



HR Broadcast

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The Benefits Buzz

TSP News



The Tobacco Bill (H.R. 1256), signed on June 22, 2009 provides a number of significant changes to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

The immediate change is that this law eliminates the waiting period for employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) to receive Agency contributions. Previously, a new FERS employee had to wait between 6 - 12 months to be eligible for Agency automatic 1% contributions and any Agency Matching contributions on their own contribution up to 5% of their basic salary. This law affects all FERS employees who were hired on or after December 1, 2008.

This law is not retroactive. The National Finance Center (NFC) expects to complete the required programming changes so that this action is implemented no later than August 2, 2009 (pay period 16).

If you provide orientation information to new employees, make sure that you inform them of this change. A good source of information is our website: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml>.

Other changes connected the bill will follow a delayed implementation schedule. An additional change will be to automatically enroll all new FERS employees into the TSP with a 3% contribution rate to the G Fund. That auto enrollment feature should be implemented sometime in the spring or summer of 2010.

The bill also allows the TSP to offer a Roth 401(k) with after-tax benefits to Federal employees. The projected time frame is about 2 years down the road. This will allow TSP and payroll offices to build the program requirements and for TSP to develop an education strategy.

Further information will follow on these TSP changes as they are implemented. If you want to be the first to hear important news from TSP, be sure to sign up for their email updates. Go to <http://www.tsp.gov/> and click on "Get email updates."

Retirement Planning

Thinking about retirement? Whether your plans to retire are in the near future, or further down the road, take a look at the planning checklist, and other useful information on our web site:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/retirement.shtml>

If you have questions about creditable service for retirement, making your military or civilian deposits to the retirement fund, or how much your annuity will be please contact your servicing Benefits Specialist:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/benefits.shtml

Thinking About Retirement?

Processing Tidbits

New eAuthentication Process

USDA has implemented a new registration process for employee eAuthentication accounts. It provides an easier registration process with a reduced chance of registration failure.

In the new registration process, paycheck information is no longer required. Instead, employees will receive an email invitation to register approximately five weeks after their date of hire. The process includes the following steps:

Step 1: After an employee is hired, Human Resources (HR) enters the employee's data into the National Finance Center (NFC) system.

Step 2: Selected NFC data is proved to the USDA eAuthentication system.

Step 3: Email addresses are entered in the eAuthentication system for new employees.

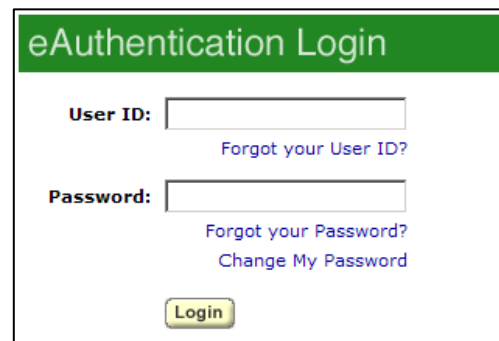
Step 4: Employees are sent an email inviting them to register using the new self-registration process. The email will include instructions and a link (URL) to be used, and will arrive approximately five weeks after the date of hire.

The link in the email invitation takes employees to information created specifically for them. Therefore, the links in email invitations may not be used by other employees. Each employee must receive their own invitation to register. A code in the link expires after 30 days. The system will generate and send a new invitation to the employee two more times. Employees who fail to register during the 90-day period must contact ATAC for assistance in order to register.

If you have been employed by APHIS more than 90 days, have not registered for an account and wish to register in the future, you will need to contact ATAC.

If you already have an existing employee eAuthentication account, you do not need to take any action.

For questions on employee eAuthentication accounts, contact ATAC at 877-944-8457 or send an email to ATAC@aphis.usda.gov



If you have been employed by APHIS more than 90 days, have not registered for an account and wish to register in the future, you will need to contact ATAC.

Performance Appraisals

Attention supervisors!! When you have completed your employee performance reviews, there is one final step you must take. **Copies of the summary performance ratings for each employee must be submitted to the Processing Section in Human Resources Operations-Minneapolis for entry into the personnel database.** The importance of entry into the personnel database is twofold: 1) proof that the appraisal was conducted for accountability reporting; and 2) use in construction of a retention register in the event a Reduction in Force is ever required.

