

Marketing & Regulatory Programs HR BROADCAST

November 2011 Issue

Development Opportunities Announced!

The Human Resources Division is proud to announce the annual training & development calendar for FY 2012. We hope you find this a helpful planning tool as you are beginning your Individual Development Planning (IDPs) for the new fiscal year. This calendar will be available on the Human Resources Division website with periodic updates. To minimize the use of email announcements, the majority of these programs will be announced monthly as an “ESLS & TDB Training Community Month at a Glance” which will list all the webinars, classroom training, and other opportunities available in the coming month. This announcement will include registration links and all logistical information. If at any time you’re interested in what’s coming up in the future, you will be able to find that on the annual calendar.

In the spirit of cost savings and creating more employee engagement in development programs offered by the Executive Support & Leadership Services and the Training & Development Branch (ESLS & TDB Training Community), there has been a concerted effort to use webinars whenever feasible. We are committed to creating the best learning experiences; therefore some programs will continue to be delivered in classroom format. On the annual calendar we have built in lots of detail to help you with your development decisions: Here’s what you will find on the Annual Calendar:

APHIS HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Month at a Glance October 2011

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

- Three tabs listing the learning opportunities --- by Date... by Suite ... by Competencies
- What is a “**Suite**”? These are webinars/workshops which relate to a particular topic. For FY 2012 we offer the following Suites:
 - Administrative Career Development Services
 - Basic Leadership Development Program
 - Change
 - Communication
 - Developing Self & Others
 - Experienced Supervisor
 - MBTI Application Series
 - Modernization
 - New Supervisor
 - Virtual Workplace Environment
- The “**Competency**” tab relates to the APHIS Leadership Roadmap and OPM Competency guidelines. This tab will help you identify what learning opportunities are scheduled relating to a particular competency you would like to work on.
- Lastly, the “**By Date**” tab provides all the logistical information for each session
 - Date
 - Location (if classroom session)
 - Session Title
 - Target Audience
 - Suite it relates to
 - Competencies targeted
 - Method of Instruction (webinar or classroom)
 - Contact Information
 - Length of session
 - Instructor
 - Starting Time (in Eastern Time Zone)

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We hope that the HR Broadcast is meeting your needs and communicating topics of interest, but if there are items you would like to see included in future issues, please contact our HR Broadcast editor, Christina Furnkranz, at Christina.S.Furnkranz@aphis.usda.gov

We welcome your feedback and ideas and hope you find this a useful planning tool! Click here to find the most recent **Month at a Glance**: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/downloads/month_at_a_glance.pdf

November 2011 Issue

Performance Appraisals and Awards

By Margaret McKinney

(Margaret.K.McKinney@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3334)



PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

With the end of the 2011 fiscal year on September 30, 2011,

it is time to complete performance appraisals and submit performance awards.

Supervisors are reminded that when you have completed your employees' performance reviews, there is another important step in the process. Please submit a copy of the AD-435, summary performance rating form, for each employee, to the Processing Section of Human Resources Operations **as soon as possible**. HRO Processing will enter the rating into the payroll/ personnel data base, which is required as: 1) proof that the appraisal was conducted for accountability reporting; and 2) for use in construction of retention registers, if needed.

HRO requires a copy of the AD-435 only - please do not send copies of the performance standards. The AD-435 forms sent to the HRO-Minneapolis Processing Section are maintained for a short period of time following their input into the personnel database, and are then shredded. As a result, this copy of the rating form is not available for retrieval from HRO. It is important that supervisors keep copies of the rating forms and standards in the Employee Performance Folder, maintained by the supervisor (or the regional office), until the employee leaves the agency. At that time, the last 4 years of appraisals must be sent to HRO Processing Section for filing in the Official Personnel Folder (OPF) before the OPF is sent to the new agency or the national records center.

