January 2007 Issue

HR Broadcast

NEW FEATURE ON THE WEB

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

Coming in the APRIL Issue:
**** Change in Spot Award Amount***

Helpful Hints

W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate

Employees who intend to claim total Federal tax exemption for CY 2007 must submit a new W-4 prior to February 18, 2007. Effective Pay Period 4, employees who claim total exemption for CY 2006 and who have not filed a new W-4 for CY 2007 will have Federal taxes withheld as single taxpayers with zero withholding allowance. A W-4 filed for the prior year does not extend tax exemption into CY 2007. A new W-4 must be filed for CY 2007.

Training Documents

Training documents, such as the SF-182 (Request, Authorization and Agreement for Training), training certificates, or other proof of training, are no longer filed in Official Personnel Folders (OPFs). Training forms/documents are to be filed in the supervisor's work file for the employee.

Please do not send SF-182's, or any other training documents, to be filed in the OPF. In most cases, any training documents received in HRO for filing will be shredded.

QUICKHIRE QUERIES

Below are some questions frequently asked by applicants applying for jobs through the MRP automated system:

Q: Where can I go if I have technical questions about or need help going through the on-line application process?	A: The following two documents are available for you to use as resources to the USAJOBS application process: 1. How to Apply Brochure (A four page PDF informational guide with step-by-step information on the application process.) 2. How to Apply Presentation (A PowerPoint presentation containing information on and a tour of the application process.) You may access these documents at the following website: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/systems/USAJOBS/applying.html If you are unable to find the answer to your question within the above documents, you may email your question to our help desk technical support at the following e-mail address: apphelp@aphis.usda.gov Our help desk technical support is available from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Central Time, Monday - Friday (except government holidays). Please allow up to 24 hrs to receive a response. You may also contact the agency representative identified within the vacancy announcement for the position in which you are interested. You will find the agency contact information within the *How to Apply* section of the USAJOBS vacancy announcement.
Q: How do I edit/update my resume on USAJOBS? How do I send an updated resume to a position to which I have already applied?	A: In order to update your resume stored in USAJOBS you must log into your My USAJOBS account by going to the USAJOBS website: http://www.usajobs.gov/ USAJOBS is the only place you can edit/update your resume. Once logged into your account, click **[Manage Resume]** and then click the **[Edit]** link below the resume you would like to update. You will now be in your stored resume; make your changes, being certain to save your work on a regular basis. You have now updated your resume. If you have already applied to a position and now would like to send your updated resume, while logged into your USAJOBS account, click the **[Applications]** tab. The announcement must still be in the open period. If the announcement has closed and is no longer accepting applications, you will not be able to send an updated resume. Once in the applications section, find the position to which you would like to send an updated resume. Click the title of the position to enter the vacancy announcement. Scroll to the bottom of the announcement and click **[Apply On-Line]**. The system will ask you to select a stored resume to send. Select the resume you updated and click on **[Send updated resume]**. USAJOBS will transfer you and your updated resume to the USDA system. This updated copy of your resume will replace your previously submitted version. The system defaults to selecting "Take me to the assessment". You may update your contact information and core Federal questions at this time or print additional fax cover sheets by selecting "Update my information that is on file", or click **[Continue].** If you clicked **[Finished]** at the end of the application process at an earlier time, the grades for which you applied will be selected. If you clicked **[Save]** when you first visited the application, the grades for which you applied will not be selected, and you will need to reselect the grades. However, all of your previously completed answers will be visible. Click through your previously completed answers. You must click **[Finished]** twice within the application process each time you enter your application, to send an updated resume, or make changes. You must allow the system to return you to USAJOBS. Once the system has returned you to USAJOBS, you may continue to work in your USAJOBS account or select to log out of your account.
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

The following information is for *Selecting Officials* who are preparing to fill a recently established position, or an existing position that is currently, or soon-to-be vacant:

