



HR Broadcast

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The MRPBS web site has been redesigned! You may have noticed our new look. Be sure to check out the Human Resources pages, and save it as a favorite!

[MRPBS Web Site](#)

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 for easy access by all our customers. We hope you will find this helpful!!



[HR Calendar](#)

Be sure and check the calendar for the months of January, February, and March!!

The Benefits Buzz

Review Your Statement of Earnings and Leave!



Every pay period, the National Finance Center (NFC) produces a valuable document for you - your Statement of Earnings and Leave. It shows your salary and leave information for the pay period, including your gross pay, all deductions withheld, and current and projected leave balances.

Your Statements of Earnings and Leave are available electronically on your Employee Personal Page, on NFC's secure website, where you can view and print your statements, and use the system's other features to make changes to your pay, such as your tax withholdings, financial allotments, Thrift Savings Plan contribution amount, savings bonds, etc.

Questions about your retirement or insurance benefits? Please call or email the [Benefits Specialist](#) who services your program/location.

Your Statements of Earnings and Leave are available electronically on your Employee Personal Page

You are responsible for reviewing your Statement of Earnings and Leave for accuracy each pay period and to promptly report any errors to your servicing personnel office. If errors are reported quickly, it is relatively easy to correct them. If the error continues for an extended period of time, the effect could be financially disastrous to you, as you are required to pay for benefits that were elected but not properly deducted

It is important that you take a few minutes to review your Statement of Earnings and Leave each pay period to be sure that the deductions made from your salary payment are accurate, especially if you have recently made a change which would affect your pay, such as:

- Health Benefits election
- Life Insurance election
- Thrift Savings Plan contribution
- Federal and State Income Tax Withholding
- Savings bond election or change
- Charitable contributions
- Deposits to financial institutions
- Union or other association/membership dues
- TSP Loan repayments
- Federal Long Term Care insurance premiums
- Flexible Spending Account Deductions
- Federal Dental and/or Vision Insurance premiums

In addition to the above, your Statement will show required deductions for:

- Retirement coverage, if you are eligible (CSRS, CSRS Offset, or FERS)
- Social Security (FICA), if you are covered by CSRS Offset or FERS, or if you are not eligible for other retirement coverage
- Medicare Tax

Please review your Statement of Earnings and Leave every pay period. If you have any questions after reviewing your statement, please do not hesitate to call Human Resources Operations (HRO) at 612-336-3281, so that your questions can be directed to the appropriate staff member.



To use your Employee Personal Page (EPP), go to <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/> and click on the "My EEP" icon. If you haven't used the EPP or you don't know your EPP password, you may request a password at the EPP website. If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capability, you may request to have your Statements of Earnings and Leave mailed to your home address. Instructions for preparing and submitting such requests can be found in MRP Directive 4501.1.

Open Season Changes

If you made a health insurance open season change, your election was effective pay period 1, January 4, 2009.

If you made a **health insurance open season change**, your election was effective pay period 1, January 4, 2009, and you will receive your insurance card from your health plan. Please follow up with your health plan on the status of your insurance card. Of course, check your Statement of Earnings and Leave (see above article) to be sure that the correct health insurance deduction was taken for pay period 1.

If you made an open season election of **Federal Employees Dental and/or Vision Insurance**, you will receive information directly from your dental and/or vision plan. Again, review your Statement of Earnings and Leave to be sure that the correct premium was taken for pay period 1.

If you elected to participate in the **Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS)**, review your Statement of Earnings and Leave to be sure that your first deduction was taken in pay period 26/2008. You may submit claims for eligible expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2009, to <https://FSAFEDS.com>.

All of the above deductions are taken on a pre-tax basis, lowering your taxable income. Another way to save on taxes is to contribute more to the **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)**. For more information, go to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml>. TSP changes may be made at any time; there are no open seasons for TSP.

Processing Tidbits

Savings Bonds via Treasury Direct

Looking for a new way to purchase savings bonds? Try Treasury Direct. It is the only financial website that lets you buy bonds directly from the U.S. Department of Treasury in paperless electronic form. For more information go to: <http://www.treasurydirect.gov/tdhome.htm>

Now is the time to verify your home address

The National Finance Center (NFC) will be mailing 2008 W-2 forms in early January, so now is a good time to verify your home address to ensure that your W-2 arrives timely. If you have moved, please be sure that you complete an AD-349 form, Change of Address, and submit it to your Processing service provider, or you can make the address change on the NFC, Employee Personnel Page at: <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/>.

