



HR Broadcast

NEW FEATURE ON THE WEB

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 Calendar will be kept up-to-date as information changes and will be available on our website for easy access by all our customers. We hope you will find this helpful!!

Be sure to check the calendar for the months of October, November, and December!!!

Coming in the January Issue:

❖ **More on eOPF**

The Benefits Buzz



This TSP mistake could cost you money! If you are an employee covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), be sure that you are spreading your TSP contributions over all 26 pay periods so that you receive the agency matching contributions. This is especially pertinent to highly paid FERS employees who are planning to contribute the IRS elective deferral limit of \$15,000 in 2006. If you hit that limit before pay period 24 of 2006 (the last pay period of the pay year), your own TSP contributions and your government matching contributions will stop for

the remainder of the pay year. Don't let those matching contributions get away! For more information, see the TSP Fact Sheet on Elective Deferrals: <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/oc91-13w.pdf> You may change your TSP contributions at any time by using the National Finance Center Employee Personal Page at <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/index2.asp>

Are you planning to retire in 2006? You should plan to complete your required retirement application forms and return them to your Benefits Specialist 30 to 60 days before your final retirement date to avoid the end of the year crunch! We process more retirements in pay period 26 than any other pay period of the year. Keep your retirement plans on track by using the planning checklist at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/retirement_checklist.html

Open Seasons are Coming! **November 13 - December 11, 2006** will be the open season dates for the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, the Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFED) for dependent care and health care reimbursements, and the new Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). The open season is the time to enroll, change, or cancel your FEHB plan, enroll in FSAFEDS for 2007, and find out about and enroll in the FEDVIP, a brand new benefit to Federal employees! Watch for more information via email and on the Benefits web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits.html>

Coming soon - eOPF

Where We Are Now

Marketing and Regulatory Programs (M&RP) entered the first phase of electronic Official Personnel Folders (eOPFs) in July, when an electronic folder was created for each M&RP employee and all SF-50B forms (Notification of Personnel Action) created in pay period 14 and after were received and filed electronically. Human Resources will continue to print hard copies of SF-50Bs for employees until employees are able to access their personnel folders electronically. It is anticipated that employee access to their electronic folders will take place around October 1, 2007. Employees will then be able to view the documents in their folders via a secure website.

Meanwhile, Human Resources has started to conduct its work using the electronic folders and will be working with both the hard copy OPF and the electronic version, until all documents in existing hard copy OPFs are converted to electronic versions. That process, known as back-file conversion, is expected to be complete sometime during the fourth quarter of calendar year 2007.

Anyone with questions about eOPF can visit the USDA frequently asked question website at <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/e-OPFUSDAFAQ.pdf>

Helpful Hints

Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are to be completed 30 days after the performance rating cycle has ended and the summary rating form should be forwarded to Human Resources Operations-Minneapolis, Processing Section, for entry into the NFC database. Please forward **only the summary rating to Minneapolis**. Do not forward any attachments such as the performance standards. Information on performance appraisals can be found in the following Directives: APHIS Directives 4430.1 (2- level system) 4430.5 (new 4- tier system); 4430.4 (5- level system); AMS Directive 4430.1 and GIPSA Directive 4430.

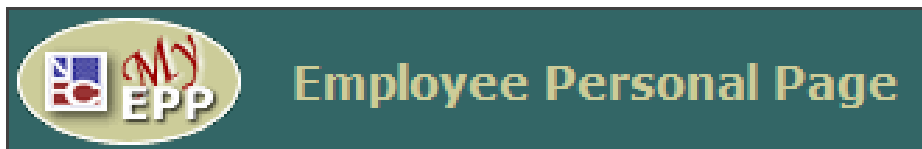
Address Change Reminder

When moving, employees are reminded to submit form AD-349, Change of Address, as soon as possible to ensure accurate and timely mail delivery of Earning and Leave Statements and W-2 forms.

Employees who are changing addresses, but who have savings bonds, must submit a savings bond form with the change of address form.

Address changes can be submitted to the HRO-Minneapolis Processing Section or employees can make address changes using the NFC Employee Personnel Page (EPP) at www.nfc.usda.gov. To use the EPP, employees must log in, click on the "self service" button and select the desired form to complete.