Four Questions To Consider Before Advertising Your Vacancy

Frequently, recruitment actions are received in Human Resources requesting that a vacancy be advertised both case exam (externally) and merit promotion (internally). Often the selecting official requests the vacancy be advertised "the same as last time." The federal recruitment process can be long and frustrating for both applicants and selecting officials. This frustration can be reduced or eliminated by structuring recruitment requests according to your responses to the following questions:

1. Where are the best qualified applicants currently employed?

If the position has historically been filled internally, it is appropriate and advisable to advertise the vacancy through the Merit Promotion Program only. In addition to targeting the most highly qualified applicants and expediting the issuance of your certificate, this will eliminate the frustration external applicants feel after repeatedly applying for vacancies and being neither interviewed nor selected. Many of these external applicants may be desirable for other future vacancies, but will stop applying after repeatedly being bypassed for interviews or selections.

2. Are the most highly qualified applicants employed by the Federal Government in the local commuting area?

If the answer to this question is yes, it is more effective to request that the area-of-consideration be limited to the local commuting area and possibly the program, e.g., MRPBS Local Commuting Area.

3. Have past selections consistently been made at the full performance level?

Often vacancies are advertised at multiple grade levels. Selecting officials should consider past recruitment activity to determine if advertising at multiple grade levels is effective. Vacancies should be advertised at those grade levels for which there is a highly qualified applicant pool and, therefore, a likely selection. Prior selections are indicative of those grade levels.

4. Historically, have there been a large number of applicants?

If past recruitment activity indicates you can anticipate a voluminous response to your vacancy, it is appropriate to reduce the length of the announcement period. The minimum of one week may be advisable.

Your servicing Human Resources Specialist in Staffing is available to advise you on all your recruitment options. Please don't hesitate to call upon them.

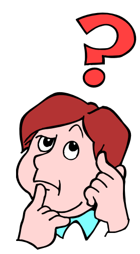
Personnel Security News

More AD-1197 ID Request Form Questions

How should I submit the AD-1197, Request for USDA ID Badge when both the office issuing the ID <u>and</u> HR are asking for the same form?

As a result of the diverse manner in which each Program Office handles the issuance of ID Badges, it is recommended that a COPY of the AD-1197 and supporting identity source documents be made so that one can be sent to HR with the new-hire paperwork and the other can be submitted for the issuance of the provisional ID badge. Remember, the AD-1197 form serves two purposes; one as the initial "Request for an ID Badge" and secondly it sets in motion the process of beginning a background investigation on new employees and contractors

Once the background investigation has been initiated and an Advanced Fingerprint Report received from OPM, the HR Security Staff will authorize the issuance of the permanent ID and forward the signed AD-1197 to the office issuing the ID. Because the status of the employee, including the ID expiration date, is maintained in the Agency's card issuance database the provisional vs. permanent status of the ID badge is transparent to employees.



What about replacement ID badges? Would the HR Personnel Security Section need a copy of the AD-1197 for these?

Not necessarily, it depends on whether or not it has been validated that the employee has had a background investigation previously completed. Currently the Personnel Security Staff is working on an enormous project validating for the Department and OPM all completed background investigations on MRP employees. For current employees requiring a replacement badge you can submit the AD-1197 to the office who normally processes your Program's IDs and bypass the HR Personnel Security folks. However, if you are not certain a background investigation has been completed, please feel free to contact any one of the Personnel Security Staff so that the proper background investigation can be completed.