AWARDS

All awards require a separate, written justification attached to the AD-287-2, Recommendation and Approval of Awards. All awards and recommendations must be approved at a higher level than the Recommending Official, except for Time Off Awards of 10 hours or less. Performance Awards must be received in HRO-Minneapolis Processing Section no later than November 29, 2011.

For more information on awards, please see the Department Regulation, 4040-451-1 (<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-451-1.pdf>). Agency-specific awards guidance for GIPSA employees may be found in GIPSA Directive 4451.1. AMS and APHIS employees may refer to the new MRP Directive 4451.1 (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/directives/index.shtml>).

DUE DATES:

AD-435 to HRO **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

AD-287-2 and justifications to HRO by **November 29, 2011**

If mailing, please send final rating forms (AD 435) and approved Awards/Justifications (AD 287-2) to:
USDA APHIS MRPBS HRO Processing, Butler Square, 100 N. 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55403-1588

In lieu of mailing, you can email or fax AD-435 and AD-287-2 to your Processing Service Provider, but do not do both as this will create a duplicate award.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/processing_prog_assignments.pdf



Technology At Work

Persons with disabilities who need program information in alternate formats (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).



HOME



USDA is now tracking Agency telework percentages through webTA. In order to meet the telework goals set by the Department, it is very important that all T&A's are coded appropriately whether you telework on a regular schedule or on an adhoc basis.

- Utilize the 01-01 Reg Time-Telework Code if you telework on a regular or recurring basis
- Utilize the 01-01 Telework Other Code if you telework on an unscheduled or adhoc basis

Name:	Regular		Pay Period:	21 : Oct 9, 2011 to Oct 22, 2011																	
Time Card Type:			Leave Year:	2011																	
Transaction	Pfc	Sfc	Account	9 S	10 M	11 T	12 W	13 T	14 F	15 S	Wk 1	16 S	17 M	18 T	19 W	20 T	21 F	22 S	Wk 2	Total	
Work Time				Time In																	
				Time Out																	
Edit	01 - Regular Base Pay																			24:00	
Del																					
Edit	01 - Reg Time-TeleWork			Regular, Recurring Telework																16:00	
Del																					
Edit	01 - Telework - Other			Unscheduled, Adhoc Telework																	
Del																					
New																				40:00	
				Work Time Total		8:00		8:00		8:00		8:00		8:00		8:00				40:00	

Click here to add new codes to your profile

For more information regarding Telework, please click on the link below.
http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr_telework.shtml

If you have any questions with webTA, please contact the Leave and Compensation Team.
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/lct.pdf

Human Resources Division Phone Listing



To view the updated **Monthly HRD Phone Listing** at any time, you can bookmark this link by adding it to your **Favorites** or **Favorites Bar**:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/hrd.shtml

To bookmark the HRD Contact Us page to your Favorites:

- Open the link above
- Go to the **Favorites** tab at the top of the webpage
- Click on "Add to Favorites..."



To bookmark the HRD Contact Us page to your Favorites Bar:

(which are icon links that will always be on your internet page no matter what site you are visiting):

- Open the link above
- Go to the **Favorites** tab at the top of the webpage
- Click on "Add to Favorites Bar"
- Once the link has been added to your Favorites Bar, you can rename it by right clicking the icon and selecting "Rename"





USE/LOSE ANNUAL LEAVE

By Nella Roberts

(Nella.H.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-734-5382)

Annual leave which exceeds personal annual leave ceilings at the end of the leave year, which is December 31 for the 2011 leave year could be forfeited (lost) if not used. For most employees, the maximum amount of annual leave that may be carried over from one leave year to the next is 240 hours (30 days); for certain other employees, the maximum carryover is 360 hours (45 days). With some exceptions, members of the Senior Executive Service are entitled to a maximum carryover of 720 hours (90 days). Employees are encouraged to:

- Pay particular attention to your leave balances and work closely with your supervisor to schedule and use any use/lose annual leave.
- It is recommended that you schedule the use/lose leave in writing, either through email requests, or through WebTA, by the end of pay period 23, November 19, 2011.

