Marketing & Regulatory Programs

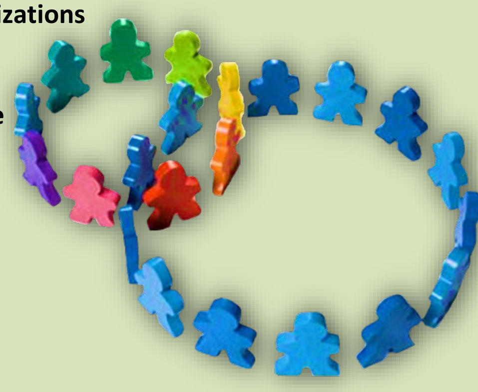
HR BROADCAST

Quarter 2 – FY 2015 Issue

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

On January 14, 2015, USDA Leadership was provided Dr. Gregory Parham's (Assistant Secretary for Administration) vision for transforming USDA's workforce and workplace. In line with his guidance, the HR Management Team (HRMT) identified operational priorities for fiscal year 2015. We discussed what areas need focus by our organization. These operational priorities support the HRD mission and represent activities that provide linkage between the work performed by our employees and APHIS and USDA goals and priorities. The 5 HR operational priorities are:

- **Improve Employee Engagement with Internal and External Customer Organizations**
- **Establish an Efficient Process for Employees Placed on Excused Absence**
- **Hiring a More Diverse Workforce**
- **Improve HR Operations Performance to Include Time to Hire**
- **Plan for EOD Online and Conduct Pilot**



As part of HR's commitment to ensuring that employee engagement is not a one-dimensional approach, but rather just the way we do business, each member of the HR Management Team will be conducting a bi-annual customer pulse check (in March and August). Using various survey tools (telephonic interviews, surveys, and focus groups), randomly selected internal and external customers will be contacted to provide feedback on our service delivery. This information will be shared with the management team and employees to help confirm we are providing the best service that we can and meeting our customers' expectations.

A new tool will be introduced for the HR employees that will help with our internal employee engagement – the establishment of an employee email box where your suggestions, ideas, and issues can be accessible through our email address book at hrod@aphis.usda.gov.

Lastly, we will be launching the My HRD SharePoint site at **MY HRD** which we hope to be a more interactive, educational, motivational, and informational way for us to communicate with each other. There will be some aspects of that site that the customers will be able to access. We are anticipating the site to be fully operational in the very near future.

We look forward to continue to work with our customers and stakeholders to provide effective and efficient HR Services so they are able to accomplish their important missions.

Marsha Wiggins, HRD Director

Inside this Issue:

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 Layout Editor, Christina Furnkranz, at Christina.S.Furnkranz@aphis.usda.gov

Exit Survey

*By **Patricia Flower** (Patricia.A.Flower@aphis.usda.gov, 202-799-7082)*

As part of USDA's ongoing Cultural Transformation effort, significant emphasis has been placed within MRP on gathering employee opinions through listening sessions, web sites and portals, the Employee Viewpoint Survey, and various other methods. Information is also needed from employees who leave the MRP agencies, and because of that, a web-based process is in place for individuals to complete an online exit survey. The exit survey gives employees the opportunity to communicate their reasons for leaving, perceptions of the work environment, and overall satisfaction with their agency.

In order to ensure that departing employees are notified of the exit survey, HRD has an exit survey coordinator to facilitate the process. Pat Flower of the Human Resources Division, HR Systems and Reporting Staff, is the exit survey coordinator and can be reached at 202-799-7082, or by email at Patricia.A.Flower@aphis.usda.gov.

The following procedures should be followed: Supervisors, administrative officers, or assigned designees should instruct the departing employee to contact the exit survey coordinator to obtain the link to the exit survey website. If the departing employee does not have internet capabilities, he/she can request a hard copy by contacting the exit survey coordinator.

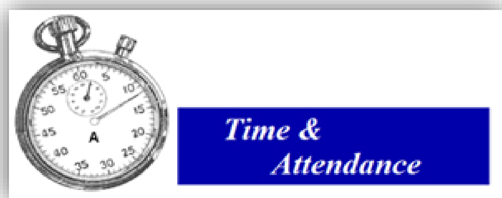
Additional information on the Exit Survey is available at the Human Resources Desk Guide, Subchapter 4250 .

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).

