



HR Broadcast

The MRPBS web site has been redesigned! You may have noticed our new look. Be sure to check out the Human Resources pages, and save it as a favorite!
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/index.shtml>

HR CALENDAR

The Human Resources Division has put together what we hope you'll find to be a useful tool in helping you manage and respond to actions, activities and information related to a variety of HR-related functional areas. For example, what type of personnel actions do I need to remember to initiate each month?, when does the annual reminder on "use or lose" annual leave come out?, when are those financial disclosures reports due? The HR Calendar provides you with this and lots more information! The

Coming in the July Issue:

- eOPF update
- More LincPass Q&A's

Calendar will be kept up-to-date as information changes and will be available on our website (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/downloads/hr_calendar.pdf) for easy access by all our customers. We hope you will find this helpful!!

Be sure and check the calendar for the months of January, February, and March!!!

The Benefits Buzz



TSP News

Sign up to receive email notifications from the Thrift Savings Plan. No, the TSP won't fill up your email box with frequent emails - they will occasionally email you when they have posted important news on their web site. Go to <http://www.tsp.gov/> and click on "Get email updates."

The Thrift Savings Plan Service Office has mailed the annual TSP Participant Statement to all participants this month. Please take the time to read the information and to review your statement carefully.

The TSP Statement shows your Account Number, which you must use when using your Account Access section of the TSP web site, the Thriftline, or when completing forms that are processed by the TSP office, such as designation of beneficiary (TSP-3) or loan or withdrawal applications.

Most of the TSP forms have been revised recently, and older versions may not be acceptable. If your office stocks these forms, please update your supply. All TSP forms are available at <http://www.tsp.gov/> under Civilian Forms and Publications. Please follow the instructions on forms carefully. A common mistake is mailing the forms to the wrong address, which increases the administrative costs and delays processing.

For information on how to change your TSP contributions (TSP-1), TSP Catchup (TSP-1-C), and much more, go to: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml> Remember, TSP-1 and TSP-1-C forms are the only TSP forms processed by your Human Resources Office, and we require your SSN, not your TSP account number, to process these.

If you have questions about the Thrift Savings Plan, or your other employee benefits, please contact your servicing Benefits Specialist:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/benefits.shtml

Benefits Web Site

Thinking about retirement?

Preparing for a divorce?

Going on Leave Without Pay (LWOP)?

Have questions about how to credit your military service for retirement?

Looking for financial planning resources?

Please visit the Benefits Web Site to find information about many topics of interest:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/index.shtml>

Processing Tidbits

Duty Station and State/City Taxes

When a personnel action is processed to change an employee's duty location, that change may affect the employee's State and/or City tax deductions.

State taxes are withheld based on the duty station, not the address of an employee's residence. In these cases, state taxes withheld based on a duty station may be waived, if the duty station state and the residence state have a reciprocity agreement. Employees can contact the state tax office to determine if there is an agreement. Employees wishing to waive taxes for their duty station state need to complete a Certificate of Non-Residence, or similar form, for that state and a state withholding exemption certificate for the state in which they reside. These forms can be obtained at <http://statew4.com/content/taxforms.php>

City taxes can be withheld based on the duty station, the residence address, or both. City taxes will be deducted automatically from a pay check if the Department of Treasury has notified the National Finance Center (NFC) that city taxes are mandatory for a particular city. Treasury does this based on the number of Federal employees in a duty station (**usually must be at least 500 Federal employees**). If there are not a sufficient number of Federal employees in the city, then city taxes generally are not withheld

Performance Appraisals

Attention supervisors!! When you have completed your employee performance reviews, there is one final step you must take. **Copies of the summary performance ratings for each employee must be submitted to the Processing Section in Human Resources Operations-Minneapolis for entry into the personnel database.** The importance of entry into the personnel database is twofold: 1) proof that the appraisal was conducted; and 2) use in construction of a retention register in the event a Reduction in Force is ever required. Please do not send copies of the performance standards; only the summary rating sheet is required.

Copies of ratings are not filed in the electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF). Instead, ratings are filed in the Employee Performance File (EPF) which is maintained by the supervisor. Summary rating forms sent to the HRO-Minneapolis Processing Section are maintained for a short period of time following input in the personnel database, but then are shredded. As a result, rating forms are not available for retrieval.

LINC PASS FAQ's



Why do we need new ID badges?

After 9/11 the President issued a Homeland Security Directive mandating that all federal employees be issued a secure and reliable form of identification after undergoing a comprehensive background investigation. The goal of the Homeland Security initiative is to eliminate wide variations in the quality and security of forms of identification issued to government employees and contractors.

What will be different?

The identification card is technologically superior to the current badge and contains two computer chips. The embedded chip contains a 200 bit numeric string that is bound to an identity (yours) in order to protect your personnel information. It works on APHIS card door card readers to access APHIS facilities. The second smart chip is a computer chip that contains several pieces of information. A digital copy of your two index fingers, a digital copy of the picture on the front of the badge and 4 E-authentication certificates are on this chip. This chip works to allow you to use the new card to log on and use your computer. It will allow APHIS to eliminate passwords and implement what is called "single sign on".

What is the advantage of the new pass?

The new badge has several advantages. It is resistant to manipulation, fraud and theft. The new badge is issued to employees and contractors who have undergone a background investigation. It is compatible among all USDA agencies.