Annual leave is not lost until pay period 1, 2012. This means that it may not be restored until that time. For additional information on the restoration process and documentation requirements, see: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/tod_self_study/use_lose.shtml

USE/LOSE ANNUAL LEAVE RESTORATION

By Nella Roberts

(Nella.H.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-734-5382)

Use/lose annual leave is not subject to restoration until it is "lost." Leave is not lost until pay period 1, 2012. Use/lose may be considered for restoration if it was canceled, in writing, due to operational emergencies (exigencies of the public business). Guidance on the leave restoration process is on the web at: http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/publications/tod_self_study/use_lose.shtml

A few important points to remember:

- Your supervisor must have cancelled your leave in writing.
- This memo must have included: the reason(s) the leave was cancelled, (i.e., explain the operational emergency in detail), the dates and hours cancelled, higher level concurrence in the decision to cancel leave (in the form of a signature on the memo).
- Lost leave may not be restored if compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay was used instead of use/lose annual leave during the 2010 leave year. This does not include Compensatory Time Off for Travel or credit hours.
- Programs have the authority to restore lost leave due to operational emergencies (exigencies of the public business).
- Leave lost due to illness or administrative error must be forwarded to HRD for consideration.





Security Clearance Debriefing – Who Needs One and When?

All individuals holding a security clearance MUST contact their security office at least two weeks **prior** to leaving their position to receive the proper debriefing. This could be as a result of retirement, transfer to another agency, any other form of separation, or if their position no longer requires a security clearance.

To properly cancel active security clearances, employees must receive a debriefing from USDA, Personnel and Document Security Division (PDSD). The number to call to arrange the debriefing is 202-720-7373. They will also be asked to sign the “Security Debriefing Acknowledgement” section on their SF-312, “Classified Information Nondisclosure Agreement” form. This is the same form they signed when their clearance was granted. If an employee does not receive a security debriefing upon departure, their security clearance is automatically “administratively withdrawn” and the clearance is no longer valid.

Personnel Security also receives numerous inquiries from employees who are leaving the Agency that do not hold a security clearance but are looking for a security debriefing. *Employees who do not have a security clearance DO NOT need to receive a debriefing.* Substituting the term ‘background investigation’ with ‘security clearance’ often creates this misunderstanding. More information on the difference between National Security and Public Trust investigations can be found at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/ohsec/pdsd/securityVStrust.htm>

Required Annual Refresher Training for National Security Positions

By definition, National Security positions are positions that have the potential to cause damage to the national security. These positions have Non-Critical Sensitive, Critical-Sensitive, or Special-Sensitive sensitivity level designations. Many of these positions also require access to classified information at the Confidential, Secret, or Top Secret level. *Individuals who maintain a security clearance are also required to receive annual information security refresher training on how to handle and protect classified information under Executive Order (EO) 12958.* The training reminds personnel of their responsibilities in protecting national security information.

For AMS, APHIS, and GIPSA employees, meeting this requirement can be accomplished by completing the on-line AgLearn course, *National Security Annual Refresher Training* – course #: DA-OSS-PDSD-01.

A second option, specific to APHIS employees, is to attend group briefings which are tailored to meet both the EO 12958 requirement as well as specific needs of APHIS. The group briefings are conducted in Washington, DC; Riverdale, MD; Raleigh, NC; Ft. Collins, CO; and Ames, IA (or other locations upon request). This instructor led presentation is also available on AgLearn for those unable to attend the group briefings. To inquire about the on-site sessions, contact Craig Aughe, APHIS Information Security Specialist at (301) 436-3198.

These courses are offered through AgLearn and available to add to your Individual Development Plan (IDP).

- National Security Annual Refresher Training : course #: DA-OSS-PDSD-01 (on-line)
- Information Security Education and Training : APHIS Only (Instructor Led)
 - Once completed, you will have to confirm your completion in AgLearn.

