



The Pacesetter

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 *Janice A. Carbone*

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope each of you enjoyed a pleasant and joyous holiday season. As we embrace the onset of fresh new year, let us not forget the survivors of the Gulf Coast hurricanes as well as the men and women overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. The resolve, fearless determination and strength shown by these individuals inspire us all. That inspiration will also carry us through as we continue to face major challenges and undertakings in 2006 to include the implementation of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) and the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

On 23 December, the Program Executive Office (PEO) announced a delay in the implementation of NSPS. A significant outcome of this postponement is a revised implementation schedule, currently set to begin late April 2006. The Department of Army will convert approximately 2,300 employees in Spiral 1.1. As we prepare for the initial and subsequent Spiral implementations, we should continue to communicate NSPS to the workforce, move forward toward aligning employee performance objectives with organizational strategic plans and goals, and promote the completion of soft skill training.

The BRAC Commission's recommendations took effect 9 November 2005. While the Department of Army has faced BRAC before, this time will prove to be a greater endeavor due to the reconfiguration of the overseas theater. Those organizations and installations affected by the BRAC have two years to begin closure and realignment procedures.

On a personal note, 2006 also offers new opportunities and change for my family and me. Effective 31 January, I will retire from Civil Service. After proudly serving for many years, I look forward to spending time with family and adventuring out onto new paths. It has been a privilege and an honor to work with you.

Thank you all.

National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Update



On December 23, 2005, Ms. Mary Lacey, National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Program Executive Officer (PEO) announced a delay in the implementation for Spiral 1.1 organizations. As a result of feedback from various activities and events in 2005, Ms. Lacey stated, "we need more time to focus on simplifying the performance management design, getting performance objectives right, and ensuring the system is simple, clear, and understandable."

All January NSPS specific content training is to remain on hold until the March 2006 timeframe. The PEO has asked the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) to serve as the DoD training pilot.

Spiral 1.1 participants have been re-evaluated and now consist of approximately 11,000 DoD employees beginning on April 30, 2006. The rating cycle will extend through October 2006 and the NSPS payout will occur in January 2007.

Army's Spiral 1.1 participants will be Civilian Human Resource activities consisting of approximately 2,300 employees. Spiral 1.2 and 1.3 are scheduled for October 2006 and January 2007. All of DoD are urged to continue NSPS communication, alignment of strategic plans/goals with performance objectives and soft skill training.

A list of Soft Skill training courses and registration instructions

can be found under Appendix D: Recommended Training for NSPS Core Competencies at <http://www.chra.army.mil/nsps-training/index.htm> There is not cost for taking these online courses.

Up-to-date information regarding NSPS can be found on the following websites:

DoD: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/>

Army: <http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/nsps/>

Contact your NSPS Transition Manager or Civilian Personnel Advisory Center Human Resources Representative for questions regarding NSPS.

Base Realignment and Closure Employee Guides (BRAC) On Army Knowledge Online (AKO)



Base Realignment and Closure Employee Services Guide for Appropriated Fund Employees

A Guide to Placement Programs, Separation Incentives, Benefits and Entitlements Available to Army Employees Affected by BRAC

21 December 2005

BRAC 2005

The Base Realignment and Closure Services Guides, December 21, 2005 contain information about Placement Programs, Separation Incentives, Benefits and Entitlements.

Guides for Appropriated and Non-Appropriated Fund Employees affected by BRAC are on the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) Website

To access the guides:

1. Log onto AKO
<http://www.army.mil>
2. Enter Password
3. Search for "BRAC Employee Guide.



Base Realignment and Closure Employee Services Guide for Nonappropriated Fund Employees

A Guide to Placement Programs, Separation Incentives, Benefits and Entitlements Available to Army Employees Affected by BRAC

21 December 2005

BRAC 2005



Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Leave Restoration

If a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) affected employee forfeited annual leave at the end of leave year 2005, the leave will be re-credited to the employee in a Restored Leave Account.

Employees eligible for retained hours in excess of 240 hours will be able to view the excess leave on their Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) in the March timeframe. The LES will contain a remark regarding retained leave and restoration of leave.

Employees may contact the DFAS Contact Center at (850) 453-4141, EXT 1310 for information and

assistance.

More information can be obtained at **myPay** website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>

BRAC Annual Leave carryover rules are legislated by law and BRAC affected employees are entitled to carryover their annual leave. There is not limit to the amount of annual leave carryover for BRAC affected employees.

Contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center for additional guidance.

