



United States Department of Agriculture's  
Electronic Official Personnel Folder  
Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction: This set of FAQs is intended to provide readers a broad overview of what the e-OPF system is, how agencies will transition to it, and how it will operate. Its focus is on the procedures for implementing the Fast Track e-OPF process, recognizing that USDA agencies may elect to fully convert their OPFs to e-OPFs in a more compressed time frame. Consequently, agencies may choose to supplement this document with additional information to address their unique circumstances and e-OPF conversion plans.

**1. What is the Official Personnel Folder?**

The Official Personnel Folder (Standard Form 66) is a file containing records that cover an individual's employment history. It covers Executive Branch service under Title 5, United States Code (<http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/get-cfr.cgi?TITLE=5&PART=293&SECTION=302&TYPE=TEXT>). The long-term records included in the file are chosen to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and the employee. The Official Personnel Folder is part of the Government-wide system of records, OPM/GOVT-1. While a person is employed at a Federal agency, the agency becomes the custodian of the OPF. The OPF is ultimately the property of the Office of Personnel Management. The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, published by the OPM, contains the rules for creating, maintaining, using and disposing of the OPF.

**2. What is the Electronic Official Personnel Folder (e-OPF)?**

The e-OPF is an electronic version of the original OPF and a system for accessing the electronic folder online. The e-OPF allows each employee to have an electronic personnel folder instead of a paper file. Some of the features of the system include:

- Provides immediate access to OPF forms and information
- Delivers an e-mail notification to the employee when a document is added to the e-OPF
- Supports a multi-level secure environment, with security rules for vital information
- Eliminates loss of an employee's official personnel files during filing and routing
- Reduces cost associated with storage, maintenance, and retrieval of records
- Provides for electronic transfer of human resources data
- Integrates and compliments agency human resource information system capabilities
- Complies with OPM and federally mandated HR employee record management regulations

**3. How will e-OPF be implemented?**

5/5/2006

e-OPFs will be implemented in two successive phases: (1) “Fast Track” when, beginning on a specific date and going forward, all employee data will be recorded, stored, and transferred electronically; and (2) “Back-File Conversion” when OPFs that already exist on paper will be digitized.

#### **4. What is Fast Track?**

In the Fast Track phase, an agency will begin using the standard e-OPF software applications conforming to a standard framework within a short time frame with: (1) no customized interfaces; (2) no customized data conversion; and (3) an initial standup with a core team called “friends and family”.

#### **5. What does Fast Track include?**

- Complete e-OPF infrastructure (Servers, etc...)
- Deployment to Department of Interior’s National Business Center (NBC) as the hosting facility
- Agency configuration (letters, templates)
- Creation of employee folders
- Filing of historical SF-50s
- Establishment of employee, SF-50 interfaces
- Creation of core user accounts
- Standard training
- Transition Support

#### **6. What does Fast Track not include?**

- Conversion Activities of any kind
- SF-52 Workflow processing
- Business Workflow
- Non-standard interfaces
- Legacy migration
- Non-EHRI host site

#### **7. What is back-file conversion?**

In the Back-File Conversion phase, an agency will scan/digitize/index the paper forms in existing Official Personnel Folders to complete the Electronic Official Personnel Folders. (Note: Some agencies have yet to acquire the funding for the back-file conversion process. When funds are available, the existing paper documents will be scanned and added to the e-OPF's)

#### **8. What process was used to get old documents into the e-OPFs?**

All paper documents stored in the OPF were inventoried, boxed, and shipped to an off-site facility where they underwent the “backfile” conversion process. Backfile conversion included scanning, indexing, and quality assurance checks of each document in the file.

**9. Who will input new documents into the e-OPFs?**

After initial conversion is complete, all new SF-50's will be electronically transmitted from the National Finance Center Personnel/Payroll system to the e-OPF system. Other documents will either be scanned by the HR staff or sent to a scanning facility for scanning and inclusion in the e-OPF until such time as all official personnel forms will be transmitted electronically from the NFC.

