14.401 Receipt and safeguarding of bids.

(a) All bids (including modifications) received before the time set for the opening of bids *shall* be kept secure. Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, the bids *shall* not be opened or viewed, and *shall* remain in a locked bid box, a safe, or in a secured, restricted-access electronic bid box. If an invitation for bids is cancelled, bids *shall* be returned to the bidders. Necessary precautions *shall* be taken to ensure the security of the bid box or safe. Before bid opening, information concerning the identity and number of bids received *shall* be made available only to Government employees. Such disclosure *shall* be only on a "need to know" basis. When bid samples are submitted, they *shall* be handled with sufficient care to prevent disclosure of characteristics before bid opening.

(b) Envelopes marked as bids but not identifying the bidder or the *solicitation may* be opened solely for the purpose of identification, and then only by an official designated for this purpose. If a sealed bid is opened by mistake (*e.g.,* because it is not marked as being a bid), the envelope *shall* be signed by the opener, whose position *shall* also be written thereon, and delivered to the designated official. This official *shall* immediately write on the envelope (1)an explanation of the opening, (2) the date and time opened, and (3) the invitation for bids number, and *shall* sign the envelope. The official *shall* then immediately reseal the envelope.

Parent topic: Subpart 14.4 - Opening of Bids and Award of Contract