

# NEWS2USE

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## VANPOOLING: A COST EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE

Commuting can be a real hassle: racing out the door in the morning, fighting traffic, relying on the radio for companionship, and paying sky-high prices for gas. When you finally get to work, you feel the effects of a stressful, unproductive and costly commute.

Vanpooling is a cost effective alternative. Qualified NIH employees can receive up to \$105.00 monthly to reduce the cost of vanpooling. Individuals who vanpool can also enjoy the convenience of sharing a ride to work with others in a friendly environment. You'll arrive at work safe, on time and relaxed. But the benefits don't stop there. By vanpooling you can begin to use your commute time productively to catch up on your work, sleep or read the latest bestseller.

Dinah Huffer is a VPSI Vanpool coordinator. "I have commuted via carpool/vanpool to NIH for almost 29 years. Six years ago, I started a VPSI vanpool that originated out of Brunswick, Maryland, with one stop in Jefferson and the final destination being Bethesda. Starting the vanpool is the best thing I have ever done. It has saved mileage, reduced wear and tear on my own personal vehicle, and the Transshare subsidy from the government makes my out of pocket expense minimal. Our ride home is anything but dull. We have a good time!"



*Vanpool No. 1 members (left to right): Mary Demory, Lt. Jason Barr, Dennis Potts, Pat Smothers, Trevin Skeens, Dinah Huffer, Ron Whittington, and Debbie Whittington.*



Kenny Floyd says, “The reason I like the vanpool option is that it provides a reliable and less expensive transportation mode than any others available to me. I have driven myself, carpooled, taken the train and van-pooled while working at the NIH. The most reliable of these has been the vanpool. As someone who is concerned about the environment, I also see the advantage of reducing vehicle emissions by sharing a ride. Beyond the information sharing and friendships that I’ve experienced while vanpooling, I also have an opportunity to rest before and after work. While not every trip is a bed of roses there is always someone along to commiserate with about

work, the weather and the traffic. Anyway, who can beat the price? For approximately \$50 a month you, too, could enjoy a few new friends, save money, help save the environment and relax while going to and from work.”

Maryann Sofranko reports that “With a round-trip commute from Jefferson, Maryland of approximately 100 miles, vanpooling has been a real lifesaver for me. Prior to getting involved in the vanpool, I drove by myself to work daily, and the commute took its toll not only on my car, but on me physically and emotionally. With chronic congestion on 270, my daily commute had become a source of much stress and anxiety. Now that I commute to work via the vanpool, I find myself in a much more relaxed and balanced state that carries through my entire day, at work and at home.”

## CARPOOL PERMITS

■ *A registered carpool may obtain an NIH carpool hanger to park in designated areas. Each carpool will only receive one carpool hanger. This hanger should be shared between each carpool member. In order to receive a carpool permit, each person must surrender any other type of permit they currently hold. If participating in the NIH Transhare program, you must first withdraw from the program before participating in the NIH carpool program.*

■ *Each person must be the registered owner of a vehicle and possess a valid NIH identification card and a driver’s license.*

■ *Carpool permits are valid in areas marked with “CP Spaces reserved until 9:30 a.m.” signs in designated portions of parking lots throughout the campus. If carpool spaces are full, this permit authorizes parking in “General” parking spaces.*

■ *Prior to 9:30 a.m., parking of non-carpool vehicles in carpool spaces is not permitted and may result in the issuance of a traffic citation.*

### INFORMATION

Gary Freeman  
301-402-RIDE

### WHAT IS A VANPOOL?

A vanpool is a group of 7-15 people who commute together on a regular basis in a van.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

To start your own vanpool or to join existing NIH vanpools looking for passengers, contact 301-402-RIDE. You do not need to provide your own van. The van is provided by a vanpool operator such as VPSI Vanpool. One person volunteers to be the driver/coordinator of the van. The riders share a fee that covers the vanpool fare. Riders usually meet at a designated pick-up location like a shopping center parking lot or a park-and-ride location. Some van routes have more than one pick-up point, some don’t. And it’s the same with drop-off points at the destination. It all depends on the nature and needs of the group. Of course, the fewer stops, the faster everyone gets to work and home again.

### WHAT’S THE COST?

Because you share the cost with up to 14 other people, vanpooling is typically much less expensive than driving yourself to work. Qualified NIH employees can receive up to \$105.00 a month in Transhare subsidies to offset the cost of vanpooling.