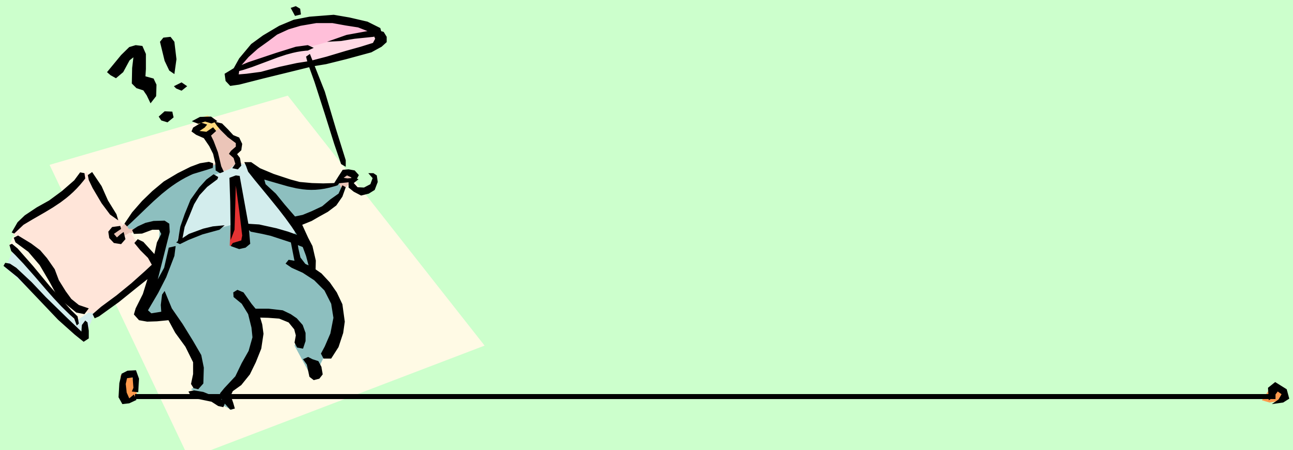
Should I be concerned about employees whose first appointment to the Federal Government didn't require a background investigation but now we've either extended or converted them to a different appointment?

Absolutely! The <u>only</u> employees who don't require having a background investigation are those who are newly hired under the excepted appointment authority (i.e., under 1040 hours) or their appointments do not exceed 180 days. Whenever an employee exceeds or reaches an accumulative 180 days Federal service without a break in service of 24 months or more, they must then have a background investigation completed. While HR tries to keep on top of these "return" employees, it's essential that the Program Administrative Offices monitor these as well and notify the HR Personnel Security Staff when an employee reaches or exceeds the 180 days. The employee will then be contacted to begin the background investigation process.

e-QIP SF-85 Implementation

SF-85, Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive, Low-Risk Positions (NACI):

MRPBS, HRD, Personnel Security began implementing the use of the electronic Standard Form (SF) 85, “Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions” on January 1, 2007. From this point forward, no hard copy questionnaires will be accepted. Instead, employees must complete and submit them electronically through OPM’s secure on-line e-QIP system. Joining the previously successful electronic submission of Public Trust (SF-85P) and National Security (SF-86) forms, this now completes MRP’s e-QIP implementation plan for submitting all questionnaires for background investigations electronically. Notices were sent to all MRP Program Administrative Offices in mid-December. If you did not receive this information, please contact the Agency’s Personnel Security Officer at Dru.J.Dukart@aphis.usda.gov.



Interim (Temporary) Clearances

If deemed necessary and appropriate, the USDA Personnel Security Branch may be able to grant an interim (temporary) security clearance to an employee while his/her investigation is processing at OPM. Interim clearances are granted in exceptional circumstances where official functions must be performed before completion of the investigative and adjudicative processes associated with the security clearance procedure. There is no difference between an interim and a full security clearance as it relates to access to classified information. However, when such access is granted, the background investigation must be expedited (35-day) service. If potentially disqualifying information is developed at anytime, the interim security clearance may be withdrawn. An interim security clearance will be granted under the following conditions: 1) a demonstrated, clearly identified need stated on the *Justification for Requested Security Clearance* form; 2) a favorable review of the SF-86; 3) the submission of an appropriate 35-day investigation request to OPM; and 4) the completion of a security indoctrination and signed SF312, Nondisclosure Agreement. A request for interim SCI should be submitted only when there is an *emergency or urgent operational requirement* that necessitates indoctrination prior to the completion of the required investigation and the individual.