



HR Broadcast

The MRPBS web site has been redesigned! You may have noticed our new look. Be sure to check out the Human Resources pages, and save it as a favorite!
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/index.shtml>

HR CALENDAR

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 (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/downloads/hr_calendar.pdf) for easy access by all our customers. We hope you will find this helpful!!

Be sure and check the calendar for the months of January, February, and March!!!

Coming in the April Issue:

* Duty stations and taxes withheld

The Benefits Buzz



Review Your Statement of Earnings and Leave!

Your paycheck is important to you, isn't it?

Every pay period, the National Finance Center (NFC) produces a valuable and informative document for you – your Statement of Earnings and Leave. It shows your salary and leave information for the pay period, including your gross pay, all deductions withheld, and current and projected leave balances. **Your Statement of Earnings and Leave is available electronically on your Employee Personal Page (EPP), which is part of NFC's website.** The EPP is a secure website where you can view and print your Statement of Earnings and Leave, and use the system's other features to make changes to your pay, such as your tax withholdings, financial allotments, Thrift Savings Plan contribution amount, savings bonds, etc.

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To access your EPP, go to <https://www.nfc.usda.gov/> and click on the "My EPP" icon.

If you haven't used the EPP or you have lost or forgotten your password, you may request a password at the EPP website. NFC recently stopped mailing Statements of Earnings and Leave to employees in an effort to save printing and mailing costs. (If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capability, you may request to have your Statements of Earnings and Leave mailed to your home address. Instructions for preparing and submitting such requests can be found in MRP Directive 4501.1 at

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/hr_desk_guide/4501/4501toc.shtml

It is important that you take a few minutes to review your Statement of Earnings and Leave each pay period to be sure that the deductions made from your salary payment are accurate, especially if you have recently made a change which would affect your pay, such as:

- Health Benefits election
- Life Insurance election
- Thrift Savings Plan contribution
- Federal and State Income Tax Withholding
- Savings bond election or change
- Charitable contributions
- Deposits to financial institutions
- Union or other association/membership dues
- TSP Loan repayments
- Federal Long Term Care insurance premiums
- Flexible Spending Account Deductions
- Federal Dental and/or Vision Insurance premiums



In addition to the above, your Statement will show required deductions for:

- Retirement coverage, if you are eligible (CSRS, CSRS Offset, or FERS)
- Social Security (FICA) if you are covered by CSRS Offset or FERS, or if you are not eligible for other retirement coverage
- Medicare Tax

Each employee has the responsibility to review the Statement of Earnings and Leave for accuracy each pay period and to promptly report any errors to the servicing personnel office. If errors are reported quickly, it is relatively easy to correct them. If the error continues for an extended period of time, the effect on the employee can be disastrous.

If you have any questions after reviewing your Statement of Earnings and Leave, please do not hesitate to call Human Resources Operations (HRO) at 612-336-3281, so that your questions can be directed to the appropriate staff member. Those few minutes could save you money and trouble.

OPEN SEASON CHANGES

If you made a **health insurance open season change**, your election was effective pay period 1, January 6, 2008, and you will receive your insurance card from your health plan. Please follow up with your health plan on the status of your insurance card. Of course, check your Statement of Earnings and Leave (see above article) to be sure that the correct health insurance deduction was taken for pay period 1.

If you made an open season election of **Federal Employees Dental and/or Vision Insurance**, you will receive information directly from your dental and/or vision plan. Again, check your Statement of Earnings and Leave to be sure that the correct premium was taken for pay period 1.

If you elected to participate in the **Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS)**, check your Statement of Earnings and Leave to be sure that your first deduction was taken in pay period 25/2007, and you may submit claims to <https://FSAFEDS.com> for eligible expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2008.

All of these deductions are taken on a pre-tax basis, lowering your taxable income. Another way to save on taxes is to contribute more to the **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)**. For more information, go to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/benefits/tsp.shtml>. TSP changes may be made at any time; there are no open seasons for TSP.

HR BENEFITS STAFF CHANGES



We bid farewell to Barbara Johnson, the Benefits Specialist who provided service to employees in the AMS Poultry and Fruit and Vegetable programs, APHIS Veterinary Services, and the Merit Systems Protection Board. After many years of providing excellent retirement counseling to employees, Barbara retired on January 3.