Introduction to “Time Manager”



Have you ever wished for some kind of leave calculator that would help you to plan your leave usage or to keep track of your use-or-lose hours? Well wish no more because the National Finance Center has added such a feature to the Employee Personal Page (EPP). It is called “Time Manager”, and it is basically an electronic calendar specifically designed for tracking leave usage and leave balances.

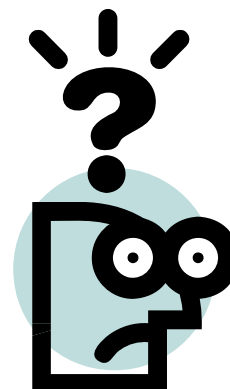
Here is how it works. Pay periods 1 – 26 are displayed on one page, and each pay period is a mini spreadsheet showing the beginning and ending balances for annual, sick, comp, and other types of leave. The leave usage for prior pay periods will have already been uploaded into Time Manager. As employees add projected leave usage to the current and future pay period information, the leave balances automatically adjust accordingly. PP26 will show the projected use-or-lose hours as well as your final (for the leave year) annual, sick, comp, and other leave balances.

Pay Period 25, 2006													
Starting Balance	Mon Dec 11	Tue Dec 12	Wed Dec 13	Thu Dec 14	Fri Dec 15	Mon Dec 18	Tue Dec 19	Wed Dec 20	Thu Dec 21	Fri Dec 22	Total	Accrued	Ending Balance
Annual	116.25											8	124.25
Sick	50											4	54
Comp													
Other													
Projected totals and balances													

Pay Period 26, 2006													
Starting Balance	Holiday* Mon Dec 25	Tue Dec 26	Wed Dec 27	Thu Dec 28	Fri Dec 29	Holiday* Mon Jan 1	Tue Jan 2	Wed Jan 3	Thu Jan 4	Fri Jan 5	Total	Accrued	Ending Balance
Annual	124.25											8	132.25
Sick	54											4	58

To access the Time Manager feature, log into EPP. Look for the “Time Manager” tab at the top of the page, and click once. Use the scroll bar to the right to access the pay period information. Click once on a block within the pay period spreadsheet to change the information in the block. You can update the annual leave “Accrued” block if your annual leave category will be changing during the leave year or if you need to change from 6 to 10 hours accrued in PP25. Use the “Options” drop-down menu to show weekends, change the leave year, and print a leave slip. Be sure to click on the “Save” button before you exit Time Manager in order to be able to access the information you’ve entered into the spreadsheet at a later date.

Don’t already use EPP, or can’t remember your password? Log onto the National Finance Center’s (NFC) home page (www.nfc.usda.gov) and click on the “My EPP” icon which is located in the middle of the page. Click “Accept” when the security message pops up. Click on “Forgot Your Password?”. Click on “Request Password by Mail” (only employees who have already used EPP and enabled the email feature will be able to use the “Request Password by E-mail” button). NFC will send a temporary password to the mailing address currently on file. It usually takes between 1-2 weeks to arrive. You will then be able to log into EPP and create your own password.



QUICKHIRE QUERIES

Q: When I log into My USAJOBS and check my application status, it states “Application Started” Shouldn’t it state “Application Rcvd – Complete”?

A: Yes. Upon completion of your application, return to USAJOBS and check your application status to make certain your status has changed and indicates “Application Rcvd – Complete” with a link to “more information.” If your application status does not include the more information link, you will be unable to follow the status of your application online throughout the application review process. The status of “Application Started” indicates you have not completed all steps in the application process.

If your status indicates “Application Started” and the announcement is still open, follow these instructions:

1. In the *Track your online job applications* section of My USAJOBS, click on the title of the position.
2. At the bottom of the vacancy announcement, click “Apply Online”.
3. Re-select the resume you are using to apply to this position and click “Send updated resume”. You will be transferred to your previously completed answers in our system.
4. *Take me to the assessment* will already be selected. Click “continue”. NOTE: If you would like to review/update your contact information or your responses to the Federal core questions, or if you wish to print fax cover sheets, select the option *Update my information that is on file* and then click “continue”. Going directly to the assessment by-passes this information.
5. Click “Continue” or “Finished with Grade ...” to move through your previously completed answers.
6. After reviewing your answers to the vacancy questions you will arrive at the first of two “finished” buttons. Click “Finished”.
7. You may now verify receipt of submitted supporting documentation or print additional fax cover sheets. When you are finished, click “Done”.
8. You have now arrived at the final page of the application process. Review all of the information you are submitting. You will be unable to view faxed supporting documentation.. At the bottom of the web page click “Finished”. This is the second of the two” finished buttons”. You will now be automatically returned to USAJOBS.