Telework: Proper Time and Attendance Coding in WebTA

By ***Tara Coker*** *(Tara.L.Coker@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2883)*



USDA is committed to being an organizational champion to support telework and tracks each agency's telework percentages through WebTA. In order to meet the telework goals set by the Department, it is very important that all time and attendance (T&A's) are coded appropriately whether you telework on a regular basis or on an adhoc basis. APHIS employees have done a fantastic job complying with these instructions, but there may be some confusion as to exactly which Telework Codes (TC) are to be used.

Within WebTA, employees are given the choice of selecting from 7 TC Descriptor Codes to go along with the Telework 01 TC Code. The following table illustrates the telework codes as they are shown in WebTA with their definition:

TC Code	TC Descriptor Code	Definition
01-01	11	Reg Time - Telework
01-01	12	Telework Alt Site < = 2 Days
01-01	13	Telework Alt Site > 2 Days
01-01	14	Telework Home
01-01	15	Telework Home < = 2 Days
01-01	16	Telework Home > 2 Days
01-01	17	Telework Other

Of the 7 TC Descriptor Codes employees should only be utilizing the following 2 telework codes, as highlighted in the table above:

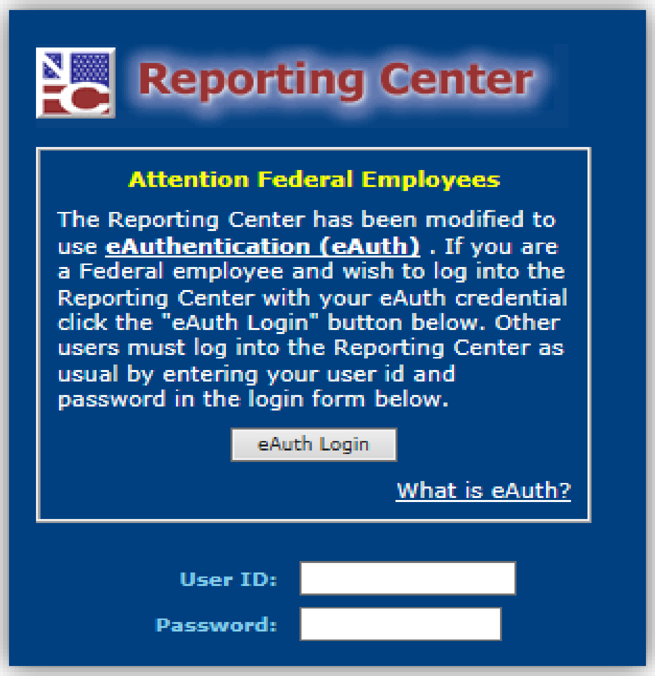
01-01 Reg Time-Telework if you telework on a regular or recurring basis
01-01 Telework Other if you telework on an unscheduled or adhoc basis

You may be asking the question, *"Why include all 7 Telework Codes in WebTA verses just the 2 that should be used?"* Here's the answer. WebTA is a Web-based application that was specifically developed by the National Finance Center (NFC) to support the Federal workforce time and attendance process. Because WebTA interfaces with NFC and USDA isn't the only Federal agency that utilizes the system, we cannot add or delete Transaction Codes or Transaction Descriptor Codes.

Please work with your timekeeper to ensure that you are properly coding your T&A's for all your telework hours.

For more information regarding Telework, please click HERE.

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



Reporting Center Access

*By **Nancy Bradford***

(Nancy.L.Bradford@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3391)

APHIS Supervisors can request access to the NFC Reporting Center Application for an employee using the newly revised HRO-106F (FIELD Only) form. Every employee who has potential access to Personally Identifiable Information (PII) **must have** a signed HRO-135; NFC Sensitive Data Security Agreement, permanently stored in their eOPF. This form must accompany the HRO-106F. Requests should be submitted to the HR.System.Access@aphis.usda.gov mailbox.

Employees are responsible for ensuring that their Reporting Center accounts remain active. The National Finance Center (NFC) has begun inactivating accounts that are not accessed every 30 days.

Employees should set a recurring reminder in their Outlook calendar for the first of every month to remind them to go into the Reporting Center and keep their access active.

APHIS Supervisors should use the HRO-106F (FIELD Only) to request modification or deletion of access for any employees who they no longer supervise.

AMS and GIPSA users are asked to follow the guidelines established by their Agency Security Officers (ASO).