### INFORMATION

301-402-RIDE

<http://dttts.ors.od.nih.gov/vanpool.htm>

<http://dttts.ors.od.nih.gov/transhare.htm>

## MEET LINDA FITZWATER: NEW PROGRAM SPECIALIST

### DIVISION OF TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

After 23 years at the NIH, and much experience as an AO with extensive travel experience on the customer side, Fitzwater is excited to serve the NIH community as the Program Specialist for travel and the project officer on the Travel Management Centers (TMC) Contract, better known as Omega World Travel. She will work closely with the Quality Assurance specialist for travel, Marisa Sheelor, who also recently joined the travel and transportation staff. Fitzwater will also work with the Clinical Center Project Officer for patient travel.

Challenges of this office include meeting the needs of the traveler in a timely and efficient manner; being responsive to travel questions, concerns and complaints; and monitoring the performance of the contract, a performance based contract measured by the following six standards:

■ 98% of all quarterly reservations will be complete and accurate

■ 97% of all quarterly reservations for air travel will have the lowest logical fare based on NIH travel policy and travelers’ requests



*Linda Fitzwater, new program specialist and project officer on the Travel Management Centers contract.*

- 85% of all quarterly customer telephone calls will be answered within 20 seconds or three rings
- 90% of all quarterly telephone holding times will average no more than 2 minutes
- 90% of all customer phone messages will be returned within an average of two business hours
- 97% of all requesters/users surveyed rate the vendor at least 'average'

Fitzwater plans to schedule travel meetings for the NIH staff, update the community on travel issues through the Travel-Tips newsletter, update the website, and use other appropriate forms of communication to keep the traveler informed.

In the meantime, she welcomes your suggestions and concerns by phone or e-mail.

#### **INFORMATION**

Linda Fitzwater  
301-594-6205  
<http://dttts.ors.od.nih.gov>

## **MAIL AND COURIER SERVICES THRIVE**

The Division of Mail and Courier Services (DMCS) has reason to be proud of the excellent results recently reported in a Fall 2004 survey of its performance over the prior six-month period. The training and programs that DMCS has implemented to decrease postage errors, increase efficiency, and generally make sure that the contract requirements were fulfilled, have all contributed to improved mail services for the NIH community.

#### **THE SURVEY**

In October 2004, hard copy surveys were distributed to all NIH mail stop code contacts. These individuals, who range from secretaries to scientists, are designated to handle or report issues and concerns that affect employees served by their assigned mail stop. Although they tend to be busy, over one-third took the time to submit feedback.

Since they keep abreast of mail related issues, the mail stop code contacts are in the best position to judge mail services. The surveys assessed attributes such as timeliness, reliability, convenience and resolution of problems. Open-ended comments were also encouraged. ORS' Division of Mail and Courier Services was rated from a high of 8.84 out of 10 on "responsiveness" to a low of 8.22 out of 10 on "quality," on average. The lowest average rating of 8.22 was still well above the midpoint of a 10 point scale. In general, respondent's perceptions were very positive.

The surveys were analyzed by the Office of Quality Management. All responses that contained comments and contact information were forwarded to DMCS for follow up.

In addition to the customer survey, DMCS has gathered several other measures of business performance.

#### **PROMPT DELIVERY**

Delivery is on time most of the time, within eight minutes of the targeted schedule, improving steadily over the last two years.

#### **ACCURATE DELIVERY**

Mail sorting errors are minimal, with one mistake for every 625 pieces of mail during the initial sort. Almost all of those mistakes are caught in subsequent sorts.

#### **POSTAGE**

Quality control checks show that the number of postage errors (postage misapplied or miscalculated) was extremely low. Proper training of the postage metering staff has all but eliminated postage errors.

#### **FINANCES**

The ground shipping program put in place as an alternative to USPS Parcel Post service, increased savings by an additional \$43,000 (\$183,000 total for FY 2004), which is more than 31 percent in savings over the previous year. IC mail managers contributed to the success of this program by responding to communications promoting it.

#### **SECURITY**

Identifying potential hazards is a top priority. X-ray clerks are maintaining high efficiency and accuracy. Retention of employees in this sensitive position is critical.

#### **THE FUTURE**

DMCS plans to continue to look for strategies to improve customer service and decrease costs. Additional or enhanced training, technology and quality control will all be considered ongoing priorities. In addition, there will continue to be strict enforcement of the requirements outlined in the performance-based

contract, as well as positive and constructive feedback. DMCS will continue to hold meetings with mail managers to keep the lines of communication open. Flyers and other printed communications will be distributed to the NIH community. Another survey will be scheduled sometime this year to keep tracking performance.

