



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!!

Coming in the January!

Issue:

- ❖ **More PEARS POINTERS**
- ❖ **Helpful Hints**
- ❖ **NFC Reporting Center**



The Benefits Buzz

If you made a **Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)** election during last year's open season, it became effective on September 4, 2005, if you met the pay and duty status requirements during the previous pay period (pp 17). Pay and duty means that you were working -- not on any type of leave. For Full Time employees, this means you were required to be in a pay and duty status for 32 hours during pay period 17. For Part Time employees, this means you were in pay and duty status for one half of the regularly scheduled tour of duty recorded in your personnel system during pay period 17. If you didn't meet the pay and duty status requirements during pay period 17, your FEGLI open season election will not be effective until the pay period following the one in which you meet these requirements. Watch your Statement of Earnings and Leave for the change. There are NO regular open seasons for FEGLI.

You may reduce your FEGLI coverage at any time by completing an SF-2817, signing only for the coverage you want to keep, and faxing it to Human Resources Operations Benefits Team at (612) 370-2035.

The **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)** and the **Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS)** open seasons will run November 14 - December 12, 2005. Watch for all employee emails and information on our web site in November!

There are no more **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)** open seasons! This means you can change your contributions at any time (but only once per pay period, please!) If you are age 50 or older this year, you may be able to make catch up contributions to TSP. Go to our web site for instructions: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/benefits_tsp.html.

TSP's new Life Cycle Funds provide you with a convenient way to invest your TSP account using professionally determined investment mixes that are tailored to different time horizons, depending on when you think you will begin withdrawing your TSP account. Find out more at <http://www.tsp.gov/lifecycle/flash/index.html>.

Thrift Savings Plan contributions are capped by the IRS elective deferral limit of **\$14,000 in 2005**. If you are a FERS employee who will earn more than **\$93,333 in 2005**, you *may* choose to limit your contribution to a dollar amount per pay period, rather than using 15% as a contribution rate, in order to maximize your agency matching contributions. If you hit the IRS elective deferral limit before the end of the **pay year (pay period 24)**, your TSP contributions stop, as well as your government matching contributions. Don't let those matching contributions get away! For more information, go to <http://www.tsp.gov/calc/contributions/index.html>.

Non Pay Status. Do you know how nonpay status, or Leave Without Pay, affects your employment and benefits? How do you maintain your health benefits coverage while in nonpay status? Find out more at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/benefits_non_pay_status.html.

If you are going in nonpay status because you have been called to active duty military service, please see specific information at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/benefits/benefits_military_duty.html.

Questions? Who do you call when you have questions about your benefits? Contact your servicing Benefits Specialist at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/employee_directory/benefits.html.

THE STAFFING CORNER

REINSTATEMENT ELIGIBILITY AND YOU

Do you know someone who left Federal service for a period of time only to return via "reinstatement?" Perhaps, in your role as a selecting official you may have wondered why individuals labeled "Reinstatement Eligible" appeared on your merit promotion certificate when you only intended to consider agency employees in the local commuting area. This article will examine the basics of reinstatement eligibility and, hopefully, reduce some of the confusion surrounding this valuable candidate pool.

HOW IS REINSTATEMENT ELIGIBILITY DETERMINED?

The answer is simple: with an SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action. Ideally, the individual applying for reinstatement will provide the servicing HR office with an SF-50 that clearly indicates the series of their qualifying position, the highest grade they have achieved, and a tenure code of either 1 (career) or 2 (career conditional). In addition, a thoroughly prepared resume, SF-171 or OF-612, accurately describing their duties and length of service in a relevant, qualifying series, will greatly simplify the qualification process.

WHAT IS A "REINSTATEMENT ELIGIBLE?"

In legalese, the term "reinstatement eligible" refers for any former employee (or in rare instances, current Federal excepted service employee) who has, at some point in their work life, held a career or career conditional appointment in the competitive service. According to regulation, reinstatement eligibility is a lifelong entitlement for employees if 1) they achieved at least career conditional status and are entitled to veteran's preference; or 2) they have acquired career status they have acquired career status by completing at least three years of substantially continuous and creditable Federal service

In contrast, with some exceptions, non-preference eligibles (i.e., those of us without veteran's preference) that leave Federal service under a career conditional appointment are generally eligible for reinstatement for a maximum of three years from the date of separation from their last qualifying appointment. Subject to these limitations, an individual with reinstatement rights is entitled to consideration for any position for which they qualify. The entitlement is not limited by an announcement's area of consideration. If any applicant with reinstatement eligibility responds to an announcement, and is among the best qualified group of candidates, or otherwise meets the criteria for noncompetitive eligibility, he or she will be referred.