AMS EMPLOYEES

Contact Roy Mitchell or Effie Pryor -> NFCSSUPPORT-USDA-AMS@ams.usda.gov

GIPSA EMPLOYEES

Contact Tanika Harris -> Tanika.V.Harris@usda.gov

The HRO-106F and HRO-135 forms along with the Reporting Center Quick Tips and answers to some frequently asked questions can be found at **My APHIS – NFC Reporting Center** *(This link takes you to the APHIS Intranet where you'll need your eAuth ID/Password or your LincPass)* or by contacting the HR.System.Access@aphis.usda.gov mailbox.

Formal Discussions

*By **Joanne Adams** (Joanne.B.Adams@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2942)*

Within the realm of Labor Relations, one issue that can be a "pitfall" for management is the formal discussion. A broad definition of a formal discussion is any discussion concerning a grievance, general personnel policy or practices, or general employment conditions between one or more representatives of the Agency and one or more employees that are in the bargaining unit represented by a Union.

Why is this important?

It is important for anyone who is a representative of the Agency to understand this because, in accordance with the Labor Relations Statute, the union has the right to be represented at formal discussions between management and bargaining unit members. Dealing directly with bargaining unit employees concerning a grievance, general personnel policy or practices, or general employment conditions is considered a "bypass" of the Union. Bypassing the Union may result in the Union filing an unfair labor practice charge against management.

When is a Discussion Formal?

Not all discussions between management and an employee in the bargaining unit are considered formal. Key elements to consider when determining if a discussion is formal include 1) who will be at the meeting and 2) the nature of the discussion. A formal discussion requires one or more employees from the bargaining unit and one or more representatives of the agency. A representative of the agency could be a supervisor(s), a management official(s), someone from personnel or labor relations, or an attorney representing the Agency.

With regard to the nature of the discussion, a meeting does not become a formal discussion unless the subject of the discussion concerns a grievance(s), working conditions, or Personnel Policy or Practice:

- Grievances: A discussion between the described parties concerning any grievance presented under a statutory appeals process (EEO mediation settlement talks, MSPB depositions or settlement discussions, etc.) or negotiated grievance procedure is a formal discussion. The Union is afforded the opportunity to be in attendance at all grievance meetings, even if an employee is self-represented or represented by an attorney.
- Working Conditions: Discussions on changing personnel policies, personnel practices or other general conditions of employment, such as work place moves, changes in work schedules, etc., will meet the subject test of a formal discussion.
- Personnel Policy or Practice: Involves general rules applicable to Agency personnel, not discreet actions taken with respect to individual employees.

Continue to page 6…

Continued from page 5 "Formal Discussions"…

Examples of discussions between management and bargaining unit employees that are **NOT** considered a formal discussion include:

- Counseling sessions between the employee and supervisor;
- Performance reviews (mid-year or year-end reviews);
- A meeting to inform two employees of a temporary reassignment in duties;
- Oral conference meeting for proposed adverse action;
- A discussion limited to the manner in which four specific employees report their productivity.

Notice to the Union of a Formal Discussion

The Union should be provided with adequate prior notice of a formal discussion and an opportunity to attend the meeting. Adequate notice is considered to be enough time for the Union to arrange for a representative to attend the meeting, as allowed by circumstances. Notices are normally provided by email with a read receipt. Contact Labor Relations for advice or assistance with providing the Union appropriate notice.

Union Representation at the Meeting

The Union has the right to choose which representative it wants to send to the meeting. If a Union representative does attend, the representative may ask clarifying questions, state the Union's views, and agree or disagree with management's views. The Union representative should not disrupt the meeting, take over the meeting, bring the meeting to a halt (except for short caucuses), engage in egregiously disrespectful or antagonistic behavior, answer for the employee, or instruct the employee not to answer questions.

If the Union representative becomes disruptive, management's options are to ask the Union representative to stop the disruption, ask the Union representative to leave, or stop the meeting. If the union representative is asked to leave the meeting, management should be prepared to provide sound reasons for asking them to leave and should document what occurred.

For More Information

If you would like more information about Formal Discussions, please contact Joanne Adams,
301-851-2942;
Joanne.B.Adams@aphis.usda.gov

It's time to start planning for Mid-Year Progress Reviews!

*By **Gwen Montgomery** (Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2928)*

The midpoint of the **FY2015** performance cycle is **March 31, 2015.** Supervisors and managers must conduct mid-year performance reviews with all eligible employees. All mid-year progress reviews must be certified as complete and reported to the HR Policy Branch no later than **May 11, 2015.**

Supervisors and employees should maintain ongoing, two-way communication with employees throughout the entire performance cycle. These conversations are crucial for accomplishing program goals and employee performance expectations, and may ease anxiety often associated with mid-year review meetings. Employees are also encouraged to prepare and submit summary reports to supervisors to ensure their accomplishments are captured for their mid-year review.