Suspension of Outstanding Scholar Appointing Authority

The Department of Defense (DoD) temporarily suspended the use of the Outstanding Scholar Appointing Authority on December 23, 2005. The Office of Personnel Management also temporarily suspended its internal use of this appointing authority. Both suspensions are in response to the August 5, 2005, Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) decision in the case of *Dean v. Department of Agriculture*. OPM has notified MSPB

that it will be filing a brief requesting reconsideration. DoD may issue additional guidance after the MSPB rules on the OPM request for reconsideration.

Although use of the Outstanding Scholar appointing authority has been temporarily suspended, these applicants remain eligible for employment through open competitive examining procedures; the Student Career Experience

Program; Federal Career Intern Program; and the Presidential Fellows Program for appointment in the competitive service.

If you questions or concerns, please contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.



Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) Final Regulations

The Office of Personnel Management has issued final regulations to implement provisions of the Jobs for Veterans Act, signed into law on November 7, 2002. There is a major change in the eligibility criteria for obtaining what was previously called a Veterans Readjustment Appointment and is now called a Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA). This became effective 3 Jan 2006.

Section 4214 of title 38, United States Code, has been amended by the Act. Under the revised law, the following veterans are eligible for VRA:

- Disabled Veterans;
- Veterans who served on active

duty in the Army Forces, participated in a United States military operation for which an Armed Forces Service Medal was awarded; and

- Recently separated veterans

The law defines recently separated veterans as any veteran during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty. Please note that the 3year eligibility period may not be extended.

VRAs are excepted appointments, made without competition, to positions otherwise in the competitive service. Qualified covered veterans who were

separated under honorable conditions may be appointed to any position in the competitive service at grade level up to including GS-11 or equivalent, provided they meet the qualification standards for the position. Upon satisfactory completion of 2 years of substantially continuous service, the incumbent's VRA must be converted to a career or career conditional appointment. An individual may receive more than one VRA appointment as long as the individual meets the definition of a covered veteran at the time of appointment.

For more detailed information please contact your local Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

How Priority Placement Program (PPP) Can Help Employees

In the coming issues of the Pacesetter, we will have a series of articles regarding the Department of Defense (DoD) Priority Placement Program (PPP). How it works, who it affects, and information about the different programs. This issue covers how PPP can benefit those employees who may find themselves affected by the possibility of Base Closures and Reductions in Force.

Rights and Benefits of Civilian Employees Affected by Base Closures, Reductions and Consolidations

All career, career-conditional employees and excepted service employees are given maximum assistance in continuing their careers as employees of the Federal government through assignments to other positions in the Department of Defense (DoD), or other Federal agencies. In addition, in cooperation with the Department of Labor and State Employment Services, assistance will be given to employees in locating positions in private industry. Where appropriate, they will be given the opportunity to undertake retraining programs to qualify them for jobs available in their local labor markets.

Employees whose jobs are transferred to other locations may be given the opportunity to transfer with their jobs,. The costs of transporting them, their families and households to new locations will be borne by the government. Among the costs that will be paid are moving and transportation of house hold effects, buying and selling a home, the cost of a "house hunting" trip to the new locations and temporary quarters subsistence expenses.

Employees whose jobs are eliminated will be given priority rights to other vacant positions in the Defense Department (and other Federal agencies). Employees demoted who are entitled to **grade retention*** will be given priority rights to other DoD vacant positions in the commuting area at their **retained grades***.

The DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP) provides the principle mechanism for placing affected employees elsewhere in the DoD. Through its Automated Stopper and Referral System (ASARS) the skills of displaced employees are matched with vacant positions at other DoD activities in the authorized area at which the employees are willing to work.

If the new job involves a move to another location, the costs of moving the employee and his/her household are borne by the government in accordance with the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR). If the new job is a lower grade level, the employees **grade or pay is saved*** to maximum extent permitted.

Employees may also register in the Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS). Employees registered in the DORS will have their resumes referred to non-DoD Federal agencies, Private Sector employers, not-for-profit organizations and state and local governments. Registration in DORS is voluntary.

Employees may be given priority consideration for vacancies in other Federal agencies through the Inter-Agency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP). State employment services also provide placement and retraining assistance for employees desiring jobs in private industry.

For further information, contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

***Grade and pay retention rules will change under National Security Personnel System (NSPS).**

Our Commitment

As Civilian Soldiers

we believe our role is to

Support and Advise

Commanders

in their exercise of

Human Resource

management responsibilities



Seven Army Values

- **L**—Loyalty
- **D**—Duty
- **R**—Respect
- **S**—Selfless Service
- **H**—Honor
- **I**—Integrity
- **P**—Personal Courage

LDRSHIP

The Importance of Employment Reference Checks

A recent report issued by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) determined that although reference checking is a useful tool in the federal hiring process, it is severely underused. The report covers the legal issues and best practices that should be followed by both reference checkers and reference providers.