PP access problems?

If you experience problems with your NFC Employee Personal Page ID or password, please contact the NFC Operations and Security Center at 1-800-767-9641 or email them at osc.etix@usda.gov

Staffing Corner

New Assessment Process for Team Leader and Project Manager Job Applicants in APHIS

Early last summer, APHIS introduced its *Leadership Roadmap* as part of a re-invigorated focus on succession planning. The *Leadership Roadmap* is a tool to be used to advance the succession planning effort in at least two ways: 1) as a guide to be used for employee development, as evidenced by the recent issuance of the *APHIS Leadership Development Toolkit*, and 2) as the basis for evaluating applicants for leadership positions in APHIS.

In July, the Human Resources Division integrated the leadership competencies from the *APHIS Leadership Roadmap* into the evaluation process used to refer candidates who applied for supervisory and managerial positions in the organization.

Beginning in January, HR will begin using leadership competencies in the evaluation process for candidates who apply for positions as Team Leaders or Project Managers. Applicants for these positions in APHIS will respond to a series of questions designed to help assess the extent to which they possess the competencies identified in the *Leadership Roadmap* for Team Leaders and Project Managers. The *APHIS Leadership Roadmap Toolkit for Hiring Managers* has been updated to provide additional assistance to hiring managers, who will be selecting the competency assessment questions asked of candidates applying for team leader or project manager vacancies. The Toolkit for Hiring Managers is posted on the HR website for review at:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpb/hr/aphis_leadership_roadmap.shtml

Questions about the information above can be posed to your servicing staffing specialist in Riverdale or Minneapolis.

Time-in-Grade restriction eliminated; Qualifications requirements remain

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is eliminating the time-in-grade restriction on advancement to competitive service positions under the General Schedule (GS) effective March 9, 2009.

While the time-in-grade restriction is being eliminated, candidates for promotion will still be required to meet the OPM qualification standards before being eligible for promotion. Candidates for promotion will have to demonstrate at least one year of specialized experience equivalent in difficulty to the next lower grade level or will need to possess the appropriate level of education (if education can be substituted for experience).

Additionally, promotions will continue to be merit-based and contingent upon an individual's possession of the relative knowledge, skills, and abilities for a particular position. Supervisory approval is also required.

Instructions for supervisors who want to request career ladder promotions as a result of the elimination of the time-in-grade restriction will be forthcoming. This change does not affect employees' eligibility for within-grade increases (WGs).

Please contact your servicing staffing specialist in either Riverdale or Minneapolis if you have questions.

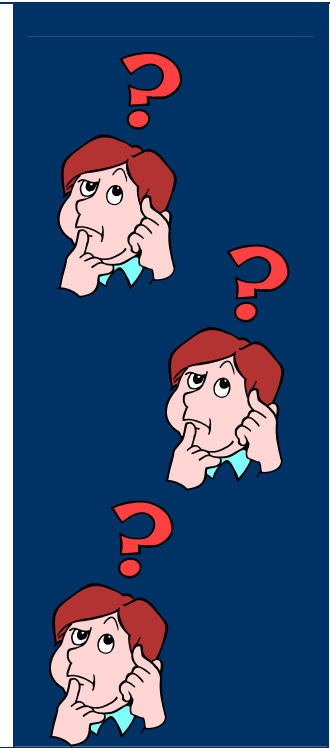
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HSPD-12 and Your LincPass Credential

As we leave 2008 enter into the new year employees continue to successfully enroll and/or activate their new USAccess (LincPass) credentials in record numbers. As a result, our office receives numerous inquiries regarding employee roles and responsibilities as LincPass Credential holders. In order to process these calls in the most effective manner, we encourage employees and managers to read and bookmark the USAccess website (<http://www.fedidcard.gov>) prior to contacting our office. This website contains valuable information, including FAQs, regarding every aspect of the USAccess credentialing process.

Also, please continue to monitor this quarterly bulletin for highlights of the credentialing process such as the following fact sheet which has been taken from the above mentioned webpage.





Identity management has become an important part of our homeland security since September 11, 2001 and it directly affects you, the Federal employee and Federal contractor. The 9/11 Commission Report recommended screening people with biometric identifiers across agencies and governments as one of its global strategies to protect against terrorist attacks.