Guidance for preparing accomplishment reports and other performance management information can be found on the My APHIS site at APHIS/MRP Performance Management. Items posted on the webpage include USDA and MRP Directives, performance management calendar, accomplishment report tip sheet, and other helpful guides and web links for both supervisors and employees. For additional information, please contact Gwen Montgomery at (301) 851-2928 or via email at Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov.

The CLOSURE of Federal Offices Due to Inclement Weather

*By **Nella Roberts** (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)*

In December 2014, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) changed the leave practice for nonemergency employees on pre-approved leave when federal offices are closed. This was done in an effort to align with the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act and for continuity of operations. As a result of continuity of operation plans and telework, the justification for providing administrative leave (TC 66) to nonemergency employees on pre-approved paid leave has become obsolete because agencies continue to operate at a substantial level of productivity through telework when "Federal offices are closed."

In response, the Human Resources Desk Guide (HRDG) Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave, has been updated. The wording in **green** below represents the OPM changes and apply to all MRP offices. To view the web update go to: HRDG 4630 – Absence & Leave

Non-emergency employees without telework agreements will be granted administrative leave for the number of hours they are regularly scheduled to work. The following chart is to be used for nonemergency employees on preapproved leave:

Nonemergency employees . . .	With telework agreements . . .	Without telework agreements. . .
On pre-approved sick leave due to illness,	Will continue to be charged sick leave.	Will continue to be charged sick leave.
Whose pre-approved sick leave is cancelled because the medical appointment is cancelled,*	May choose to telework or request another form of leave.	Will be granted administrative leave (TC 66) for the number of hours regularly scheduled to work.
On pre-approved leave, e.g., annual leave, credit hours, compensatory time off,	May choose to telework or remain on leave.	Will continue to be charged leave.

*Note: Because the medical appointment is cancelled, the legal basis for the sick leave has been eliminated and the sick leave must be cancelled.

NOTE: This HRDG change does not apply to bargaining unit members until bargaining obligations have been met.

The Leave Error Report

By ***Cindy Hadlich*** *(Cindy.L.Hadlich@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3544)*

The Leave Error Report, within the NFC Reporting Center Administrative Reports Section, is a useful tool to help the timekeepers maintain accurate leave balances for their employees. The report reflects leave discrepancies between the time and attendance (T&A) system, and the National Finance Center (NFC) Payroll system. Leave discrepancies occur when the leave balances in the NFC Payroll system and those in the T&A system do not match. The Leave Error Report is produced each pay period by NFC, but names will only appear if a leave discrepancy exists. If you don't have access to the NFC Reporting Center, please refer to the Reporting Center Access article on page 4.

Please review this report every pay period. In addition, please update your leave audits every pay period (using the HRO-717), and correct each employee's Leave Data screen in webTA as necessary in accordance with the following:

<u>If the "T&A Ending Balance" is in error:</u> update the employee's leave audit with the amount of leave accrued and used, and change the employee's Leave Data screen in webTA to match the leave audit. **No other action is necessary. Do not process a Corrected T&A, or submit a leave audit to your servicing Civilian Pay Technician on the Leave and Compensation Team, in HRO.**

<u>If the "NFC Ending Balance" is in error:</u> update the employee's leave audit with the amount of leave accrued and used, and forward it (via fax or email) to your servicing Civilian Pay Technician, on the Leave and Compensation Team, in HRO. The leave audit must be completed for the current calendar year, and include the most recent pay periods leave balances. If you are emailing the leave audit, please either scan a copy that includes the timekeeper's signature, or include the following statement in the body of the email: "I certify this leave audit is true & correct." This statement, along with your email, acts as your electronic signature. You may also use an official electronic signature on the leave audit, by using Adobe. File the original leave audit with the employee's time and attendance records, and retain for six years.