Please do not send copies of the performance standards; only the summary rating sheet is required. Copies of ratings are not filed in the electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF). Instead, ratings are filed in the Employee Performance File (EPF) which is maintained by the supervisor. Summary rating forms sent to the HRO-Minneapolis Processing Section are maintained for a short period of time following input in the personnel database, but then are shredded. As a result, rating forms are not available for retrieval.

Attention
supervisors!!

eOPF - Where is it now?

eOPF has arrived!! The Human Resources Division began a phased rollout of employee access to eOPF in May with MRPBS as a "pilot" program for the rollout. Feedback received has been positive and Human Resources has continued the rollout to include PPD, LPA, CREC, Office of the Administrator, BRS, and WS. Please check our website to see when your program is scheduled to be rolled out and while there also check out our Frequently Asked Questions.



LWOP or Non Pay Status

Do you know the difference between LWOP and Non Pay Status? Do you know when you need to submit an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, for LWOP? LWOP (Leave without Pay) is a temporary non-pay status and non-duty status granted at the employee's request.

LWOP - US is a leave of absence to perform duty with the uniformed services.

Non Pay Status - Placement of a seasonal employee in a nonpay or nonduty status at the end of a peak workload period.

It is necessary to do an SF-52 for LWOP of 80 hours or more due to an on the job injury or illness or for any LWOP that is 30 days or more.

An SF-52 is always submitted when placing a seasonal employee in a non pay status due to the end of a peak workload period.

For information on the effects of non-pay status, visit our website below:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/non_pay_status.shtml

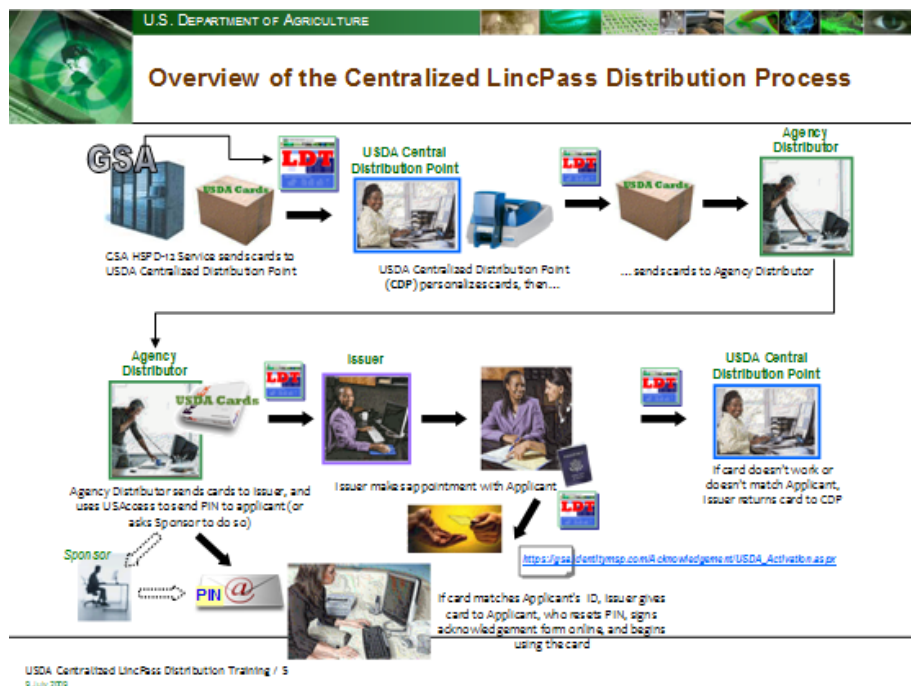
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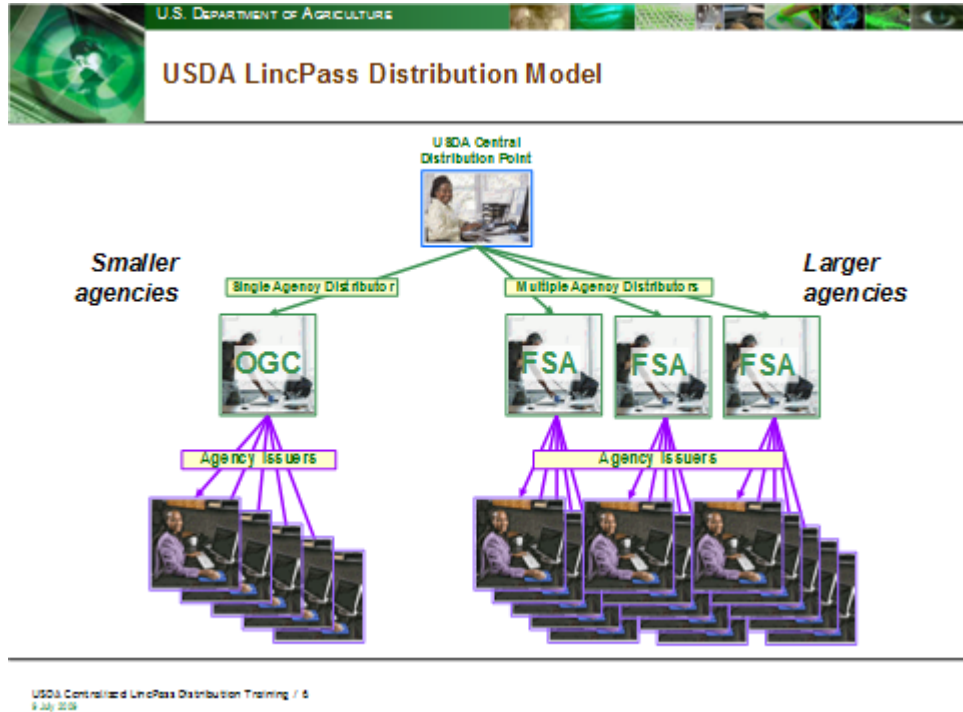
Mobile Site Enrollment - LincPass Credential Distribution Process:

The “big-picture” graphical overview of how the LincPass credential distribution works is annotated in the charts below. GSA provides PIV card services for several Departments, including USDA, Interior, Treasury, and a few others. For MRP employees who enrolled at the mobile sites in the past year, unless designated otherwise, their LincPass IDs were sent to the central distribution site to be processed in the following manner:

- When enrollments have been processed, GSA’s HSPD-12 service prints the cards and then sends them to the USDA Central Distribution Point, or CDP, in Fort Collins, CO.
- The CDP personalizes the cards and sends them to the Agency Distributor.
- The Agency Distributor sends the card(s) to the Issuer, and uses the USAccess system to send a PIN email to the employee. If the Distributor does not have sponsorship access to the USAccess system they may ask someone with this role to mark the record so an email notification with the PIN number is generated.
- Once the Issuer gets the cards, he or she makes an appointment with the employee, at which the Issuer checks the employee’s ID, and asks them to then change the PIN and sign the online Privacy Act and acknowledgement form.
- If the card doesn’t work or doesn’t match the employee’s ID, the Issuer returns the card to the CDP.
- The Agency POCs, Distributors, Issuers, and CDP staff utilize the LincPass Distribution Tool (LDT) to track all activity during the distribution process.



This is the distribution process model. Most smaller agencies have one distributor with as many issuers as needed to get the cards into the hands of its personnel, as shown in the model on the left. Larger agencies, such as MRP, follow the model on the right with multiple distributors who in turn send cards to multiple issuers under them.



HSPD-12 Enrollment Reminder

If you have not yet enrolled or registered to receive your LincPass Credential, for further guidance contact Josh Malecha of the Personnel Security staff no later than **September 30, 2009** at 612-336-3430 or email him at <mailto:Joshua.D.Malecha@aphis.usda.gov>. Any one of the following criteria meets the requirements of obtaining a LincPass credential:

- Full-Time Employee, or
- Issued a Government Computer, or
- Issued a Government e-mail account, or
- Require Access to a Mission Critical Facility, or
- At your Agency/Program Request.