**10. What does OPM plan to do with the original paper OPF's once they are available online?**

OPM is working to issue official policy regarding the paper OPFs. OPM is considering a number of alternatives, one of which is to retire the paper folder to the Federal Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO. Please see your agency policy for specific guidance.

**11. How secure is my personal information in the e-OPF system?**

USDA has taken several steps to ensure that all employee information is protected. First, the e-OPF can only be accessed through an Internet browser using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) with 128-bit encryption. This ensures that all of the information the e-OPF sends over the Internet is encrypted or 'scrambled' and thus cannot be intercepted and read. Second, access to your e-OPF account is controlled by your password. Do not give your password to anyone else. Third, the e-OPF has been programmed to limit movement between screens to ensure that someone cannot go directly to your documents using a temporary URL. Fourth, system timeouts will inactivate the system after periods of inactivity. Even with these protections, every employee should protect their own data privacy by printing and filing personal documents and ensuring other persons are not able to access their information.

**12. Who will have access to the e-OPFs?**

HR Specialists will have access to employees that they service; OPM investigators will have access when conducting a background investigation; and employees will be able to see their own information. Each employee is responsible for the consequences of providing others access to their e-OPF. In addition, each time a folder is accessed by someone other than the employee, a record is made of who accessed it and why.

**13. How can I get e-mail notification when new documents are added to my e-OPF?**

We plan to pre-populate the e-OPF with every USDA's government employee's email address to notify you each time a document, such as an SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action), is added to your e-OPF account. It is your responsibility to ensure that your correct e-mail address is entered. You can either use your government provided e-mail or your personal e-mail. At the initial e-OPF entry screen, follow the links to input an e-mail address of your choice.

**14. What information will be included in the e-mail notification?**

The e-mail notification sent to the employee when a document is added will contain only basic information about the document, such as form number, type of action, and effective date.

**15. Will employees be notified when items are removed from their e-OPF?**

The removal of documents; such as the expiration of a Letter of Reprimand or a Cancellation SF-50 will not generate notifications.

**16. Will employees be notified if someone looks at their e-OPF?**

No. E-mail notification occurs only when a new document is added to the e-OPF. However, a complete audit trail is recorded each time a document is accessed by any user.

**17. Who processes removal of documents?**

HR Specialists are the only users that may add or delete documents from the e-OPF. If you have a concern about a document which should be removed from your e-OPF (e.g., a letter of reprimand), notify your HR Specialist or follow the same procedures that you have followed in the past. All questions regarding the content of your e-OPF should be directed to your servicing HR Office.

**18. What measures will be taken to ensure that e-OPF data will not be lost?**

OPM will be hosting the e-OPF system for the USDA and other government agencies. There will be nightly incremental backups of all new documents and any related information added on a given day. Full system-wide backups will occur weekly. OPM will back-up completely and store off-site the entire data repository on a monthly basis.

**19. How will I receive training on the system?**

The e-OPF, like other web-based systems, is very intuitive. However, an online tutorial is available that illustrates the basic features of the system. HR staff will be provided training on the use of the system.

**20. Will this system include other documents that are not a part of the OPF?**

With the e-OPF, we will be able to create “virtual” sides (i.e., left side – temporary) in which we can store other HR documents, such as training or performance appraisals. No decision has been made if other forms, outside those required for the current paper OPF, will be stored in the e-OPF in the future. Access to other forms will be based on current OPM recordkeeping practices.

**21. What is the target date for our agency to be fully converted to electronic folders?**

5/5/2006

The USDA has targeted July 2006 for completion of Fast Track Implementation and is funding the initiative. Implementation will begin as an “Electronic Day Forward” start. This means that an e-OPF will be established for each employee and new documents will be electronically received from NFC electronically filed. Employees will be instructed in phases as to how they may access the system.

**22. Who owns the OPF and e-OPF, the employee or the agency?**

Neither. According to OPM’s Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping: “ The Office of Personnel Management owns the personnel folder and its contents.” The Guide contains the Office of Personnel Management’s rules for creating, maintaining, using, and disposing of the Official Personnel Folder.

