

2026 Incident Purchasing Guidelines

Questions and Answers

Background:

In response to the reduction of government cardholders supporting incidents during the 2025 season, a more strategic approach to incident purchasing was adopted. Building on input received from the 2025 season and further changes to cardholder numbers, the following principles have been established for managing purchases at incidents in 2026, superseding the 2025 Restricted Purchasing List.

Guiding Principles:

- Utilize stock on hand (at host unit(s) or cache items) first. If items are unavailable, the cache cannot meet the date/time needed, or if the incident is small and does not utilize the national cache system, local purchases may be made.
- Assess needs based on anticipated incident duration, number of personnel, and appropriate order quantities.
- Provide basic first-aid items only; do not purchase designer or non-essential medications.

Q1. Are there circumstances under which Category 3 items may be purchased?

A1. Refer to Q3 for kit restocking protocols. Equipment such as BP cuffs and shears that are used or damaged during an incident should follow established replacement or damaged property processes. Approved replacements may be purchased with a valid resource order.

Q2. Why has the incident purchasing guidance been created?

A2. Stock on hand and caches (local or national) should serve as primary supply sources. This guidance represents a standard approach to incident purchasing, considering items deemed personal and therefore not eligible for purchase with appropriated funds. Typically, individuals in travel status receive \$5.00 per day for incidental expenses to cover personal item costs.

Q3. How should government Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) replenish their kits?

A3. Restocking of government-owned kits must adhere to the incident replacement process including, but not limited to, automated external defibrillator (AED) pads and glucose testing strips. Purchases should replace supplies consumed at the incident, not expired items. Justifications for restocking require approval from personnel with fiscal oversight (e.g., Incident Business Advisor or incident business specialist) and may be made by either the incident or home unit with a valid resource order.

Q4. What procedures should cooperator EMTs, paramedics, and Rapid Extraction Module Support (REMS) teams follow for kit restocking?

A4. Restocking depends on the terms and conditions outlined in the cooperative agreements under which resources are mobilized. If permitted, two options are available: (1) the preferred approach, issuing an S# for reimbursement via standard billing procedures, or (2) submitting requests for restocking through the incident's local purchase or expanded procurement support organization.

Q5. Are Category 3 items restricted to expanded procurement support organizations?

A5. The guiding principles apply universally to all purchasers, including both local purchasers and expanded procurement support organizations.

Q6. Are cache purchasers subject to the restricted purchasing list?

A6. Cache purchasers are responsible for maintaining cache kit inventories and can continue their procurement activities to ensure incidents are properly supported. Additional justification or approval is not required.

Q7. Why are AED pads and batteries included on this list?

A7. Incident funds should not be used to procure AEDs or expired pads and batteries. These items should be purchased with preseason funding. Incident replacement pertains solely to items utilized during the incident; replacement of expired items is not applicable. Charging incident replacements to the incident is appropriate.

Q8. Why are Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) items included in Category 3?

A8. The guidance specifically addresses emergency response functions and P-codes. BAER is not classified as an emergency response function. In the USFS, BAER items may not be purchased using P-codes; instead, BAER-related work and supplies are funded with H-codes, following an approved plan. The government purchase card can be used for BAER supply purchases charged to an H-code once the plan has been approved, in accordance with host agency procurement procedures.