We also bid farewell to Linda Stiebinger, the Benefits Assistant who processed all of the benefits forms submitted by the 14,000 employees we provide service to. Linda's work ethic and knowledge of the benefits systems will surely be missed. She retired on December 31.

Program assignments have changed. For your point of contact on the Benefits Team, please go to:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/benefits.shtml

News from the National Finance Center (NFC)

The National Finance Center (NFC) would like to inform customers of a change that will affect all Federal, State, and Local income withholdings for 2008 in regard to tax calculations. Although Calendar Year 2008 will have the traditional 26 Pay Periods, employees will actually receive 27 salary payments in Tax Year 2008. Tax formula calculations which usually take into account 26 (for the number of payments in the tax year) will be calculated using 27 for 2008 taxable earnings.

To view and/or print the updated tax formulas, go to NFC's Home Page (www.nfc.usda.gov) and click Pubs & Forms. Then at the Pubs & Forms page left-hand menu, click Tax Formulas and select the appropriate option from the map provided. Changes to the tax formulas are identified by "> <".

NFC will implement increased security measures to the logon process for the Employee Personal Page (EPP). Upon implementation, which is scheduled for February 11, 2008, users will be:

- Required to create a unique User-ID to replace the social security number.
- Required to strengthen their Password.
- Requested to provide an email address, if not previously provided.

Users can view the sample page by clicking on My EPP on NFC's homepage at www.nfc.usda.gov and click on "See a Sample."

FEDERAL INCOME TAX W-4

If you claimed exempt from Federal tax last year and you do not expect to owe any taxes this year, you must file a **NEW W-4** claiming exempt status **BEFORE FEBRUARY 17, 2008 (PP 4)**. Otherwise, tax withholdings will automatically be based on single with zero exemptions. No adjustment will be done to reimburse you for taxes withheld at the single rate.



Issuance of USDA LincPass ID Badges and Operational Enrollment Stations

USDA has started the process of enrollment and issuance of USAccess credentials for USDA employees and contractors (At USDA, we are calling these credentials LincPass cards.)

Once you are sponsored in the system (i.e. your information is entered in the USAccess system by your Sponsor, who currently is your HR Personnel Security Staff) you will receive an e-mail instructing you to make an appointment to visit a USDA credentialing center to verify your identify and register for your credential.

Before you make this appointment, please follow the **3 Easy Steps to Successful Enrollment**.

1. Gather Proper Identification To Bring To Your Appointment

To enroll and register for your USAccess card, you need to present two forms of identification.

Your primary form of identification must be one of the following:

- U.S. Passport
- Driver's License with photo
- Military ID
- Military Dependent ID.

Your secondary form of identification can be an additional primary form of identification, or one of the Secondary forms of identification described on the Acceptable Forms of Identification list. Some examples from the list include:

- U.S. Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate [original or certified copy]
- ID card issued by federal, state, or local government agencies or entities with a photograph (current USDA ID Badge is acceptable)
- School ID with photograph
- Voter's Registration card.

NOTE: If you do not have at least one form of Primary ID and another secondary form of ID, you will not be able to enroll/register for your USAccess card.

For a complete list of Acceptable Forms of Identification, visit the USAccess Program Website at www.fedidcard.gov.

2. Verify Your Information Was Entered Correctly In the System

As part of the enrollment process, you will be sent an e-mail acknowledging that you have been sponsored (i.e. your information was entered in the USAccess system.) Contained in this e-mail is how your Personal Identification Information (PII) was entered in the system.

Before scheduling an enrollment appointment, verify that the Personal Identification Information entered into the system by your Sponsor is correct. For example, make sure your names are spelled correctly. If you notice any misspelling or typo, you need to contact your Sponsor to update your information in the USAccess system. Do not make an appointment to enroll if your personal information is not correct. It must be corrected before you can be enrolled

3. Verify That Your ID Documents Match the Name Entered In the System

Next, verify that your name, as it appears on your email, matches the name listed on the primary and secondary forms of identification you plan to bring to your appointment.

NOTE: Your ID documents MUST match the name entered in the system. If your information does not match and you go to your appointment, you will NOT be able to enroll, and will be asked to reschedule your appointment.