One major concern seems to be fear of the potential for liability in a defamation suit. The report stresses that the key to checking a reference and to giving a reference is to keep the discussion specific, factual and job-related. Often times managers are reluctant to discuss only salary and dates of employment. When giving a reference, you should stick to the facts you have personally observed. Aside from obvious legal considerations, focusing the discussion on facts, rather than opinions or hear-say, will allow prospective employers to form their

own opinions. Similarly, when seeking a reference, you should ask specific questions about the work and work habits of the candidate.

Another concern centers on the requirements of the Privacy Act when it comes to employment references. The Privacy Act protects certain types of information that is stored in a system of records; however it does not protect most job-related information that is independently based on your own personal observations in the workplace. Please keep in mind it is never appropriate to discuss such things as disabilities, sick leave usage, religious practices, family circumstances, EEO complaints and other matters that are not strictly related to job requirements. It is appropriate to discuss an employee's performance, without speculating as to the cause of any performance deficiencies; the quality of work; depth of knowledge, skills and expertise;

timeliness of work and compliance with rules.

One other relevant consideration in giving references involves settlement agreements. The terms of each settlement agreement are unique.

Contact your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center for detailed guidance on how to comply with any such agreement.



More Army E-Learning

Army E-Learning course: **Six Sigma**

This course group is featured in >**Business Skills Library**
> BUSINESS STRATEGY and OPERATIONS > Operations Curriculum.



To access courseware or register for Army E-Learning visit:

<https://usarmy.skillport.com/rkusarmy/login/usarmylogin.cfm>

- Six Sigma: The Define Phase
Defining and Mapping the Six Sigma Process
- Six Sigma: The Measurement Phase
Measurement Systems
- Six Sigma: The Analyze Phase
Hypothesis Testing
- Six Sigma: The Improve Phase
Design of Experiment (DOE)
- Six Sigma: The Control Phase
Six Sigma - Statistical Process Control



Pay Adjustment 2006

Executive Order (EO) 13393, signed by President Bush, 22 December 2005, authorized the implementation of the 2006 salary pay adjustment. The overall average pay increase is 3.1 percent; across-the-board 2.1 percent in rates of basic pay and the remaining 1.0 percent are distributed in varying amounts as GS locality increases. Detailed information can be obtained by accessing: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2006/executiveorder2006pay.asp>

The effective date of the General Schedule (GS) pay adjustment was 8 January 2006. The North Central Civilian Personnel Operations Center (NCCPOC) has responsibility for processing these mass pay adjustment. Once the GS pay process is completed, NCCPOC will begin processing pay adjustments for Federal Wage System (FWS) employees. Salary and Wage pay tables can be viewed at the following website: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/06tables/index.asp>

Additionally, effective in January 2006, all Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) employees in NF levels 3 thru 5, and CC levels 1 thru 2 pay band employees will receive an annual across-the-board increase of 2.1 percent in rates of basic pay and locality pay increases in accordance with the General Schedule changes. View the January 2006 NF pay bands at: <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/wage/wage.html>

W-2 Electronic Access via *myPay*

Effective January 2006, employees with customized **myPay** Personnel Identification Numbers (PINs) will be required to obtain their tax statements (W-2) electronically.

The electronic W-2 is usable for all income tax purposes and is sanctioned by the Internal Revenue Service.

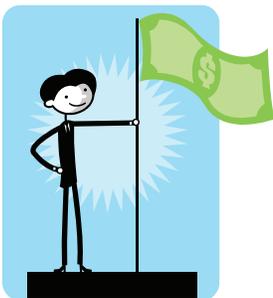
myPay account holders who have forgotten their personnel identification number (PIN), as well as new users can request a new PIN on the **myPay** website: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

Users with military e-mail addresses (i.e., mil) can receive the new PIN via e-mail. All others will receive their new PIN via mail in approximately 10 working days from the date of request.

If the information posted to your W-2 is incorrect, please contact your servicing pay office or your customer service representative for assistance.



Percentage Limits on Employee Contributions for Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Have Been Eliminated



Beginning January 2006, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) will no longer restrict your contribution to a percentage of pay. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) limits will still apply. This change will allow most participants to invest more money for retirement in their TSP account. The IRS places an annual limit on elective deferrals, e.g., tax-deferred employee contributions to the TSP. For 2006, the elective deferral limit is \$15,000.

If you are age 50 or older, you are also eligible to make an additional \$5000 in catch-up contributions for 2006, even if you contribute the maximum \$15,000 in regular contributions.

For more information log onto the TSP website: www.tsp.gov and select What's New, Current Information.