



HR Broadcast

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

Coming in the Oct. Issue:

- Reference Checking
- When will eOPF be accessible to employees?

Be sure and check the calendar for the months of July, August, and September!!!

The Benefits Buzz



New Financial Planning Tool

Are you on the right track for saving for retirement? The Office of Personnel Management has recently offered a new financial planning tool to the Federal workforce, called the Federal Ballpark Estimate. Gather your personal information, and then try it out!

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/benefits_ballpark.html

HRO Retirement Planning and Employee Benefits Seminars

Planning an all-employee meeting in FY2008? Our FREE seminars are in high demand. Please submit your request for consideration by August 1.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/retirement_seminars.html

Thinking About Retirement?

Follow this helpful checklist – it is never too early to start planning!

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/retirement_checklist.html

PROCESSING TIDBITS

eOPF

The move toward electronic Official Personnel Folders (eOPFs) takes a significant step forward over the next few weeks as the Human Resources Division (HRD) prepares and packages existing hard copy folders for shipment to an OPM-approved scanning facility in Virginia. While in Virginia the contents of the folders will be scanned into an electronic format and those electronic documents will be loaded on to the resident server for the eOPF system.

HRD in Minneapolis has begun preparing and packaging the OPFs for shipment within the next three weeks and employee OPFs will not be available for use either by the employee or HRD, except in emergency situations, until the end of August. HRD will continue to have access to the personnel records housed in the



National Finance Center (NFC) payroll system, allowing for the processing of personnel actions and payroll changes during this time.

We certainly recognize that all Agency employees have the right to view their own OPF and we have made every effort to honor requests. However, as the files are boxed, sealed, shipped and are in the scanning process, all non-emergency

requests, including those received through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), will be held until the file is scanned and is available electronically. As soon as files are available electronically (approximately 2 months), requests for OPF's will be handled as expeditiously as possible. HRD and the FOIA office are working together on this process and we appreciate your patience during this transition.

Address Change

An address change made by an employee through the NFC, Employee Personal Page WILL NOT change the address with the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) or their health benefits carrier. In order for the address change to be effective with TSP or a health benefits carrier, an employee must submit an address change form, AD-349, to their servicing Processing Assistant in HRO-Minneapolis.

Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals are to be completed 30 days after the performance rating cycle has ended and should be forwarded to Minneapolis Processing Unit 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: 4430.5 (new 4 tier system); 4430.4 (5 level system); AMS Directive 4430.1 and GIPSA Directive 4430.



New Personnel Security Employee



Welcome Susan Burnette. Susan joined the HR Personnel Security Section as a Security Assistant on April 2, 2007. Coming from private industry, her first responsibility was to take over the enormous task of the HSPD-12 OPF Review validating background investigations. Susan will ultimately transition into other support duties in the section. Her telephone number is (612)336-3325.



Replacement of USDA Identification (ID) Badges, HSPD-12 and the new LincPass ID



Still wondering about replacement IDs and what you need to do? All employees with current ID badges are **considered to be compliant under HSPD-12** unless one of the three following events happen:

- 1) Your current ID badge is within 30 days of expiration (check ID badge for expiration date); or
- 2) Your current ID badge has been lost or destroyed; or
- 3) You are notified by someone that a new LincPass ID badge (Smart Card) requires issuance. This could be through your Physical Security Manager; HR's Personnel Security; or your individual Program administrative point of contact. (note separate News Flash regarding the LincPass ID)

In all three events noted, employees should contact their Program administrative point of contact to complete the AD-1197 to begin the process of obtaining a replacement ID Badge. The AD-1197 should be sent to the Minneapolis HR Personnel Security Section first to validate the background investigation. **ONLY** in the event that a background investigation cannot be verified will an employee be asked by the HR Personnel Security staff to complete a background investigation questionnaire, submit fingerprint cards, and supporting documentation.

The previous process of *"turn in your old ID and immediately get a new ID"* has changed. This now includes completion of form AD-1197 with supporting identity source documents. The two identity verifications do **not** include the employee's current ID but rather a State Driver's License or State Issued Identity Card and any other identity document as listed in the AD-1197 Instructions. Both can be found at:

AD-1197 (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/ad/ad1197.pdf>)

AD-1197 Instructions (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/ad/ad1197instr.pdf>)

To help expedite the issuance of an ID - when HR submits the employee's investigation paperwork to OPM an advanced fingerprint report is requested. Once a favorable advanced fingerprint report is received from OPM, Personnel Security will approve the issuance of the replacement ID. Typically advanced fingerprint reports take less than 30 days so it is recommended that replacement ID request forms (AD-1197) are submitted to HR well in advance of ID expiration dates.