Why are we calling the ID badges Lincpass?

USDA chose to honor President Abraham Lincoln who commissioned the Agriculture Department.

Will these have an expiration date or will they be good for the rest of our time working for USDA? The Lincpass will expire 5 years from the date of issue or when you leave USDA, whichever comes first.

Might it be faster to get information from our Lotus Notes, rather than Ag Learn? Not all USDA Agencies utilize Lotus Notes whereas all USDA Agencies should be using e-authentication (AgLearn).

I've heard there is a GPS chip in the new card to track my every move, is this true? No. There are only two chips on the card. The contactless chip uses RFID technology and is only active when it comes in contact with the APHIS card reader. The second chip is only active when inserted into a computer. The cards do not "broadcast any information" and cannot be tracked.

What information will be stored on the card?

Visually, the card has your picture on it, your name, USDA, whether you are an employee or contractor, and an expiration date. The contactless chip only contains a 200 bit numeric string that takes the place of your name.

The computer chip contains a digital copy of picture on the card, your name, a digital copy of your index fingerprints and 4 E-Authentication digital certificates.

Will my SS# be part of the access system?

No. The access control system contains no social security numbers, and the card does not contain your social security number. The HSPD-12 system is electronically tied to the payroll system at NFC which has SSN# and dates of birth. That system is encrypted and secure.

What happens if I leave my LincPass at home?

If you forget your badge, no problem. You can get a visitor badge for the day to move about APHIS facilities. ITD will have a way to allow temporary use of your computer with a password until you bring your card to work.

What is the process to replace a lost LincPass?

You must immediately report the loss of the Lincpass so it can be disabled. Once that happens the Personnel Security Office in Minneapolis will que GSA to initiate a replacement card. The process for replacing a lost card is that you will have to go to an enrollment station again to receive a replacement.

Currently, the Agency pays for the replacement of lost or stolen building passes. Will this continue to be an Agency responsibility or the responsibility of the employee(s)?

The new badge is extremely expensive and must be safeguarded. The replacement badge will require a fund site be included with the paperwork and is a program responsibility. It is a program decision as to who should pay this cost.

How will employees not near one of the enrollment stations obtain their LincPass?

APHIS and USDA are working on a portable enrollment that should reach within 50 miles of most employees. Some of our field employees may have to go TDY to receive their badge.

If a Program is having a large meeting - could an enrollment station be set up there for the large number of employees who will be attending?

Yes, APHIS has taken the government lead and successfully completed enrollment utilizing a portable enrollment station at the ITD conference in New Orleans, and the PPQ, SPHD meeting in Savanna. There are other large gatherings where portable enrollments have been scheduled.

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When is APHIS planning to implement the process of cards being needed for access to computers?

The date of implementation is unsure at this time. APHIS is awaiting guidance from the Department for coordination and implementation

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STAFFING NEWS

Monster Government solutions, the proprietor of the on-line application system, has changed the system name from "QuickHire" to "Hiring Management." Consequently, we have changed the name of this column to "Hiring Management Hints." This is our only change. You can expect the same helpful guidance to continue in this column.

Hiring Management Hints:

Q: When I check MY Applications at the USAJOBS website my "Document Status" reads "None". I faxed my supporting documentation using the auto-generated fax cover sheets. Why aren't they showing up as received on USAJOBS?

USAJOBS is now allowing users to attach uploaded documents to their USAJOBS profile. However, the documentation that may be uploaded to your USAJOBS profile is completely separate from the documents that we accept via the auto-generated fax cover sheets. At this time, we are unable to view any of the documents that applicants may store at USAJOBS. Therefore, it is necessary that any documentation you send for one of our announcements is sent using the auto-generated fax cover sheet from our system.

How do I know if my supporting documentation has been received?

After your documents have been faxed, you should receive an automated email confirmation. It will be sent to the email address listed in your USAJOBS account. You will only receive the email confirmation if you use the auto-generated fax cover sheets provided in the application process. If you do not receive this email confirmation, you should email apphelp@aphis.usda.gov for assistance.

You may also check to see if your supporting documentation has been received by visiting the USAJOBS website <http://www.usajobs.gov/>. At the usajobs.gov website click [My USAJOBS] and fill in your My USAJOBS username and password. Then click [MY Applications]. Scroll to the appropriate announcement. Your USAJOBS status should read "Resume Received" with a link titled [more information...]. Click on the [more information...] link, and you will be transferred to the USDA system.

Once transferred to the USDA system, you will be prompted to select one of two options. Select the "View/Generate Fax Cover Sheets" option and then click [Continue]. In the past, your documentation would show as being attached to the specific vacancy announcement to which you applied. Today your documentation is attached to your 'profile' and specific announcement numbers no longer appear. What you will see now is a list of fax cover sheets. The fax cover sheets you should look for will read "Not Applicable" under the announcement number column. The documentation associated with the "Not Applicable" fax cover sheets will attach to your profile. This means the documentation associated with those fax cover sheets has been submitted to all announcements to which you have applied subsequent to documentation's receipt in the system. The last column, "status," will reflect "Received" and indicate the date of receipt for all faxes. When the status column reflects "Not Received" no fax has been received for that document type.

As an added feature, the system will submit any documentation attached to your profile when you apply for any future vacancies.