FAQs – eOPF Implementation

NRCS along with other USDA agencies will convert all Official Personnel Files (OPF) to an electronic system (eOPF). This implementation is part of the e-Government Initiatives and is projected for completion by December 28, 2007.

To meet the above deadline, NRCS has instructed its HR offices to begin purging personnel files. It is the responsibility of each state office to ensure documents from the right and left side of an employee's personnel file are purged and ready for scanning by October 5, 2007. Below are responses to general questions (bold type) about this process:

1. **What is the time frame for purging OPFs and shipping them to the contractor for scanning?**

   The deadline for purging all OPFs is October 5, 2007. Additional guidance will be provided later concerning shipment of the OPFs to the vendor.

2. **What is meant by "purging and scanning" in the NB.260.7.22 (Page 2)? What is the contractor doing with the "purged" documents?**

   Purging is reviewing and removing from the OPF any documentation that is not filed in accordance with the Guide to Personnel Recording, Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, Guide to Data Standards, and the NRCS Records Guide.

   Scanning is making an electronic copy of a document.

   Purged documents will not be forwarded to the contractor. NRCS has contracted for the contractor to scan the OPF during the back file conversion. OPM has provided the contractor with guidelines for scanning the OPFs and if additional documents are purged, the contractor will provide NRCS with a CD containing documents they purged.

3. **What do we do with all the purged items?**

   All purged documents should either be returned to the responsible owner (Employee Relations, EEO, etc.), employee, or placed in a temporary folder. Documents that should be retained because of an on-going complaint, investigation, or Employee Relations issue should be maintained in a confidential document folder/envelope for an employee.

4. **What do we do with SF-52s, I-9s, SF-256, Procurement Integrity forms?**

   In compliance with OMB-A123 audits, SF-52s must be retained for the previous year and current year for testing. These 52s should be filed monthly.

I-9s should be maintained in a separate folder and alphabetized by last name.

SF-256 and SF-181s should be removed if currently in the OPF. However, ensure that information from the SF-256 and SF-181 is coded in EmpowHR.

5. **Do we retain applications in the OPF? What documents should be kept with the application?**

   Yes, file applications for employment on the right side of the OPF only when used for one of the purposes listed below:

   o As basis for first Federal appointment;
   o As basis for latest federal appointment;
   o As latest certification of eligibility for veterans' preference;
   o As basis for rating in civil service examination; or
   o To show OPM has completed a background investigation. (The application will have a note the case was processed. File by stamped date; when not stamped, file by signature date).

   Attachments authorized for retention in the personnel folder include only items requested in the job announcement and refer to basic qualification, such as:

   o License
   o Office of Personnel Management for 1170/17
            Supplemental Qualifications Statement/List of College
            Courses and Certificate of Scholastic Achievement
   o School Transcript

   Note: Remove other documents from the application, such as:

   o Photographs,
   o Publications submitted as proof of accomplishments,
   o Position Descriptions,
   o Diplomas,
   o Training Certificates , or
   o Performance Appraisals. *[See The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping (3-7 to 3-8)]*.

6. **What should we do with old SF-50s for awards and documentation for awards (prior to the time we were told not to file SF-50s for awards in the OPF)?**

   Retain documents on the right side only if they show an award was granted under a formal agency award program and:

   o the award was dated prior to 1986. (Standard Form 50 became the official documentation for awards in 1986.); OR
   o the award was dated between 1986 and 1998 and the agency form was an approved substitute for the Standard Form 50.

   Effective January 1, 1999, only documentation of Senior Executive Service rank awards may be filed on the right side of the Official Personnel Folder. No other awards actions effective

2

after December 31, 1998, are authorized for long term (right side) retention. *[See The Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping, Page 3-17].*

7. **Where should the Form AD-334, long skinny earnings statement, be filed in the OPF?**

   Form AD-334 should be purged according to the USDA Specific Forms List. However, because of prior experiences with retirements, file it on the right side of the OPF. Because of its fragile paper, it is recommended that a copy be made and placed in the OPF for scanning and the original maintained in a separate file.

8. **Where should the SF-1152, Designation of Beneficiary, Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee, be filed? It is not on the list.**

   All beneficiary forms that have witness signatures should be replaced with a copy and the original maintained in a separate file. Additional instructions will be provided at a later date.

9. **How will we obtain Hiccup Packages?**

   You should obtain the information from EmpowHR to correct any personnel errors within the last five years.

10. **What hard copies of the OPF will be shipped for scanning?**

    States will ship all OPFs except those files of individuals who are retiring by February 1, 2008.

11. **What should states do with documents on the left hand side of the OPF?**

    States should review and purge documents on the left side of the OPF. Leave the left side of the folder in tact for scanning by the contractor.

12. **How do we access the eOPF from July 9, 2006 forward?**

    You will be able to access eOPFs from July 9, 2006 after receiving a password and instructions from USDA this month.

13. **What do we do with the hard copy OPFs that were established on or after July 9, 2006?**

    Purge and forward the hard copy OPFs for scanning without 50s included since they were scanned by NFC.

14. Will a schedule be developed for sending/scanning OPF's? Will it be a staggered schedule? One state at a time? All states at once? Or will you select certain states?

A shipping schedule will be developed and distributed at a later date. All states must have OPFs purged and ready for shipping by October 5, 2007.

15. Do employees have a right to a hard copy of all contents in the OPF prior to sending them for scanning?   If so, how will this task be resourced if it occurs in any volume?