Some examples of mismatches that require a correction are:

- Apparent typo or transposition of letters in the name (ex. Jmaes vs. James)
- Mismatch between a given name and an alias, nickname or derivative name (ex. Jim vs. James)
- Mismatch between maiden name in one record and married name in the other
- Mismatch of the suffix

If mismatches appear and the system is incorrect, you need to contact your Sponsor (the person who entered your information in the system), who will update your information in the USAccess system.

Once this update is made, you will receive another e-mail to make an enrollment appointment. Once again, verify the personal information on the email to be sure it is correct and matches the names on your identification documents.

If a mismatch occurs, but your ID documents are correct (i.e. you have recently been married), you can bring what is called a Linking Document to your appointment. A 'linking' document can be used to link two names on two ID source documents. Acceptable linking documents include:

- Marriage certificate
- Certified copy of birth certificate
- Court record of name change

The linking document must have both the former and current legal names on it and both the primary and secondary document must be valid and not expired. For example, a married woman may use both a current driver's license (in the married name) and a certified copy of her birth certificate (in her maiden name) but will be required to bring a linking document, marriage license, with both her maiden name and married name on it.

STAFFING NEWS

Monster Government solutions, the proprietor of the on-line application system, has changed the system name from "QuickHire" to "Hiring Management." Consequently, we have changed the name of this column to "Hiring Management Hints." This is our only change. You can expect the same helpful guidance to continue in this column.

Hiring Management Hints

Q: Where can I go if I have technical questions about or need help going through the on-line application process?

A: The following two documents are available for you to use as resources and guides to the USAJOBS application process:

1. How to Apply Brochure (4 page PDF informational guide with step by step information on the application process)
2. How to Apply Presentation PowerPoint presentation containing information on and a tour of the application process)

You may access these documents at the following website:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/job_opportunities/index.shtml

If you are unable to find the answer to your question within the above documents, you may email your question to our help desk technical support at the following e-mail address: apphelp@aphis.usda.gov

Our help desk technical support is available from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Central Time, Monday - Friday (except government holidays). Please allow up to 24 hrs to receive a response.

You may also contact the agency representative identified within the vacancy announcement for the position in which you are interested. You will find the agency contact information within the *How to Apply* section of the USAJOBS vacancy announcement.

Q: How do I edit/update my resume on USAJOBS? How do I send an updated resume to a position to which I have already applied?

A: In order to update your resume stored in USAJOBS you must log into your My USAJOBS account by going to the USAJOBS website: <http://www.usajobs.gov/>

USAJOBS is the only place you can edit/update your resume. Once logged into your account, click **[Manage Resume]** and then click the **[Edit]** link below the resume you would like to update. You will now be in your stored resume; make your changes, being certain to save your work on a regular basis. You have now updated your resume.

If you have already applied to a position and now would like to send your updated resume, while logged into your USAJOBS account, click the **[Applications]** tab. The announcement must still be in the open period. If the announcement has closed and is no longer accepting applications, you will not be able to send an updated resume. Once in the applications section, find the position to which you would like to send an updated resume. Click the title of the position to enter the vacancy announcement. Scroll to the bottom of the announcement and click **[Apply On-Line]**. The system will ask you to select a stored resume to send. Select the resume you updated and click on **[Send updated resume]**.

USAJOBS will transfer you and your updated resume to the USDA system. This updated copy of your resume will replace your previously submitted version. The system defaults to selecting "Take me to the assessment". You may update your contact information and core Federal questions at this time or print additional fax cover sheets by selecting "Update my information that is on file", or click **[Continue]**. If you clicked **[Finished]** at the end of the application process at an earlier time, the grades for which you applied will be selected. If you clicked **[Save]** when you first visited the application, the grades for which you applied will not be selected, and you will need to reselect the grades. However, all of your previously completed answers will be visible. Click through your previously completed answers. You must click **[Finished]** twice within the application process each time you enter your application, to send an updated resume, or make changes. You must allow the system to return you to USAJOBS. Once the system has returned you to USAJOBS, you may continue to work in your USAJOBS account or select to log out of your account.

Additional Information

If you have additional questions about any of the information above, or other questions related to applying through USAJOBS, contact your staffing service provider. You may also e-mail questions to our dedicated application help e-mail address: apphelp@aphis.usda.gov