Welcome to the CHRA North Central Region Newsletter

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Setting the pace through innovation, quality products, and customer-focused relationships.

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Director's Perspective
Nancy A. Lane

Summer: The heat is on.

WOW! The fiscal year has been a bumpy ride and the past couple of months have been challenging to say the very least. Several Hurricanes devastated our southern borders, delay and reconfiguration of National Security Personnel System (NSPS) implementation, Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), hiring freezes and budgetary woes.

Our country has experienced numerous storms over the years; however Hurricane Katrina left a devastating toll on our spirit. The cost in human life has been hard to comprehend. Many of our employees continue to give of their time and resources to bring about relief in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

In the spring, after a short delay, Spiral 1.1 was implemented converting 3,000 Department of Army Civilian Personnel employees into NSPS. We are preparing for the next round of employee conversions in the first quarter of fiscal year 2007. A wealth of automated tools has been developed to educate all concerning NSPS. These online resources play a critical part in preparing our workforce for full participation in this new performance-based environment. More information can be found on pages 2, 3 and 4 of our newsletter.

For every negative thing that is in the press about GWOT, there are countless positives ones that tend to get overshadowed. Just take a look at the stories posted on Army Knowledge Online (AKO) as submitted by our Army military and civilian personnel on the ground. These personal accounts help us stay the course.

Some organizations still face hiring freezes. This additional restriction tests our quest to recruit the best and brightest. As you continue to survive, transform and adjust to ever changing demands on limited resources, we stand ready to assist.

This fiscal year is nearly complete. We will remember the lesson from the past and move toward the future. Our challenge for the coming year and beyond is to stay the course in our pursuit of excellence.

When the day is done and all has been said, we must not lose sight that we are here to provide service to the Soldiers in the field. They put their lives on the line everyday so that we as civilians can continue to enjoy a life of freedom.

HOOAH!

National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Next Phase—Spiral 1.2 Implementation

On July 12, 2006 Department of Defense (DoD) announced that it will implement Spiral 1.2 of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS), a new civilian human resources system. Over 14,000 Army Civilian employees will convert to NSPS between October 2006 and January 2007. Employees are Non-Bargaining, GS/GM, Acquisition Demo, both continental United States (CONUS) and outside the continental (OCONUS). The complete list of organizations included in Spiral 1.2 is available on the NSPS Web site at http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/Spiral1.2.pdf

In late April 2006, 11,000 DoD employees converted to NSPS. The human resources system includes classification, compensation, staffing, performance management and workforce shaping elements. The department will continue to implement NSPS to the DoD civilian workforce in phases. Lessons Learned and experience gained during Spiral 1.1 will assist future Spiral participants.

Spiral 1.2 NSPS Employee Facts

- Employees will not lose pay upon conversion to NSPS and most will receive an initial adjustment in pay to account for time already earned toward their next within grade increase.
- Employees have access to training materials, including a conversion tool in the NSPS 101 Course located on the NSPS Web site. This tool lets employees see an estimate of the value of their within-grade increase (WGI) buy-in as well as their career group and pay band.
- Employees will be given new performance plans clearly linked to their organization's mission and strategic goals.
- Employees will also be converted to pay bands that replace the General Schedule.
- The performance appraisal cycle for Spiral 1.2 employees begins on their actual day of conversion and ends Sept. 30, 2007.
- Spiral 1.2 employees will received their first performance pay increases in January 2008.

Your local Human Resource Representative located at the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) will be able to assist with any questions you may have regarding NSPS.

Soliders At Work

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Bailey

Constitution Day & Citizenship Day

On September 17, 1787, the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention held their final meeting. Only one item of business occupied the agenda that day, to sign the Constitution of the United States of America.

Constitution Day, Inc. officially began with the simultaneous recitation of the Preamble Across America in 1997.

On December 8, 2004, President George W. Bush signed House Resolution 1848 which officially established September 17th as "United States Constitution Day."

Constitution Day 2006 will be celebrated on Monday, September 18th.

Send comments or suggestions to:

Karen R. Williams, NC Regional Director's Office

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National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Resources

The following resources and websites and available to prepare Managers, Supervisors and Employees for National Security Personnel System (NSPS) implementation and conversion.

These resources and more can be found at http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/nsps/ or http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/

Pay Pool Process at a Glance – Brochure

The brochure provides a broad overview of the pay pool process and information about how the process works.