**23. What is the role of the National Archives and Records Admin. (NARA) in the e-OPF system?**

OPM is working with NARA’s Modern Records Program group to discuss the impacts of implementing e-OPFs federal-wide and establish guidance on areas such as disposal, transfer, and migration.

**24. How will employees in remote locations, who do not have access to PCs review their e-OPF’s online?**

Employees with no access to a PC will still be able to get copies of the documents in their OPF. These requests will be handled according to agency policy.

**25. What if I lose my password for accessing my e-OPF?**

There is a “Reset my Password” button if you forget or lose your password. You will be asked a few questions to verify your identity and, once successfully verified, a new password will be randomly generated for you. Reset passwords are distributed in a follow-up e-mail or, if an e-mail address is not available in the system, by letter through the U.S. Mail.

**26. How long after I click on the “Reset My Password” button until I receive a new password?**

When you click on the ‘Reset my Password’ button, your password is immediately changed to a new randomly generated password. The regenerated password will be e-mailed to the e-mail address you have provided within the e-OPF system within moments. If you do not have or do not list an e-mail address in the e-OPF system, the new password will be mailed to you via U.S. Mail and you should receive your new password within 2 weeks.

**27. Does any other agency use electronic Official Personnel Folders?**

Several agencies including the HHS, DHS, FAA, DLA, Air Force, and the State Department have already implemented electronic OPF systems. All e-OPF vendors are following 36 CFR 1228.270

5/5/2006

which discusses transfer of permanent electronic records. Follow this link for more information:  
[http://www.archives.gov/records\\_management/initiatives/pdf\\_records.html](http://www.archives.gov/records_management/initiatives/pdf_records.html)

**28. I have reviewed my folder and it appears that the latest document is missing. What should I do?**

It's probable that the missing document has not yet been scanned and added to your e-OPF file. Some forms, like the Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50) come directly from the NFC and will be transmitted directly into the e-OPF. However, certain processes still produce paper which will have to be manually scanned in-house and added to your OPF. Therefore, the conversion of paper documents will be standard practice for the foreseeable future. You can contact your servicing HR Specialist to follow-up on the document.

**29. Some of my documents that were scanned are on the wrong side of the folder. How could this happen? What do I do to fix that?**

Documents in the paper OPF were scanned and placed in e-OPF according to the Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping. If you find a document you believe is on the wrong side of the folder, please contact your servicing HR Office.

**30. I am a new USDA employee, how soon can I expect my e-OPF user ID and password?**

Information regarding your user ID and password will be provided to you during your enter-on-duty processing. It will take approximately three (3) weeks from the time you enter-on-duty until your account is set-up in the e-OPF system.

**31. I noticed that a document in my e-OPF is incorrect, what do I do?**

Contact and inform your local servicing HR Office of the problem. Your servicing HR Office is responsible for ensuring that the documents in question are corrected if necessary. You may be asked to provide documentation to help make and/or verify the correction.

**32. Is there a 'Help' feature for e-OPF?**

e-OPF has an online 'Help' function that you can reach by clicking on the word 'Help' at the top of most pages within the web site. The 'Help' instructions can be printed out. Some agencies may elect to offer an alternative 'HELP' function, please see your agency policy for guidance.

**33. I click on a document to see it through the Adobe Acrobat viewer, and then click on another document and it doesn't open up. What do I do?**

5/5/2006

Only one document can be viewed at a time. Close out the first document by clicking on the 'X' in the right corner of the Acrobat viewer and then click on the next document you wish to see.

**34. Is it mandatory to complete the Emergency Contact information?**

Employees will be able to enter information regarding whom to contact in an emergency on the Emergency Contact Information page. Entering this data is entirely voluntary and it will be up to the employee to maintain its accuracy.

**35. I can view my address info. on the Emergency Contact page, but I can't change it. Why not?**

The home address information for each employee comes directly from the NFC application. If you wish to change this information, you will need to either access NFC's Employee Personal Page at <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/index2.asp> and change your home address or submit an AD-349 (Change of Address) to your servicing HR office.