If you exit the application process at any time prior to clicking on the second finished button, you will not have access to your status through USAJOBS. This includes if you return to an already completed application to make changes or review your application. You must complete all steps each time you access your partial or fully completed application and have the system return you to USAJOBS

Q: How do I submit my supporting documentation?

A: We are now using the fax imaging capabilities within our automated application software. This means you can fax your documents into the system and they will be electronically attached to your application. The following are some general guidelines for submitting your documentation. Please be certain to refer to the vacancy announcement for vacancy specific faxing instructions.

1. You must use the fax cover sheets generated through the application process and you must fax to the number listed on the fax cover sheets.
2. There is one cover sheet for each category of supporting documentation. Fax all pages related to that category of supporting documentation behind the corresponding coversheet. If you are faxing more than one type of supporting documentation, you must submit those with the corresponding cover sheet. **DO NOT FAX ALL DOCUMENT TYPES UNDER ONE COVER SHEET.** Transcripts are one type of document. Fax all pages of your transcript and other education-related documents under the transcript cover sheet. The SF-50 is another document type. If you are faxing more than one SF-50, fax those under the SF-50 cover sheet.
3. Not all of the document categories listed will pertain to you. Only submit the documents required to complete your application package. For example, the Schedule A certification document must only be submitted by individuals applying based on eligibility for appointment due to a disability. The SF-50 is a form current and former Federal employees submit to document their Federal employment status.
4. If you have previously faxed supporting documentation to the announcement, the status of those documents will indicate *Received*. There is no need to resubmit documents which show a status of “Received” unless you are submitting an updated copy. If a document is resubmitted, it replaces the previous document(s), which means the previous document(s) is no longer viewable. If you are adding to, rather than replacing, a previous submission, you must fax both the old document(s) and the new document(s) for both to be viewable.

If you have questions about any of the information above, or other questions related to applying through USAJOBS, contact your staffing service provider.



. SCI or SCIF

How Does SCI or SCIF Relate to Security Clearances and What Does It Mean?

Individual access requires a Top Secret security clearance with a background investigation of less than five years old. Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) is information and material that is subject to special intelligence community controls that indicate restricted handling for current and future intelligence collection programs and their end products. These controls have been instituted to protect sensitive aspects of sources, methods, and analytical procedures associated with foreign intelligence programs. A Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) is an accredited area, room, or groups of rooms where SCI may be stored, used, discussed, and/or processed. Programs must be able to justify that access to SCI is required to support their mission. (This must be documented on the USDA Justification form AD-1188.)

What is the Process of Requesting Access to SCI? There are three steps to requesting an SCI.

1. Programs must submit an AD-1188, USDA Justification for Requested Security Clearance, Ensure the justification form clearly answers the SCI related questions on page 2 (instructions) to include what compartments are required and the request is authorized by a Senior Executive Service (SES) employee.
2. The employee's background investigation must be current (completed within 5 years). If the investigation is not current, request an updated investigation. An SSBI is required for initial TS/SCI requests and SSBI-PR for reinvestigations.
3. The employee's SF-86 questionnaire **MUST be completed and signed by the employee within 2 years.** If the employee has not completed an SF-86 within 2 years, an updated form MUST be submitted.

SCI and Traveling Overseas: Employees are required to report all personal foreign travel if they have been approved for access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI). All holders of a security clearance must keep their security office informed about anything that might have a bearing on their continued eligibility for access to classified information or that might signal an increased vulnerability to foreign intelligence targeting. Please contact Carrie Moore, Senior Personnel Security Specialist at USDA about your travel plans with two weeks advance notice, if possible, to receive and submit the "Request for Foreign Travel" form. Carrie can be reached at: carrie.moore@usda.gov.

For further guidance on SCI clearances please contact the MRPBS, HRD, Personnel Security Section at (612) 336-3294 or (612) 336-3289.



Security Clearance Reciprocity

New OMB Guidance on Reciprocal Recognition of Existing Personnel Security Clearances.