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/PayPoolBrochure062006.pdf

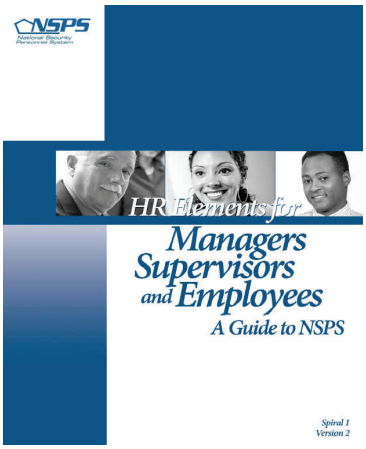
Pay Tables and Local Market Supplements

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/paytables.html

Accelerated Compensation for Developmental Positions

July 2006 Fact Sheet

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/ACDPFactSheet063006b.pdf



HR Elements for Managers, Supervisors and Employees

60 Page Desk Guide

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/HRMSE.pdf

NSPS 101 – Online

Introduces the nuts and bolts of NSPS

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/NSPS/NSPS101/nsps/index.htm

Town Hall Briefing

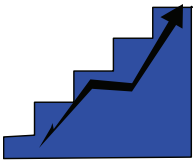
NSPS Who, What, Where, How and Why

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/docs/MasterLongTownHallNONote

Courage to Care fact sheets addresses the sensitive topics of family vulnerability during deployment. Some of the several fact sheets include "Helping Children Cope During Employment" and "Helping National Guard and Reserve Reenter the Workplace".

For more information and previous issues, please go to http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html

Top Five Steps to Successful National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Implementation



1. Identify, educate and utilize transition team members.

♦ Transition Managers (TM) and Deputy Transition Managers (DTM)

Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Representatives.

♦ Resource Management, Legal, Public Affairs, Equal Employment Opportunity.

♦ Information Technology, Senior Management Officials, and Employees

2. Reference and utilize Readiness Tool

♦ Available to TMs and their transition team

3. Communicate and Engage—Often and Effectively

♦ Read and use NSPS information on the Army and DoD website:
http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/nsps/

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/NSPS/

♦ Town Hall Meetings

4. Training

♦ Take NSPS 101– the web based NSPS tutorial

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/nsps101/nsps/index.htm

♦ Begin core competency training:

http://www.chra.army.mil/NSPS-training/nsps_training_plan_4.htm#Change_Management_Training_

♦ Identify managers/supervisors to learn and present performance management training

♦ Participate in NSPS functional training

5. Following training and before transition, establish workgroups to develop:

♦ Pay setting and staffing guidance

♦ Position descriptions

♦ SMART (Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, Timed) performance objectives

♦ Linking performance objectives to Army and MACOM strategic plans

♦ Resource management and compensation guidance

♦ Pay Pool structure, membership/administrator and funding

♦ DCPDS data accuracy and conversion planning/preparation/tasks

Non Appropriated Funds (NAF) Human Resources (HR) FOR SUPERVISORS COURSE

Recently released …

The Non-Appropriated Funds (NAF) Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors course was developed by the Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA), NAF Division to train new supervisors in their responsibilities for Civilian Human Resource Management (CHR). The course covers HR legal and regulatory requirements, HR processes and the automated HR tools designed to assist supervisors in requesting and tracking personnel actions.

Managers can prepare for course registration by entering their profile information into CHRTAS at https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/chrtas/default.asp , click on "create/update student profile".

To find out more regarding course registration and information contact your servicing NAF Human Resources Representative.

Career Programs

Many Occupational Series within the Army have special Career Programs (CP) designed to ensure an adequate base of qualified and trained professional, technical, and administrative personnel to meet the Army's current and future needs. A CP is comprised of occupational series and functional fields grouped together on the basis of population, occupational structure, grade range, and commonalty of job and qualification characteristics. The specific criterion for each CP is contained in AR 690-950, Career Management.

Presently there are 26 Career Programs, which include:

- CP-10, Civilian Human Resources Management
- CP-11, Comptroller
- CP-12, Safety & Occupational Health Management
- CP-13, Supply Management
- CP-14, Contracting and Acquisition
- CP-15, Quality and Reliability Assurance
- CP-16, Engineers and Scientists (non-construction)
- CP-17, Material Maintenance Management
- CP-18, Engineers and Scientists (resources and construction)
- CP-19, Physical Security and Law Enforcement
- CP-20, Quality Assurance Specialist (ammunition surveillance)
- CP-22, Public Affairs and Communications Media
- CP-24, Transportation Management
- CP-26, Manpower and Force Management
- CP-27, Housing Management
- CP-28, Equal Employment Opportunity
- CP-29, Commissary Management
- CP-31, Education Services
- CP-32, Training
- CP-33, Ammunition Management
- CP-34, Information Technology Management
- CP-35, Intelligence
- CP-36, Modeling and Simulation
- CP-50, Military Personnel Specialist
- CP-51, Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR)
- CP-55, Real Estate

