under Chapter 4 (commencing with Section 3070) of Division 3 are eligible to be employed on public works. The employment and training of each apprentice shall be in accordance with the apprenticeship standards and apprentice agreements under which he or she is training.

When the contractor to whom the contract is awarded by the state or any political subdivision, or any subcontractor under him or her, in performing any of the work under the contract or subcontract, employs workers in any apprenticeship craft or trade, the contractor and subcontractor shall apply to the joint apprenticeship committee administering the apprenticeship standards of the craft or trade in the area of the site of the public work for a certificate approving the contractor or subcontractor under the apprenticeship standards for the employment and training of apprentices in the area or industry affected. However, approval as established by the joint apprenticeship committee or committees shall be subject to the approval of the Administrator of Apprenticeship. The joint apprenticeship committee or committees, subsequent to approving the subject contractor or subcontractor, shall arrange for the dispatch of apprentices to the contractor or subcontractor in order to comply with this section. Every contractor and subcontractor shall submit contract award information to the applicable joint apprenticeship committee that includes an estimate of journeyman hours to be performed under the contract, the number of apprentices to be employed, and the approximate dates the apprentices will be employed. There is an affirmative duty upon the joint apprenticeship committee or committees administering the apprenticeship standards of the craft or trade in the area of the site of the public work to ensure equal employment and affirmative action in apprenticeship for women and minorities. Contractors and subcontractors shall not be required to submit individual applications for approval to local joint apprenticeship committees provided they are already covered by the local apprenticeship standards.

The ratio of work performed by apprentices to journeyman who shall be employed in the craft or trade on the public work may be the ratio stipulated in the apprenticeship standards under which the joint apprenticeship committee operates, but, except as otherwise provided in this section, in no case shall the ratio be less than one hour of apprentices work for every five hours of labor performed by a journeyman. However, the minimum ratio for the land surveyor classification shall not be less than one apprentice for each five journeymen.

Any ratio shall apply during any day or portion of a day when any journeyman, or the higher standard stipulated by the joint apprenticeship committee, is employed at the job site and shall be computed on the basis of the hours worked during the day by journeymen so employed, except for the land surveyor classification. The contractor shall employ apprentices for the number of hours computed as above before the end of the contract. However, the contractor shall endeavor, to the greatest extent possible, to employ apprentices during the same time period that the journeymen in the same craft or trade are employed at the job site. Where an hourly apprenticeship ratio is not feasible for a particular craft or trade, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards, upon application of a joint apprenticeship committee, may order a minimum ratio of not less than one apprentice for each five journeymen in a craft or trade classification.

The contractor or subcontractor, if he or she is covered by this section, upon the issuance of the approval certificate, or if he or she has been previously approved in the craft or trade, shall employ the number of apprentices or the ratio of apprentices to journeymen stipulated in the apprenticeship standards. Upon proper showing by the contractor that he or she employs apprentices in the craft or
trade in the state on all of his or her contracts on an annual average of not less than one hour of apprentice work for every five hours of labor performed by a journeyman or, in the land surveyor classification, one apprentice for each five journeymen, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards may grant a certificate exempting the contractor from the 1-to-5 hourly ratio as set forth in this section. This section does not apply to contracts of general contractors or to contracts of specialty contractors not bidding for work through a general or prime contractor, when the contracts of general contractors or those specialty contractors involve less than thirty thousand ($30,000) or 20 working days. Any work performed by a journeyman in excess of eight hours per day or 40 hours per week shall not be used to calculate the hourly ratio required by this section.

“Apprenticeship craft or trade,” as used in this section, means a craft or trade determined as an apprenticeable occupation in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by the California Apprenticeship Council. The joint apprenticeship committee has the discretion to grant a certificate, which shall be subject to the approval of the Administrator of Apprenticeship, exempting a contractor from the 1-to-5 ratio set forth in this section when it finds that any one of the following conditions is met:

(a) Unemployment for the previous three-month period in the area exceeds an average of 15 percent.

(b) The number of apprentices in training in the area exceeds a ratio of 1 to 5.

(c) There is a showing that the apprenticeable craft or trade is replacing at least one-thirtieth of its journeymen annually through apprenticeship training, either on a statewide basis or on a local basis.

(d) Assignment of an apprentice to any work performed under a public works contract would create a condition that would jeopardize his or her life of the life, safety, or property of fellow employees or the public at large or if the specific task to which the apprentice is to be assigned is of such a nature that training cannot be provided by a journeyman.

When exemptions are granted to an organization that represents contractors in a specific trade from the 1-to-5 ratio on a local or statewide basis, the member contractors will not be required to submit individual applications for approval to local joint apprenticeship committees, if they are already covered by the local apprenticeship standards.

A contractor to whom the contract is awarded, or any subcontractor under him or her who, in performing any of the work under the contract, employs journeymen or apprentices in any apprenticeable craft or trade and who is not contributing to a fund or funds to administer and conduct the apprenticeship program in any craft or trade in the area of the site of the public work, to which fund or funds other contractors in the area of the site of the public work are contributing, shall contribute to the fund or funds in each craft or trade in which he or she employs journeymen or apprentices on the public work in the same amount or upon the same basis and in the same manner as the other contractors do, but, where the trust fund administrators are unable to accept the funds, contractors not signatory to the trust agreement shall pay a like amount to the California Apprenticeship Council. The contractor or subcontractor may add the amount of the contributions in computing his or her bid for contract. The Division of Labor Standards Enforcement is authorized to enforce the payment of the contributions to the fund or funds as set forth in Section 227.

The body awarding the contract shall cause to be inserted in the contract stipulations to effectuate this section. The stipulations shall fix the responsibility of compliance with this section for all apprenticeable occupations with the prime contractor.

All decisions of the joint apprenticeship committee under this section are subject to Section 3081.

§ 1813. Forfeiture for violation; contract stipulation; report of violations

The contractor or subcontractor shall, as a penalty to the state or political subdivision on whose behalf the contract is made or awarded, forfeit twenty-five dollars ($25) for each worker employed in the execution of the contract by the respective contractor or subcontractor for each calendar day during which the worker is required or permitted to work more than 8 hours in any one calendar day and 40 hours in any one calendar week in violation of the provisions of this article. In awarding any contract for public work, the awarding body shall cause to be inserted in the contract a stipulation to this effect. The awarding body shall take cognizance of all violations of this article committed in the course of the execution of the contract, and shall report them to the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement.

This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2003, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2003, deletes or extends that date.

§ 1815. Overtime

Notwithstanding the provisions in Sections 1810 to 1814, inclusive, of this code, and notwithstanding any stipulation inserted in any contract pursuant to the requirements of said sections, work performed by employees of contractors in excess of 8 hours per day, and 40 hours during any one week, shall be permitted upon public work upon compensation for all hours worked in excess of 8 hours per day at not less than ½ times the basic rate of pay.

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SUBCONTRACTOR AFFIDAVIT

I, __________________________ declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that:

1. I am the __________________________ of __________________________ and I am responsible for the payment of __________________________ who performed work on the __________________________ during all payroll periods from __________________________ through __________________________, all persons employed by __________________________ on this project have at all times been paid the specified general prevailing rate of per diem wages and any amounts due pursuant to California Labor Code Section 1813.

Executed and sworn to this __________________________ day of __________________________, __________________________.

______________________________
(Signature)

Affiant’s name

Company

Project

first work date

last work date

Company

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