



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-260500

July 24, 1995

The Honorable Larry Pressler
Chairman
The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Robert S. Walker
Chairman
The Honorable George E. Brown, Jr.
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Science
House of Representatives

The Fire Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-522) requires automatic fire sprinklers or an equivalent level of safety for leased federal office buildings with at least 35,000 square feet of federally occupied space and some portion of the space located above the 5th floor. The act provides for an exemption to this requirement "...if the leasing agency certifies that no suitable building with automatic sprinkler systems or an equivalent level of safety is available at an affordable cost."

The act, dated October 26, 1992, provided a 2-year delay in the effective date for the fire safety provision, during which period the General Services Administration (GSA) was required to promulgate regulations to define the term "equivalent level of safety." After completing a formal rule-making process, GSA published the regulation in the Federal Register on November 1, 1994, with an effective date of October 26, 1994.¹ Within 3 years of its enactment, the act also requires us to audit a sample of such exemption certifications. This letter is in response to that requirement.

¹41 C.F.R. part 101-6, Fire Protection (Fire Safety) Engineering.

154795

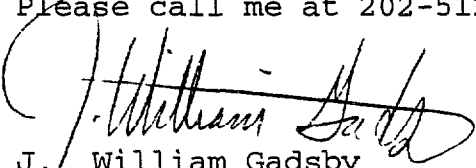
B-260500

To comply with the act, we attempted to review exemption certifications issued by GSA during the period October 26, 1994, through April 30, 1995, and to verify, for each certificate issued, that a suitable building with an automatic sprinkler system or an equivalent level of safety was not available at an affordable cost. We chose GSA because it is the federal government's principal real estate agency. The time period we selected was based upon the effective date of the act's fire safety provision and consideration of the time needed to meet our required reporting date.

To determine the number of exemption certifications that GSA issued and the reason for issuing each certification, we contacted the Assistant Regional Administrator for Public Buildings in each of GSA's 11 regional offices and requested information on the exemptions issued within his or her region. We asked GSA to provide us a copy of each exemption certification issued during the period October 26, 1994, through April 30, 1995, and for each certification, documentation supporting the decision that no suitable building with an automatic sprinkler system or an equivalent level of safety was available at an affordable cost.

GSA informed us that for the first 6 months the regulations were in effect--October 26, 1994, through April 30, 1995--it did not issue any exemptions to the requirement that certain leased space either have automatic fire sprinklers or an equivalent level of safety. Accordingly, there were no exemption certifications for us to audit.

Please call me at 202-512-8387 if you have any questions.



J. William Gadsby
Director, Government Business
Operations Issues

(240172)

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

Orders by mail:

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015**

or visit:

**Room 1100
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000 or by using fax number (301) 258-4066, or TDD (301) 413-0006.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly available reports and testimony. To receive facsimile copies of the daily list or any list from the past 30 days, please call (301) 258-4097 using a touchtone phone. A recorded menu will provide information on how to obtain these lists.

**United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001**

**Bulk Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100**

**Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

Address Correction Requested