As part of ensuring national security, Presidential Homeland Security Directive 12 (HSPD-12) mandates that Federal agencies screen their employees and issue credentials that adhere to Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 201:

Personal Identity Verification (PIV) by October 2008. FIPS 201 was issued by the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) and outlines the requirements for Federal credentials such as the USAccess credential.

The U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) developed the USAccess credentialing program as an efficient way for Federal agencies to issue common HSPD-12 approved credentials to their employees and contractors. You will receive a USAccess credential, as your agency has elected to participate in the USAccess program.

Why Do I Need This Card?

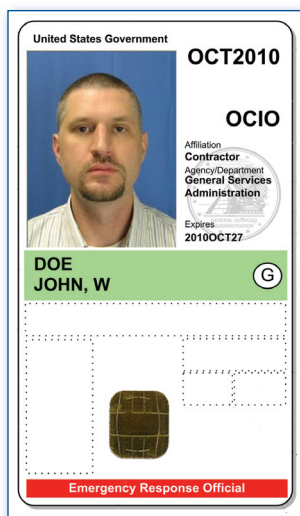
As a Federal employee or contractor, you will soon need your USAccess credential in order to gain access to buildings and systems for which you are authorized. Over time, all existing Federally issued badges will be replaced with a PIV-compliant credential. Without a USAccess credential, you may not be able to enter certain buildings, or will need to be registered as a guest.

What Information About Me Is Stored On This Card?

The credential itself displays a printed picture of your face, your full name, agency, organization, credential expiration date, credential serial number, agency particular data, and an issuer identification number. The credential also stores a Personal Identification Number (PIN), two electronic fingerprint templates, and digital certificates for functions such as authenticating the credential holder, digital signatures, and encrypting email.

How Does This Credential Ensure My Security?

An important mission of HSPD-12 and the USAccess program is to ensure that a person can easily and quickly identify him or herself reliably to any federal agency using a single credential. With your USAccess credential, you can easily identify yourself, and more importantly, trust the identity of other USAccess credential holders.



Your Roles and Responsibilities as a Credential Holder

As a USAccess credential holder, you have important responsibilities to do your part to safeguard the security of the nation, your fellow employees, and yourself.

1. Safeguard Your PIN: When your card becomes activated, you will be prompted to select a unique PIN. Your new PIN:

- Must contain 6-8 characters
- Must not be too simple (e.g., 1234)
- Must not contain number strings (e.g., 4444)
- Must be correctly confirmed

Never store your PIN with your USAccess credential or share this information.

2. Report Lost or Stolen Cards Immediately: Contact your agency's Security Officer if you have lost your card or believe it has been tampered with. Your current credential will be suspended, and the process for issuing you a new card will be initiated.

3. Know Your Privacy Rights: View the complete directives and policies governing the USAccess program available on the USAccess Privacy Notice signs located on the USAccess Web site at <http://www.fedidcard.gov>.

It is important that you understand how data is collected and stored for your USAccess credential not only for your security, but as a reminder of how important it is to protect and safeguard your credential.



Maintaining Your USAccess Credential

It is your responsibility to protect your USAccess credential and exercise the same care with it as you do with other identification credentials. **For best protection, please keep your card in your badge holder when not in use.**



Other Protective Measures:

- Do not mark on, punch holes in, or bend your card, as this will void the card warranty and could cause the protective plastic covering to peel away prematurely.
- Do not scratch the magnetic strip on your card.
- Avoid storing your card in areas subject to excessive heat (e.g. clothes dryer) or in direct sunlight (e.g. car dashboards) as the card could warp.
- Do not allow the card near magnetic fields (e.g. stereo equipment, magnets, other magnetic stripe cards, etc.)

Renewing Your Credential: Your USAccess credential is active for a period of 5 years. As the expiration date of your credential nears, you will be notified by e-mail to make an appointment at a nearby enrollment/activation center to renew your credential.

Renewing Your Credential Certificate: Your USAccess credential holds a digital certificate that must be renewed every 3 years. As the certificate renewal date of your credential nears, you will be contacted by e-mail to make an appointment at a nearby enrollment/activation center to renew the certificate.

Resetting PIN: If you've forgotten your PIN, or you have "locked" your card, contact the person who authorized you for your credential (called your Sponsor). You will need to make an appointment at your nearby enrollment/activation center in order to reset your PIN.