The Army CPs include five levels of progression: Intern Level: Positions at grades GS-05 through GS-09 or National Security Personnel System (NSPS) equivalent; Specialist level: Mid-level positions, GS-09 through GS-12 or NSPS equivalent. This is generally considered the journey-level for most CPs; Intermediate level: Positions at grades GS-12 and GS-13 or NSPS equivalent; Management level: Usually GS-13 through GS-15 or their NSPS equivalent that have substantial technical or managerial responsibilities; and the Executive level: Includes Senior Executive Service (SES) positions.

The Career Program system develops quality employees through effective career program leadership, identified progression levels, recruitment, and career development. Each CP has a functional chief and a functional chief representative (FCR) who is responsible for monitoring effective career management within their career program, monitoring the progress of career management related EEO goals, and developing policies, procedures and program requirements. In addition, the FCR has the responsibility for resolving career management issues, reviewing proposals for program changes, reviewing program effectiveness, projecting intern requirements and establishing training and development requirements.

Specific guidance for Army Career Programs is contained in AR 690-950, or you may visit: http://cpol.army.mil/library/permiss/6328.html for additional information. The current AR 690-950 has not been updated to reflect the new CPs.

How Priority Placement Program (PPP) Can Help Employees

A continuation of the series of articles regarding the DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP). This issue contains a fact sheet which explains Program "A" for displaced employees.

Priority Placement Program (PPP) Program "A" Fact Sheet

General: It is DoD policy to minimize the adverse effects on employees caused by actions such as, but not limited to, reductions-in-force (RIF), base closures, realignments, consolidations, contracting out, position classification decisions, rotations from overseas, and transfers of function (TOF). Program "A" is the primary means for implementing this policy throughout DoD; however, it does not supersede the statutory or regulatory rights of employees or former employees. Chapter 3 of the PPP Operational Manual contains specific information on registering in this program.

Displaced Employees

Eligibility: Current employees on an appointment without time limitation in the competitive service who have career or career-conditional status or those in the excepted service with or without personal competitive status may register in the PPP if they are scheduled for displacement action as covered by PPP Operational Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph B.1b. The employee's performance and conduct must be fully satisfactory. Unless early registration is authorized, employees become eligible to register when they: receive a specific RIF notice of separation or demotion; decline in writing an official RIF reassignment or demotion out of the commuting area; decline in writing a TOF or a covered management-directed reassignment out of the commuting area; or receive a notice of furlough for six months or more. Employees entitled to severance pay are mandatory registered. Employee must register while still employed.

Skills: Employees must register for their current skill and may register for a total of 5 skills, provided they are well qualified. Mandatory registrants must be registered for all skills for which well qualified, including appropriate special skills identifiers (i.e. GS-300, WG-00000).

High Grade: Competitive service employees may register no higher than current permanent grade or retained grade. If registering for other pay systems (NSPS), registration is restricted to the grade having the representative rate equal or below the rep rate of the registrant's current permanent or retained grade. If registering from GS to other pay systems, the individual may register for the highest grade for which well qualified; the potential gaining activity makes the determination as to whether an offer should be made based on their local pay scale. For excepted service employees refer to Chapter 3, Paragraph F.

Low Grade: Generally, employees may register down to and including 3 GS grades or equivalent below current permanent grade. Exceptions for GS-9 and GS-11 employees in 2-grade interval jobs, employees with a RIF job offer, employees covered by pay-banding systems, and positions in AD, WB, and WT pay systems are contained in PPP Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph F.

Priority: "1", "2", or "3" based on the severity of the action (PPP Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph E, and Chapter 5, Paragraph B.

Separation Date: For employees facing separation, the effective date of separation will be entered on the registration. For those scheduled for change to lower grade (CLG) or equivalent, the effective date of the action will be entered.

Release Date: For employees facing separation, one year from the date of separation will be entered on the registration. For those scheduled for CLG, the effective date of the action will be entered.