#### **MISUNDERSTOOD ISSUE: POSITIONAL MAIL**

At the NIH, mail is considered organizational or positional. This means the intended recipient of most mail is the specific government organization or the person holding a specific government position, not the individual. Mail addressed to the previous person holding that job will be delivered to the person currently occupying the position. Mail will not be forwarded by DMCS when an employee accepts a new government position. Employees are encouraged to notify correspondents of any address change. Send and receive all personal mail at home. The reason for this policy is that just like other government property or service, the NIH mail system is government-funded and operated and therefore should not be used for personal matters.

#### **INSTITUTE/CENTER (IC) MAIL MANAGERS PERFORMANCE**

IC mail managers are an integral part of our mail management program. They do well at communicating and distributing information regarding mail service issues, performance initiatives and postal news. They are also a good source of information to the mail and courier services staff about predicted IC customer reactions to issues such as postage rate increases and performance initiatives.

#### **INFORMATION**

Mail and Courier Services Customer Service  
301-496-3586  
mcsbcs@mail.nih.gov

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE**

### **ORS SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES RATED**

On February 23, ORS conducted its fourth performance management conference with presentations from the Scientific Resources divisions. Presenters addressed how their services performed in 2004, and what changes they plan to implement to pursue further improvements in 2005. The Acting Director of ORS, Shirl Eller, presented the opening remarks and welcomed the attendees.

The divisions that participated through talks and exhibits were Bioengineering and Physical Science, Occupational Health and Safety, Radiation Safety and Veterinary Resources. Presentation topics ranged from collaborative research to animal research support, to a variety of safety issues.

Antonio Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Quality Management, wrapped up the conference by acknowledging the contributions of the conference coordinators, presenters, and by inviting the audience to attend the next Performance Management Conference to be held on Wednesday, May 25, 2005 at the Natcher Conference Center from 9am-12:30pm. The conference will address the services provided by the Program and Employee Services cluster.

If you missed the conference but would like to learn more about a specific service or division, please contact the following speakers directly:

**Nancy Newman**  
*Safety Operations*

**Deborah Wilson**  
*Occupational Health and Safety*

**James Schmitt, MD**  
*Occupational Medicine*

**Eileen Morgan**  
*Facility Management*

**Charmaine Foltz, DVM**  
*Veterinary Resources*

**James Crowell, DVM**  
*Veterinary Resources*

**Henry Eden, MD**  
*Bioengineering and Physical Science*

#### **INFORMATION**

Robert Ostrowski  
Science Resource Manager  
301-496-0597

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Corporal Dougherty, the NIH Community Policing Coordinator, reports that many items ended up in the Lost and Found recently, from hairclips to an expensive ring. Call or go to the NIH Police office if you lost any of these items.

*Hair Clip  
Glasses  
Sunglasses  
Cell phones  
Make-up bag  
CDs  
Car keys  
Wallet  
Necklace  
Books  
Jacket  
Gloves  
Ring*

#### **INFORMATION**

NIH Police  
Building 31C  
301-496-2387



## TOP FIVE SAFETY WEBSITES

Number of Visits

For the past two years, the Division of Occupational Health and Safety has monitored the usage of its safety websites. Monitoring has included such information as the number of visitors, length of visit, the most frequently accessed pages, the most frequently downloaded files, type of businesses or domains, country of origin and the type of internet browser used during the visit.

The following is a list of the top five websites visited from April 2004 to September 2004. The top two remained the same in 2003 and 2004. The 2003 rankings are shown in parentheses.

<b>1</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>DOHS SAFETY MAIN PAGE</b> . . . . .	<b>12,333</b>
		<a href="http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/index.html">http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/index.html</a>	
<b>2</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>SAFE HANDLING OF CYTOTOXIC DRUGS</b> . . . . .	<b>8,393</b>
		<a href="http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/pubs/cyto/index.htm">http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/pubs/cyto/index.htm</a>	
<b>3</b>	<b>(6)</b>	<b>ERGONOMICS 'WELL BACK' EXERCISES</b> . . . . .	<b>6,196</b>
		<a href="http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/ergonomics/wellbackhealth.html">http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/ergonomics/wellbackhealth.html</a>	
<b>4</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>DOHSTRAINING</b> . . . . .	<b>5,700</b>
		<a href="http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/train.html">http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/train.html</a>	
<b>5</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>ERGONOMICS EXERCISES &amp; STRETCHES, 'EYE' PAGE</b> . . . . .	<b>5,538</b>
		<a href="http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/ergonomics/exerciseyes.html">http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/ergonomics/exerciseyes.html</a>	

### INFORMATION

LCDR Michelle Markley  
301-451-5824  
mmark@mail.nih.gov  
[www.ors.od.nih.gov/labsafety](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/labsafety)

## FIRE SAFETY TIPS: PERSONAL COMPUTERS

The Division of the Fire Marshal offers these fire safety tips for using personal computers with the hope that they might prevent the loss of life or property both in the workplace and at home.