Yes, employees do have a right to copy information contained in their OPF. However, HR is not under any obligation to make copies for employees. You may schedule appointments for employees to copy their OPF to prevent overburdening the HR staff.

16. Can I run a retirement report on anyone eligible to retire, retain those OPFs and if they don't retire by Jan 2009, then scan them in locally to save money now?

You can run a retirement report for your state. However, the OPF should be scanned as any other OPF. It is recommended that if you are aware of a possible retirement by February 1, 2008, you retain the hard copy of the OPF and not ship it for the back file conversion. If the employee plans to retire any time after February 1, 2008 their OPF should be purged and forwarded for scanning.

17. Retiring employees (from the Pre-Back File Official Personnel Folder Maintenance document) – retain the OPFs of employees who may be retiring prior to February 1, 2008. How do we know who they are?

You can pole all employees to determine if they plan to retire by February 1, 2008. Some states are pulling retirement reports and keeping those that are eligible to retire in 2008. This creates a concern, if a projected retiree does not retire by the above date, your state will be responsible for scanning all the information. We strongly discourage states from using this approach and encourage them to only maintain files for expected retirees by February 1, 2008.

18. What effect will FERCCA (Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Correction Act) have on eOPF?

None! The Standard Form 50s will be scanned in eOPF for access. If changes must be made during a FERCCA case they will be made by using the SF 50s.

4

19. How will an employee's eOPF be transferred to another agency?

If the receiving Agency has converted to eOPF then the files will be transferred electronically. If the receiving Agency has not converted to eOPF then we will have to create and transfer a hard copy of the eOPF.

20. Are you developing a notification to employees and/or a marketing strategy about what's being done with the hard copy OPFs (Other than NB.360.7.22)? You might want to consider an eOPF FAQ.

A second National Bulletin is being prepared with more details about the eOPF conversion. The first National Bulletin, NB.360.7.22, was issued to all employees and posted on my.NRCS. It is anticipated that a third National Bulletin will be issued for all employees explaining how to access their eOPF after the back file conversion.

21. What brand, model, and size scanner will be purchased for our use?

The scanner selected is the Fujitsu 5220C Image Scanner.

22. What training will we receive on operating the scanner for future filing? When will the training (addressed in NB.360.7.22) take place?

NRCS will provide Train-the-Trainer training. Training dates and additional guidance will be issued at a later date.

23. Will the scanner be used for new employees and new documents or do we scan all current OPF documents?

The scanner will be used to scan documents for new employees entering on duty after October 5, 2007. Temporary paper files should be maintained for these new employees until after the back file conversion.

24. What is the name of the company contracted to scan our OPFs?

The vendor is Northrop Grumman who is sub contacting to Anacomp for their back file conversion services. Both vendors meet requirements set forth by OPM.

25. Which agencies have converted to the eOPF (from the Pre-Back File Official Personnel Folder Maintenance document)?

The U.S. Coast Guard, HHS, NASA, NOAA, Forest Service, NFC, DA, and ARS have converted to the eOPF. Other USDA agencies are in the process of implementing the eOPF as NRCS.

26. **Where should the Notice of Rating NHQ-PER-010 be filed – OPF Right, left, or employee folder?**

    Form NHQ-PER-010 is not an approved official form and should not be filed on either side of the OPF. NRCS did not have OPM authority to test applicants for GS 457 positions. Therefore, if States decide to retain this form it may be filed in a temporary file. [Research revealed this form was provided by NRCS NHQ to rate Soil Conservationist, Range Management Specialist, and others as a hiring tool as opposed to evaluating school transcripts.

27. **We have some SF-50s that were printed on onion skin type paper, should we make copies of those and submit with the OPF for scanning, and retain the original?**

    Any forms contained in the OPFs that are printed on light weight paper should be copied and placed in the OPF for scanning. We recommend you retain the original to verify it was scanned into the eOPF.

28. **What are the anticipated expectations/impact/suggestions for the upcoming Benefits Open Season on eOPF?**

    All Benefits Open Season changes should be retained in a temporary file for scanning into the eOPF after the NRCS conversion.

29. **Does the short form SF-1192, Authorization for Purchase and Request for Change for Series EE Bonds go into the OPF?**

    The SF-1192 should not be filled in the OPF. Some HR offices file this form in a "Press" file which is maintained by PP.

30. **Are we supposed to remove SF-50s for details and corrections from the OPF?**

    NRCS does not process an SF-50 for details. If the detail involved a temporary promotion, it would be processed as a temporary promotion and not a detail.

    Corrected SF-50s must remain the OPF and include the reason for the correction. The incorrect SF-50 should be removed.

31. **Why are we being told to remove SF-2809s from the OPF?**

    The SF-2809 should not be removed from the OPF. Designation of Beneficiary forms that require witness signatures should be copied, placing the copy in the OPF and retaining the original in a separate file. {See questions #8 and #27.]

32. **IF SF-50s are being filed in the eOPF by NFC why is NFC still mailing copies to us?**

The SF-50s you receive from NRC are (1) for the OPF, (2) employee copy, and (3) chronological file. NFC continues to mail copies of the SF-50 to Agencies who have not converted to eOPF.

33. How do we purge OPFs of employees from Agencies (FS) who have converted to eOPF and they provided NRCS copies of paper files?

I contacted FS and they are in the process of cleaning up their eOPFs. They will not transmit former FS employees' eOPFs to NRCS. Therefore, we should purge the OPF retaining all prior FS or other agency files for scanning.