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that the contractor is required to correct or otherwise complete by a specified date.

Contract quality requirements means the technical requirements in the contract relating to the quality of the product or service and those contract clauses prescribing inspection, and other quality controls incumbent on the contractor, to assure that the product or service conforms to the contractual requirements.

Critical nonconformance means a nonconformance that is likely to result in hazardous or unsafe conditions for individuals using, maintaining, or depending upon the supplies or services; or is likely to prevent performance of a vital agency mission.

Government contract quality assurance means the various functions, including inspection, performed by the Government to determine whether a contractor has fulfilled the contract obligations pertaining to quality and quantity.

Major nonconformance means a nonconformance, other than critical, that is likely to result in failure of the supplies or services, or to materially reduce the usability of the supplies or services for their intended purpose.

Minor nonconformance means a nonconformance that is not likely to materially reduce the usability of the supplies or services for their intended purpose, or is a departure from established standards having little bearing on the effective use or operation of the supplies or services.

Off-the-shelf item means an item produced and placed in stock by a contractor, or stocked by a distributor, before receiving orders or contracts for its sale. The item may be commercial or produced to military or Federal specifications or description.

Patent defect means any defect which exists at the time of acceptance and is not a latent defect.

Subcontractor (see 44.101).

Testing means that element of inspection that determines the properties or elements, including functional operation of supplies or their components,

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by the application of established scientific principles and procedures.

[48 FR 42415, Sept. 19, 1983, as amended at 60 FR 48249, Sept. 18, 1995; 61 FR 31662, June 20, 1996; 64 FR 51846, Sept. 24, 1999; 66 FR 2133, Jan. 10, 2001]

46.102 Policy.

Agencies shall ensure that—

(a) Contracts include inspection and other quality requirements, including warranty clauses when appropriate, that are determined necessary to protect the Government's interest.

(b) Supplies or services tendered by contractors meet contract requirements;

(c) Government contract quality assurance is conducted before acceptance (except as otherwise provided in this part), by or under the direction of Government personnel;

(d) No contract precludes the Government from performing inspection;

(e) Nonconforming supplies or services are rejected, except as otherwise provided in 46.407;

(f) Contracts for commercial items shall rely on a contractor's existing quality assurance system as a substitute for compliance with Government inspection and testing before tender for acceptance unless customary market practices for the commercial item being acquired permit in-process inspection (Section 8002 of Public Law 103-355). Any in-process inspection by the Government shall be conducted in a manner consistent with commercial practice; and

(g) The quality assurance and acceptance services of other agencies are used when this will be effective, economical, or otherwise in the Government's interest (see subpart 42.1.)

[48 FR 42415, Sept. 19, 1983, as amended at 60 FR 48249, Sept. 18, 1995]

46.103 Contracting office responsibilities.

Contracting offices are responsible for—

(a) Receiving from the activity responsible for technical requirements any specifications for inspection, testing, and other contract quality requirements essential to ensure the integrity of the supplies or services (the activity

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responsible for technical requirements is responsible for prescribing contract quality requirements, such as inspection and testing requirements or, for service contracts, a quality assurance surveillance plan);

(b) Including in solicitations and contracts the appropriate requirements for the contractor's control of quality for the supplies or services to be acquired;

(c) Issuing any necessary instructions to the cognizant contract administration office and acting on recommendations submitted by that office (see 42.301 and 46.104(f));

(d) When contract administration is retained (see 42.201), verifying that the contractor fulfills the contract quality requirements; and

(e) Ensuring that nonconformances are identified, and establishing the significance of a nonconformance when considering the acceptability of supplies or services which do not meet contract requirements.

[48 FR 42415, Sept. 19, 1983, as amended at 61 FR 31663, June 20, 1996; 62 FR 44816, Aug. 22, 1997; 63 FR 9065, Feb. 23, 1998]

46.104 Contract administration office responsibilities.

When a contract is assigned for administration to the contract administration office cognizant of the contractor's plant, that office, unless specified otherwise, shall—

(a) Develop and apply efficient procedures for performing Government contract quality assurance actions under the contract in accordance with the written direction of the contracting office:

(b) Perform all actions necessary to verify whether the supplies or services conform to contract quality requirements;

(c) Maintain, as part of the performance records of the contract, suitable records reflecting—

(1) The nature of Government contract quality assurance actions, including, when appropriate, the number of observations made and the number and type of defects; and

(2) Decisions regarding the acceptability of the products, the processes, and the requirements, as well as action to correct defects.

(d) Implement any specific written instructions from the contracting office;

(e) Report to the contracting office any defects observed in design or technical requirements, including contract quality requirements; and

(f) Recommend any changes necessary to the contract, specifications, instructions, or other requirements that will provide more effective operations or eliminate unnecessary costs (see 46.103(c)).

[48 FR 42415, Sept. 19, 1983, as amended at 63 FR 9065, Feb. 23, 1998]

46.105 Contractor responsibilities.

(a) The contractor is responsible for carrying out its obligations under the contract by—

(1) Controlling the quality of supplies or services;

(2) Tendering to the Government for acceptance only those supplies or services that conform to contract requirements;

(3) Ensuring that vendors or suppliers of raw materials, parts, components, subassemblies, etc., have an acceptable quality control system; and

(4) Maintaining substantiating evidence, when required by the contract, that the supplies or services conform to contract quality requirements, and furnishing such information to the Government as required.

(b) The contractor may be required to provide and maintain an inspection system or program for the control of quality that is acceptable to the Government (see 46.202).

(c) The control of quality by the contractor may relate to, but is not limited to—

(1) Manufacturing processes, to ensure that the product is produced to, and meets, the contract's technical requirements;

(2) Drawings, specifications, and engineering changes, to ensure that manufacturing methods and operations meet the contract's technical requirements;

(3) Testing and examination, to ensure that practices and equipment provide the means for optimum evaluation of the characteristics subject to inspection;