

Increasing deployment requirements and operational commitments pose a major challenge to not only Reservists and their families but also civilian employers. In particular, some small businesses and public agencies like hospitals and police and fire departments in rural towns throughout the country may have a tough time coping when their employees leave to fulfill military commitments.

It can be particularly devastating when military duties take multiple employees away from a single civilian employer at the same time, thus leaving the organization short of invaluable resources and unable to adequately replace them.

To help prevent this from happening, in March 2003 the Department of Defense mandated all traditional Reservists, individual mobilization augmentees/individual Reservist, Individual Ready Reserve members and Air Reserve Technicians, regardless of their service affiliation, to register their civilian employer information and job skills on the DOD Civilian Employer Information Web site.

In addition to helping protect small businesses and public agencies from being severely impacted by losing multiple reservists at the same time, the database is one tool used by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve to inform service members and employers of their rights and benefits from the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994.

According to the CEI Web site, the immediate goal is to "increase the effectiveness of the Department of Defense's employer outreach programs by identifying employers directly affected by DOD policies and mobilizations. The department will then be better able to assess actual employer needs and identify possible incentives to encourage employer support for reserve participation."

Upon joining the service, Reservists are required to log in to the Web site and enter all of the requested information. Afterward, at least on an annual basis, they must log in to the Web site and check their information, even if there are no changes from the year before.

"One of the biggest obstacles we are facing is simply not being able to get the word out about the new annual requirement and stress how important having this information is," said Didier S.D. Opotowsky, chief of the Field Activities Branch in the Directorate of Manpower, Personnel and Services at Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command. "With this collection of information, the Department of Defense will have a direct line of communication between the need to fulfill the mission and keeping our Reservists' civilian employers informed. This site also gives our members a connection to information pertaining to the USERRA."

A recent addition to the requirements might be responsible for the low compliance rate, Mr. Opotowsky said. "Anyone who holds a first-responder position in their community needs to ensure that box is checked," he said. "This is a new addition to the site, so if a member updated his or her information a few months ago but did not have the first-responder requirement, the system pushed the update out as incomplete."

In addition to using the Air Force Portal to access the Web site, Reservists can log in from a home computer to <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/esgr/> and can gain access with a user ID and password or Common Access Card.