- ▶ Make sure that a multipurpose fire extinguisher (e.g., one rated for ordinary combustibles and electrical fires) is located within a reasonable distance from your personal computer.
- ▶ When you leave your personal computer on and unattended, turn off the monitor during your absence. Monitors generate high voltage internally with the potential to start an electrical fire, or even trigger an explosion if the computer is located in a flammable atmosphere (such as one might encounter from a

gas leak or from flammable vapors resulting from a chemical spill in a laboratory). The switch for the monitor is typically found at the bottom of the screen, on the side of the monitor, or in some cases at the rear of the unit. Turning off the monitor while leaving the computer on will NOT disrupt the computer's operation or compromise data integrity. When you return, simply turn the monitor back on and wait a few seconds for it to warm up.

- ▶ Never leave on a personal computer, monitor, or printer with protective dust covers in place. Doing so may cause excessive heat build-up, which can cause hardware failure and potentially result in electrical fires.
- ▶ Never place liquids on computer components or other electronic equipment where damage from spills could occur.
- ▶ Make sure that your computer's electrical outlet is properly grounded and has a sufficient power rating to handle all the components connected to it.

▶ Keep backup copies of important data in a remote location (i.e., in another building or in a safety deposit box). This will allow you to restore your data subsequent to a fire or other catastrophic event, rather than experiencing the expense of recovery, or worse, the irreversible loss of data.

### INFORMATION

Division of the Fire Marshal  
301-496-0487

## HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST: A DOZEN TIPS FROM THE NIH POLICE

- 1 Plan escape routes in the case of an intruder or a fire.
- 2 Be sure to have a telephone in your bedroom. This will allow you to call if you wake up to the sound of an intruder.
- 3 Have a lock on your bedroom door. A deadbolt is best.
- 4 Don't ever give out personal information over the phone to a stranger, including who is home at the time.
- 5 Never let a stranger in your home. Insist on proper identification from any visitor you don't know. If you are still suspicious, call the organization or company for verification.
- 6 If you are female and live alone, don't put your first name on a mailbox or in the phonebook.
- 7 If a stranger asks to use your home phone, don't let that person inside. Offer to make the call yourself.
- 8 Install a security chain on the front door. It enables you to receive small deliveries without opening the door all the way. Don't stand directly behind the opening. You raise the risk of being grabbed by someone reaching through the opening.
- 9 Many attacks are planned. Vary your daily routines.
- 10 Keep emergency numbers near the phone.
- 11 Keep doors locked at all times.
- 12 Install a peephole in the door so you can see out without opening the door. Make it low enough so your children can see through it.

### INFORMATION

NIH Police  
301-496-2387

## DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES ANNOUNCES 3RD ANNUAL IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE

On April 27-28, 2005, the Division of International Services (DIS) will host its third annual Immigration Conference. The two-day event is open to all NIH administrative and support staff that are involved in the recruitment and retention of foreign scientists.

The conference provides an opportunity for the administrative staff to learn more about the procedures involved in recruiting foreign scientists and understanding their role in the process. The latest changes in immigration rules and regulations will be updated by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State.

Registration information will be distributed via an e-mail alert to our "Key-Con" list as well as posted online.

### INFORMATION

Michelle Mejia  
301-496-6166  
[www.nih.gov/od/ors/dirs/isb/isb.htm](http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dirs/isb/isb.htm)

## CHILD CARE AT THE NIH

### THEN:

In 1975, NIH sponsored one (1) child care center on the Bethesda Campus. The Center served 35 pre-school children.

### NOW:

In 2005, NIH sponsors four (4) child care centers with a total capacity of 600 children, ages 6 weeks to 12 years.\*

\* 2005 figure includes center in Research Triangle, NC

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!** The Office of Research Services encourages you to submit questions, comments and suggestions about the services we provide to the NIH community. Someone from the ORS staff will respond to each question. Just e-mail, phone or fax your comments and questions to the appropriate location listed below.

For questions or comments about ORS services, contact the ORS Information Line:

**E-mail:** [ORSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:ORSInfo@mail.nih.gov)

**Phone:** 301-594-6677

**Fax:** 301-402-2204

**Website:** <http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/security/index.htm>

For questions or comments about articles in the *News2Use* or to suggest future story ideas:

**E-mail:** [ORSNews2Use@mail.nih.gov](mailto:ORSNews2Use@mail.nih.gov)

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