CONCLUSION

One of the most overlooked benefits of a Federal competitive service career is the relative ease that an individual with reinstatement rights can re-enter the government workforce. For employees, this entitlement is among the many intangible returns of a Federal career. For selecting officials, the reinstatement eligible can represent a valuable source of talented, experienced individuals—particularly in those labor markets where the private sector pressure places government at a competitive disadvantage.

The Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)

The FCIP is a management tool which allows agencies to hire promising internal and external candidates into internships with a minimum of red tape via an excepted appointment. After successfully completing a 2-year internship, these individuals may be noncompetitively appointed to career or career conditional status. MRP is in the process of publishing specific guidance on the FCIP.

In the interim, Managers and Supervisors are reminded that regulatory requirements in the CFR Parts 213 (Excepted Service) and 302 (Employment in the Excepted Service) must be followed. Points to remember:

- Although FCIP positions do not have to be announced, there must be a good-faith effort to solicit applications for a FCIP vacancy. Recruitment efforts (i.e. participation in a job fair, college recruitment, presentation to a professional organization, and similar events) must be documented in writing. Although there is no requirement to do so, vacancy announcements may be posted to assist in recruitment efforts.
- Veterans' Preference rules must be applied.
- Applications must be evaluated to determine qualification, and must be ranked unless all applicants are offered positions. Selecting officials will work with the servicing HR Specialist for their mission areas to ensure eligibility and qualification standards are met.
- When filling GS-5/7 positions covered under the Luevano Consent Decree, the candidates must be assessed using the Administrative Careers with America (AWCA) assessment tool. This will be administered by OPM and paid for by the selecting program area.

REQUESTING NFC IDs



Requests to establish new NFC IDs, or modify current IDs, should be mailed to the Security Officer responsible for the applications needed, such as Personnel, Travel, etc. Requests will only be accepted from Supervisors and the requests should include the following: **User name and ID (if they have one); Social Security Number; list of applications the user needs; type of access needed (inquiry, update, entry, nonsensitive, sensitive); and the organizational structure level for which access is needed.** Requests received that do not have all the information required cannot be processed until all the information is provided. Upon submission to NFC, requests can take up to 3-4 weeks to be processed.

If you need your NFC password reset, contact ATAC by email or call 1-877-944-8457

SF-181, ETHNICITY AND RACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

Due to reporting requirement changes, the Office of Personnel Management has revised the SF-181 form. Beginning **January 1, 2006**, all **appointment actions** occurring on or after this date, the new SF-181 (dated July 2005) will be the government wide standard for reporting ethnicity and race information. The revised form is not yet available on the OPM website or the MRPBS website.

In the past, the information on the SF-181 asked employees to select the single race/ethnicity category with which he or she most closely identified. The revised SF-181 employs a two question format: (1) the first question asks whether or not the employee is of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity; and regardless of the response to the first question, (2) the second question asks the employee to mark an "X" next to any of the five given race categories that apply.

New Addition to the New Employee Orientation Website

The Fiscal Year 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act requires each Federal agency to provide new employees with educational materials on the U.S. Constitution as part of the new employee's orientation. To comply with this requirement, a link to educational materials on the Constitution has been added to the Marketing and Regulatory Programs' New Employee Orientation website.

The link, entitled 'Constitution Initiative' can be found by clicking on the 'During Your First Month' button and scrolling down to the 'Constitution Initiative' entry. There, information on the relationship between the Oath of Office, administered to all new Federal employees, and the Constitution is discussed, along with the history of the Constitution.

In addition to providing new employees information on the Constitution, the FY2005 Appropriations Act required agencies to provide educational and training materials concerning the Constitution to every agency employee on an annual basis. More information about the training will be forthcoming from agency organizations responsible for training.