Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior today announced four proposed amendments to the Code of Federal Regulations governing trading with Indians.

Under the proposed rule changes, licensed traders would no longer be required to furnish a penal bond to the United States of up to $10,000. Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs disclose that no effective use has been made of the ongoing procedure, particularly since traders who lease Indian lands are required by land leasing regulations to furnish performance bonds. Compliance with the laws and regulations will instead be assured by the rescinding of licenses for failure to comply, BIA officials said.

Another amendment would conform the licensing period of a trader to the period of his land lease. Non-Indians who lease Indian-owned lands hold land leases for periods of up to 25 years. Present regulations limit the issuance of licenses to trade to one-year periods. The administrative work involved in annual renewal procedures is believed by Bureau officials to divert staff members from other major responsibilities related to economic development of Indian lands.

An additional amendment provides for a $5 license fee, to help pay administrative costs.

Finally, the proposals would require the licensing of itinerant peddlers or purveyors of foodstuffs and other merchandise, since their trade has increased so that it is necessary to designate them as traders. Similar requirements have been in effect on the Navajo Reservation and several other Southwestern reservations since 1957.

A notice of intention to adopt the amended regulations is being published in the Federal Register. Suggested changes and comments should be forwarded to the Bureau of Indian Affairs within thirty days of the date of publication.