Full INSTRUCTIONS found at:
http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_info/downloads/Annual%20Security%20refresher%20training%20instructions.pdf





Reimbursable Billing Rates for FY2012 – effective October 1, 2011

The Office of Personnel Management's Federal Investigative Services (OPM-FIS) has announced that they are not increasing rates for investigative services in Fiscal Year 2012, and to the extent possible, are absorbing increases to the third party user fees. FIS has focused on process improvements and transforming automated systems to contain costs. OPM's new Investigations Reimbursable Billing Rates for FY2012 can be found on the HRD Personnel Security website -

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/downloads/OPM_Investigation_Reimbursable_Billing_Rates_FY2011.pdf



Did You Know?

The Constitution of the United States defines our roles as Federal employees: *“to establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty.”* Renew your familiarity with the Constitution, which we swear to support and defend when we take the oath of office as a Federal employee, by taking a moment to review the information at this link:

<http://www.opm.gov/constitution/initiative/oath.asp>. As we

commemorate Veterans Day and remember those have served in our country's armed forces this November, it seems a perfect time for each of us to pause and reflect not only on the sacrifice of our Vets in defense of the Constitution but our own unique role as Federal employees.



When Can I Access My Paycheck?

By Cindy Hadlich (Cindy.L.Hadlich@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3310)



**National
Finance
Center**

U. S. Department of Agriculture
NEW ORLEANS, LA



Did you know the National Finance Center (NFC) processes payroll transactions for over 650,000 federal employees bi-weekly? Amazing! They have been processing payroll transactions for over 38 years and successfully process over a half a million paychecks each pay period.

The official payment date of record with the Department of Treasury is the second Thursday of each pay period. In 1994, with Treasury's approval, to encourage employee participation in direct deposit, the date for all direct deposit payments was moved to the second Monday of each pay period, or Tuesday for those pay periods when Monday is an official federal holiday.

In many instances, financial institutions place funds in an employee's account early and post them as "pending" or "memo posting" transactions until Monday. This early posting to personal bank accounts is a courtesy by some, but not all, financial institutions. MRP employees should not rely on their financial institution providing a courtesy "memo post" of their direct deposit salary payment on Saturday. **Saturday is not the official payment date. The second Monday of the pay period, which is the first business day after payroll processing weekend, is the actual payment date for direct deposit transactions. By regulation, financial institutions are not obligated to post funds earlier than the actual payment date.**

If your paycheck has not posted to your bank account the second Monday of the pay period, please contact your bank to see if the funds are pending. If your bank confirms the funds have not been received, please contact your servicing Leave and Compensation Civilian Pay Technician to request a replacement. We have access to systems that can get employees a paycheck very quickly. Click on the following link for contact information.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/lct.pdf



PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT THROUGHOUT YOUR FEDERAL CAREER – PART ONE – EARLY CAREER

By Laura Frantes, (Laura.L.Frantes@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3312)



BENEFITS BUZZ

Retirement planning should start early and continue throughout your career. Whether you are just beginning your federal career, are mid-career, or are nearing retirement age, there are things you can do to prepare now for your retirement. In this article, we will cover some important points for employees beginning their federal career.

Employees who are beginning their federal careers should make sure to contribute to the [Thrift Saving Plan \(TSP\)](#), a 401(k)-type retirement saving plan. Studies show that employees who start their contributions early, even if they contribute less money to their TSP overall, usually have more money in their TSP accounts at retirement than employees who start later. This is due to the benefits of [compounding earnings](#). In addition, TSP contributions are deducted before taxes are withheld which reduces your taxable income. Taxes are payable at the time you withdraw your TSP contributions, usually after retirement when you are likely to be in a lower tax bracket.