Use of Social Security Numbers in e-Mail Correspondence

The Federal Government is making several changes regarding the use of Social Security Numbers (SSN) in e-mail correspondence. The request is that agencies and individuals no longer use an individual's full Social Security Number (SSN) in any e-mail correspondence. Instead, provide only the last four digits of the individual's SSN. When sending attachments that contain full SSNs, please password protect the attachment and provide your intended audience with the password in a separate email. The use of SSNs, especially in Human Resources, is necessary to keep records accurate because other people may have the same name and birth date. So when you are requesting information by means of e-mail on any HR function (especially Personnel Security), please remember to give the employee's full name and only the last four digits of their SSN (i.e., XXX-XX-1234).

HSPD-12 60-Second NEWSFLASH*

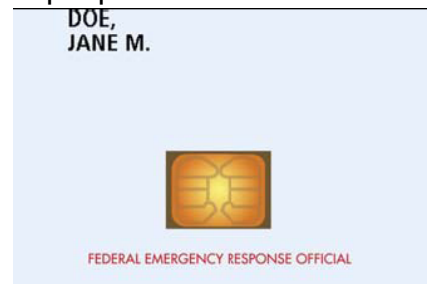
Subject: HSPD-12 Drives Upgrade of Access Systems to Include Compliant Card Readers



The overall goal of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12, commonly referred to as HSPD-12, is to achieve appropriate security assurance by verifying the identity of individuals seeking physical access to Federally controlled government facilities and logical access to government information systems. Part of this presidential mandate

requires Departments and Agencies to have their logical access control systems (**LACS**) ready to read and process the new credential no later than **October 27, 2009**.

LACS are the systems which authenticate and authorize an individual to access Federally-controlled information systems. Traditionally, individuals use multiple passwords to access multiple computer applications and websites. As USDA moves towards integrating LACS, smart card readers will eliminate the need for multiple passwords. A user with an active LincPass will be able to securely access authorized information systems using their card and a digit personal identification number (PIN) and/or submission of a fingerprint. Smart cards will be a fundamental component in the HSPD-12 initiative to strengthen the security of our information systems and move towards a single sign-on environment.



STAFFING NEWS

QuickHire Queries Article:

Q: I am a selecting official and I have received my list of eligible applicants; how much time do I have to review applicant information, conduct interviews, and make a selection?

A: The Department of Agriculture has instituted a 28-day Hiring Model. The model establishes guidelines (time frames) for meeting specific milestones in the hiring process. The guidelines establish a goal of 17 business days for selecting officials to complete the interview and selection process and return the certificate to the issuing Human Resources office.

Your e-mailed certificate instructions contain specific time frames including the certificate return date (17 business days from the issuance of the certificate) to meet the USDA Hiring Model time frames. Please join with Human Resources in making every effort to meet the guidelines established by this model.

Additional Information:

If you have additional questions about any of the information above, or other questions related to applying through USAJOBS, contact your staffing service provider. You may also e-mail questions to our dedicated application help e-mail address: apphelp@aphis.usda.gov.

Submission of Personnel Action Request Forms (SF-52)

In order to ensure that personnel activity for employees takes place in the manner in which a supervisor intends, it is important that Request for Personnel Action forms (SF-52) be received in the servicing Human Resources office no later than 1 full pay period before the requested effective date of the action.

Personnel actions must be approved by appointing officials – HR Specialists – before an action takes effect. SF-52s that are submitted late in the pay period immediately preceding a requested effective run the risk of not being approved in time, especially if any issues are encountered in the review and approval of requests. Therefore, it is vital that SF-52s be submitted with enough lead time for HR to thoroughly review the requests and work through any issues which may arise

Non Pay Status or Leave Without Pay

Do you have questions about how non pay status, or leave without pay (LWOP), affects your benefits?

As a supervisor, administrative officer, or timekeeper, do you have questions about when an SF-52 (Request for Personnel Action) must be submitted for LWOP, extensions of LWOP, and Return to Duty?

Find the answers at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/benefits_non_pay_status.html

Returning Certificates of Selection Eligibles to HR

You've made your selection to fill the vacant job in your office! Now, please don't wait to return the certificate to the servicing Human Resources office. Certificates, much like SF-52s, should be returned to the servicing HR office no later than 1 full pay period before the requested effective date; certificates containing selections of candidates from another Federal agency should be returned well before the previously mentioned time frame, since start dates must be negotiated with the candidate's current employer.

Timely return of selection certificates are necessary to allow adequate time for HR to review the selection and ensure its validity, and conduct any follow-up deemed necessary based on review of the Declaration for Federal Employment form (OF-306), or based on information received from the Request for Preliminary Employment Data form (SF-75). The SF-75 is used when employees transfer between agencies and is used to obtain information on a selectee coming from another agency.

Selecting officials should also remember that all selections are tentative until final validation of the selection is received from HR. This final validation, particularly for selections made by hiring officials in field locations, may be a copy of select letter sent by HR to the selected candidate following review and approval of the appointment. Questions on certificates and selections should be directed to your servicing staffing specialist.