Employees transferring into USDA with an **existing** security clearance may be able to transfer their clearance from a previous Agency more easily under Executive Order (E.O. 13381), "Strengthening Processes Relating to Determining Eligibility for Access to Classified National Security Information." Requests for transfers will only be submitted to the Department after it has been confirmed that the new employee requires a security clearance in his or her position in AMS, APHIS, or GIPSA. Requests must include and identify the prior clearance granting entity (e.g., Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Interior, etc.); the level of clearance; investigation type; and date granted. Employees may be asked to complete the SF-86C, Certification form as well as the AD-1188, USDA Justification for Requested Security Clearance.

AD-1197 and Transfer Employees

Confused about how the 'Request for USDA Identification (ID) Badge' form AD-1197 works when you select an employee with previous Federal service?



Several program offices have been inquiring whether or not they still need to complete the AD-1197 when the employee they've selected has previous Federal service. The answer is "it depends." This is because the AD-1197 form serves two purposes:

1. as the initial "Request for an ID Badge" and
2. it sets in motion the process of beginning a background investigation on new employees and contractors.

Employees often transfer between Agencies; so for background investigation purposes (#2 above) the AD-1197 may **not** be required as long as they have **not** had a break in Federal service over 24 months and have had at least a low-risk, non-sensitive (NACI) investigation previously completed. This is the minimum requirement under HSDP-12 for issuance of USDA ID Badges.

In these instances, the Personnel Security Office does **not** require the AD-1197 but in order for the employee to receive their USDA ID badge (item #1 above), the form **MUST** be completed and submitted to the designated person who issues the ID Badges for your individual program. (*This is not the HR Personnel Security Office in Minneapolis.*) Don't forget to include the 2 identity source documents. You will also be required to furnish an electronic photo of the employee if your badging station is not located on-site.

If the employee has had a break in service over 24 months they will be processed as new employees, which then requires the AD-1197 and supporting identity source documents. It is recommended that a copy of each be provided to your badging station with a note attached that the original was sent to HR, Minneapolis as part of the new-hire paperwork.

When a transfer employee requires a higher level background investigation based on the duties of their new position, the Personnel Security Office will notify them accordingly and begin the investigation paperwork process.

The Latest e-QIP News, the on-line Electronic Investigation Questionnaire



SF-85, Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive, Low-Risk Positions (NACI): With all SF-85P and SF-86 questionnaire forms fully operational in OPM's e-QIP on-line system, the Department is ready to rollout MRPBS HR's authority to submit the SF-85s on-line as well. This will further enhance USDA's compliance with HSPD-12, the Policy for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors.

It is anticipated notices will go out to all MRP Program Offices in the near future with more information, including the date e-QIP will be implemented on the SF-85 Questionnaire. From that point forward, no hard copy questionnaires will be accepted.

New Personnel Security Employee



Welcome Thomas Lewis, replacing Ingrid St. James, who retired after almost 25 years of Federal service. Tom is a recent military retiree who comes to HR with a wealth of background investigation and military intelligence expertise. His primary duty in the Personnel Security Section is to work directly with OPM in facilitating the SF-85, Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions. With the implementation of e-QIP on the horizon for SF-85s, Tom is the MRP

Program Offices principal contact for guidance and advice on positions requiring NACI investigations. His telephone number is (612) 336-3296



Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 12

Homeland Security (HSPD-12) Update

You may recall recently receiving an *HSPD-12 NEWSFLASH* announcing the new USDA employee/contractor identification card which is coming soon! What does it all mean and how can you find out more information? The HR Personnel Security web page now has a direct link to the Department's HSPD-12 Web site. This can be found under the section titled **HSPD-12**. (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/classification/security/index.html>)

This site is your resource to details concerning the new Homeland Security initiatives and provides up to date information to help increase understanding in order to properly implement HSPD-12 at USDA.

USDA employees with an eAuthentication Level 2 credential can login to access more detailed information about HSPD-12. Secured Information includes items such as contact information for Agency HSPD-12 Representatives, downloadable Department policies, manuals, and forms, the HSPD-12 storyboard series, and much more!

USDA has also created an HSPD-12 Implementation Team to address the requirements of HSPD-12 for the Department of Agriculture. Tim Blackburn of the MRPBS, ESD Staff is the Agency's member of this implementation team with Dru Dukart, HR Personnel Security Office and Kenneth Miller, ESD Physical Security Manager acting as liaisons. As this program progresses, additional information and materials will be posted to this site.