Area of Referral: Employees facing separation are registered for the minimum number of activities nearest their duty station likely to provide a reasonable opportunity for placement. They may not skip over DoD activities or states to register for more distant locations. Activities in an adjoining zone that are no more distant from the employee's duty station than the furthermost activity selected in the zone may be included in the initial area of referral. (Overseas displaced employees register in accordance with Chapter 5, Paragraph B.5). Employees who are scheduled for RIF, CLG or who have declined a RIF CLG and are facing separation are restricted to DoD activities within their commuting area. Expansion beyond these limits requires CARE Program Coordinator approval.

Offer Response Time: Registrants in the continental U.S. (CONUS) must accept or decline offers from CONUS activities within 2 calendar days, and registrants outside CONUS must respond within 3 calendar days.

For further detailed information regarding PPP contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC)

My Biz and *My Workplace* Self-Service Access

The Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy), Patricia S. Bradshaw, has announced the latest Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) innovation: *My Biz* and *My Workplace*. These modules within the DCPDS self-service HR application give employees secure, real-time, online access to personnel information from their workstations. Components launched the modules in June, with employees gaining access throughout 2006.

My Biz lets employees view and verify the accuracy of their own employment-related information in the following categories:

- Appointment;
- Position:
- Personal (e.g., email address);
- Salary;
- Benefits:
- Awards and bonuses; and
- Performance

Employees may also use *My Biz* to update their work telephone number and email address, disability codes, race and national origin information, and foreign language proficiency. Future system enhancements will provide additional functionality.

My Workplace brings key information about employees together in one place for managers and supervisors, streamlining their HR decision-making process and helping them to balance managerial tasks with day-to-day demands more easily. *My Workplace* keeps managers and supervisors informed about their employees' personnel actions. With quick and easy access to employee' personnel information, managers are better able to make budget decisions, staffing plans, and workload distributions.

My Biz and *My Workplace* have undergone rigorous testing with the help of various Component test users. The Navy conducted performance testing with 9,000 accounts; the Army, with 35,000; and the Air Force, with 13,000. This comprehensive testing provided valuable feedback about clarity and ease-of-use information that was integrated into the final release. From planning, to performance testing, to ongoing feedback and system enhancement, users were instrumental in shaping these innovative applications.

The Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS) Web site contains self-service tutorials on how to navigate through these modules.

For more information about access to *My Biz* and *My Workplace*, contact your servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC)

Reprinted (or excerpted) from CPMS newsletter, CPMS Express.

Army Benefits Center—Civilian (ABC-C) Update

The Army Benefits Center—Civilian (ABC-C) is pleased to announce a new and improved process for easier access to the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS). The process eliminates the need for Point-of-Entry password, however adds an improved degree of security for your personal information.

You will continue still access EBIS through the ABC-C website at: https://www.abc.army.mil or though the Army Portal: http://acpol.army.mil.

The computer screens are the same except you will no longer be prompted to enter your POE password. You will now utilize your Army Knowledge Online (AKO) userid and password.

From the ABC-C Website:

1. Select *Benefits/EBIS*
2. Enter your AKO userid and password
3. Enter your SSN and ABC-C Personal Identification Number (PIN)

From the Army Portal

1. Select *Employee Portal*
2. Enter your AKO userid and password
3. Select the *Employee* tab
4. Click on *Army Benefits Center – Civilian (ABC-C)*
5. Select *Benefits/EBIS*
6. Enter your SSN and ABC-C PIN

New Program for Dental and Vision Benefits

Federal and United States Postal Service (USPS) employees eligible for the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) program (whether enrolled or not) and annuitants will be able to enroll in dental and/or vision insurance this Fall, with coverage effective December 31, 2006.

The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) begins it's open season in correlation with the FEHB open season beginning November 13 - December 11, 2006.

Eligible employees can enroll in a dental plan and/or a vision plan. Options for the each plan include:

- self-only
- self plus one
- self and family coverage

Family members of the employee eligible for coverage consist of the enrollee's spouse and unmarried dependent children under the age of 22, if 22 or older dependent must be incapable of self-support. All rules for eligibility of family members are the same as the FEHB program.

To enroll in FEDVIP you must be eligible for the FEHB program. Annuitants are eligible to enroll in FEDVIP regardless of their FEHB status.

More information will be given out as it becomes available. At this time no contracts have been signed with insurance carriers and there is no information on benefits, premiums or enrollment at this time. Further information will be provided prior to the Open Season.

If you have any questions please send an email to FEDVIP@opm.gov.

Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB)

Open Season

Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season will be held government –wide from November 13—December 11, 2006. During this period, federal employees can:

- Make changes to their FEHB coverage based on personal needs and preferences
- Enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), a program that can result in savings on health care and dependent care by setting aside pre-tax dollars to pay for eligible expenses.

What Happens to FEHB Upon Retirement

You may continue health benefits coverage into retirement with no reduction in benefits if you:

- * Retire on an immediate annuity (one that commences within 30 days of separation from service—not a deferred annuity) and
- Are you enrolled (or covered as a family member) under the FEHB program for the five years of service immediately preceding or during all service since the first opportunity to enroll.

If you do not meet the eligibility requirements to continue FEHB coverage into retirement, your benefits will terminate on the last day of the pay period in which you separate with a 31—day grace period. You can convert to a non-group health benefits contract or elect Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC), an 18 month extension of coverage during which you pay 102 % of the premium (employee share, government share and administrative fee).

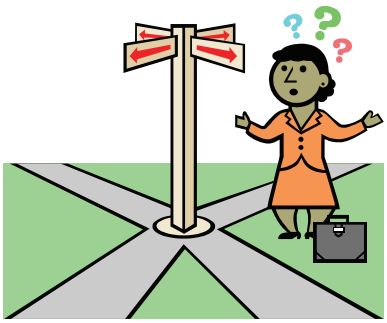
For more information on FEHB coverage during retirement, please visit the ABC-C website at:

https://www.abc.army.mil/Information/ABCHealth/Information/RequirementsforContinuingHealth.htm

Retirement Readiness

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has released the results of a retirement readiness survey as part of the process to measure the retirement readiness of civilian Federal workers. The survey involved 7,294 Federal workers selected through a stratified sampling process to ensure all racial groups, income levels, and career stages were queried. The results have interesting lessons for those of us planning an upcoming retirement as well as those earlier in their career.

More than half of workers expect to retire before age 62, with almost four in ten expecting to retire at age 59 or earlier. Men anticipate they will spend about 22 years in retirement and women think they'll spend about 24 years. This estimate is on track with current life expectancy rates for 60 years olds.



The majority of Federal employees (more than eight in ten) state they are on track or ahead of schedule in planning and saving for their retirement years. This reported feeling of readiness differs from that reported by American workers in general. Interestingly, within the Federal workforce employees with house hold wealth below $50,000, not including pensions and property, were more likely to say they were ahead of schedule than those with a wealth of $50,000 or more.

Nine in ten Federal workers have given at least some thought to their lifestyle in retirement, with almost six in ten saying they have given a great deal of thought to this issue. A prudent 88% report they have also considered the cost of that lifestyle and nearly two-thirds say they want a retirement standard of living the same as their working years.

What are some factors that may impact lifestyle and cost?

Home equity. Seven in ten Federal workers say it is very likely they will own their primary home at the time they retire. More than one third have no plans to move and intend to stay in the home for the rest of their lives. Two in ten workers report that they intend to sell their home and move to one with lesser value. There was virtually no report of the intention to sell a home and then rent during retirement years.

Family responsibility. With the delay of childbearing and increased life expectancy, future retirees are more likely than previous generations to find they must devote some of their financial resources toward aging parents or children. Federal employees are fairly evenly split between those who acknowledge needed support and those who feel there is little likelihood that financial support will be given. On the other hand, only one in ten workers anticipate an inheritance to help finance retirement years, while more affluent workers are more likely to expect an inheritance to provide financial support. Financing long-term care for illnesses in retirement can significantly impact resources. While many Federal workers have not yet acquired long-term care insurance, more than one in four has purchased it for themselves and/or their spouses.

Sources for retirement funding. Seven in ten Federal workers report they will qualify for monthly social security benefits. This number is influenced by the large number Federal employees still covered by Civilian Service Retirement System (CSRS), which does not include social security as part of the retirement plan. Nine in ten workers participate in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), which will provide another potential source for retirement income. More than half also reported contributions to another retirement savings plan outside of work.

A second career. Two thirds of Federal retirees expect to work for pay during retirement. Among those stating they intent to work, almost half say the length of time they intend to continue employment is five to fourteen years, while one in four state for "as long as possible." Interestingly, the length of time the spouse is expected to work in retirement is generally less than that of the Federal employee who is responding.

The first step in retirement planning is simply beginning to think about it. However, making informed decisions is critical to ensuring that the retiree is able to set and achieve retirement goals. Thirty-eight percent of Federal workers report their employer as their most trusted source of information about retirement planning.

Contact your local Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Representative for more detailed and personal information regarding your retirement planning.