Not only does the TSP offer a great tax advantage, but for employees covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the federal government matches up to 5% of your federal salary, as long as you contribute an equal or greater amount. If you are a FERS employee and are not contributing at least 5% of your federal income into your TSP account, you are missing out on **FREE MONEY**. New, or newly eligible, employees are automatically enrolled in a 3% TSP contribution, but you may start, stop, increase or decrease your TSP contribution at any time. To begin contributing, or to increase your contributions to the TSP, complete and fax a [TSP-1](#) to the Minneapolis Benefits Team at 612-336-3545 or use the online “Self Service” feature found on your [National Finance Center’s Employee Personal Page](#).

The TSP is only one benefit which is available to employees and can help to reduce your taxable income. The [Federal Employees Health Benefits Program \(FEHB\)](#) and the [Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program \(FEDVIP\)](#) premiums, and contributions made to the [Federal Flexible Spending Accounts \(FSAFEDS\)](#) are deducted from your pay before taxes are withheld. Thoughtful planning can allow you to take advantage of these great benefits for your family *and* decrease the amount of taxes you may owe at tax time.

The annual Benefits Open Season is your time to enroll in or change your FEHB and FEDVIP, and to elect FSAFEDS contributions for health and dependent care expenses. Need help figuring out how you can maximize your savings by combining these federal benefits? Try the [PlanSmartChoice](#) tool. To learn more about enrolling or changing plans, visit our [web site](#). The Benefits Open Season is now – December 12, 2011.

[Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance \(FEGLI\)](#) Basic coverage is provided to all new employees unless the employee waives the coverage. New, or newly eligible, employees may also elect additional optional FEGLI coverage for themselves and to cover their family members. Opportunities to enroll in or increase FEGLI coverage are limited to [Qualifying Life Events](#), requesting to increase your FEGLI coverage by taking a physical, or waiting for a rare FEGLI Open Season. FEGLI coverage provides a payment to your beneficiaries in the event of your death, while family FEGLI coverage provides a payment to you for a family member’s death. Many financial planners recommend life insurance coverage of 5-7 times your income. To begin, use the FEGLI [calculator](#) to determine coverage amounts and cost of insurance. Contact the [Benefits Assistant](#) for your program for more information.

Continue to next page



*PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT THROUGHOUT YOUR FEDERAL CAREER –
PART ONE – EARLY CAREER continued from previous page*



BENEFITS BUZZ

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Programs (FLTCIP) is available to you and your eligible family members. In the event that catastrophic illness or injury prevents you from performing at least two of the Activities of Daily Living, this insurance program will help cover costs associated with long term care provided in a home or a care facility. The cost of in-home or facility care can quickly exhaust a family's savings. A long term care policy is one way to protect your assets. See how the FLTCIP can be tailored to meet the level of benefit coverage that works for you.

Do you have all your eggs in one basket? Most financial planners recommend people diversify their assets. Are you looking for ways to do so? Do you need to save money for your child's education? Do you know where you can find reliable information and reputable brokers? The October 2010 Benefits Buzz provides some "Tips to Protect Your Assets". You can also visit our financial page for additional financial information and resources.

Making informed decisions now will help you reach your retirement as financially secure as possible. A secure retirement will give you both the peace of mind and the resources needed to enjoy your retirement to the fullest.

BENEFITS OPEN SEASON IS OPEN NOW through DECEMBER 12, 2011

The Benefits Open Season is your annual opportunity to review, change, or cancel your enrollment in Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Programs (FEDVIP), and to enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAFEDS) for health care and/or dependent care for 2012.

Watch your email for Open Season information, and for announcements regarding webinar presentations. Visit our web site for detailed information during open season.

Do you have questions about Open Season? Please contact Julie Berge at (612) 336-3623 or by email at Julie.A.Berge@aphis.usda.gov

RETIRING AT YEAR END?

Year end is the most popular time to retire. Find retirement information and forms at our retirement page. Mail your retirement forms 8-12 weeks before your retirement date to:
USDA APHIS MRPBS HRD BENEFITS, 100 N 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55403-1588.

Questions? Please contact the Benefits Specialist who services your Program.