Leave Error Report

Sensitive Personnel Data -- Use is Restricted

Contact Point: 34 11 0010 00 00 Employing Office: 4822 Date Prepared: 10/18/2010

Name	SSNO	SCD Date	A/L Cat	PP	Type Leave	Type Empl	Prior Carryover	YTD Earned	YTD Used	YTD Cr	NFC Ending Balance	P/T Carryover Balance	Accrued This PP	Used This PP	T&A Ending Balance
WASHINGTON, GEORGE	123-45-6789	4/30/1798	8	9	ANN	1	240.00	72.00	0.00		312.00		8.00	4.00	310.00
			8	9	COMP	1	10.00	5.00	0.00		15.00		0.00		12.00
LINCOLN, ABRAHAM	126-45-6790	11/06/1860	8	9	SICK	1	1070.00	36.00	24.00		1082.00		4.00		1076.00
OBAMA, BARACK	123-45-6791	1/20/2009	4	9	ANN	1	0	104.00			104.00		4.00		96.00

Total Employees: 3 Total: 4

Changes annotated are certified to be true and correct as of pay period ________________.

Certified By: ______________________________ Date: ________________

Please click <u>here</u> for the leave audit, form HRO-717.

Please contact your Civilian Pay Technician on the LCT with any questions regarding the Leave Error Report, webTA, or leave audits. <u>http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/lct.pdf</u>

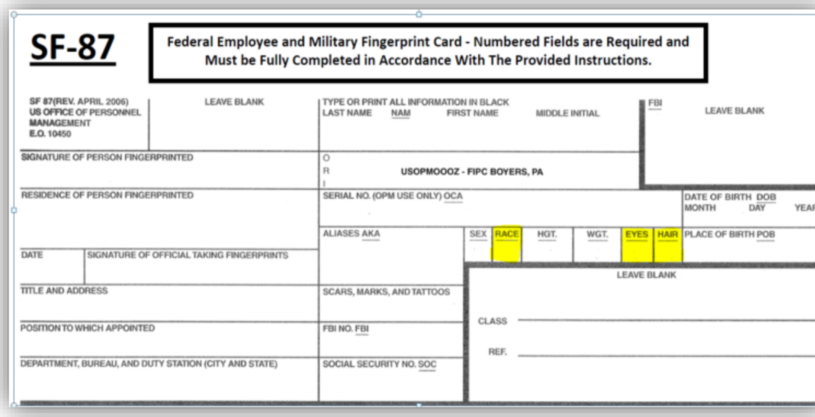
Helpful Hints when Administering Hard Copy Fingerprint Cards

*By **Patricia Hample** (Patricia.J.Hample@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3607)*

The submission of hard copy fingerprint cards (SF-87) ***is a requirement*** for all employees upon hire or when periodic reinvestigations are conducted, unless LIVE-SCAN fingerprints are being administered at MRPBS workstations. The MRPBS workstations are currently located in Minneapolis, Ames, Fort Collins, Riverdale, and Washington, DC.

Unfortunately, there is not a set of instructions included on the card. As a result, the cards are submitted with a variety of abbreviations which can cause some confusion for those reviewing them.

Please see the list below for some additional information regarding each field on the SF-87 card. Please remember, the SF-87 cards must be legible and filled out in their entirety. OPM will not accept incomplete cards. Two (2) cards must be submitted with the following information typed or printed in black ink.


SF-87
Federal Employee and Military Fingerprint Card - Numbered Fields are Required and Must be Fully Completed in Accordance With The Provided Instructions.
SF 87(REV. APRIL 2006) US OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT E.O. 10450
LEAVE BLANK
TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION IN BLACK
LAST NAME NAM FIRST NAME MIDDLE INITIAL
FBI
LEAVE BLANK
SIGNATURE OF PERSON FINGERPRINTED
O R I USOPMOOOZ - FIPC BOYERS, PA
RESIDENCE OF PERSON FINGERPRINTED
SERIAL NO. (OPM USE ONLY) OCA
DATE OF BIRTH DOB MONTH DAY YEAR
ALIASES AKA
SEX RACE HGT. WGT. EYES HAIR PLACE OF BIRTH POB
DATE SIGNATURE OF OFFICIAL TAKING FINGERPRINTS
LEAVE BLANK
TITLE AND ADDRESS
SCARS, MARKS, AND TATTOOS
CLASS
POSITION TO WHICH APPOINTED
FBI NO. FBI
REF.
DEPARTMENT, BUREAU, AND DUTY STATION (CITY AND STATE)
SOCIAL SECURITY NO. SOC

- **Last Name, First Name, Middle Name**
- **Signature of person fingerprinted**
- **Residence of person fingerprinted**
(Enter employee's present home address.)
- **Date**
(The official taking the fingerprints should enter the date.)
- **Signature of official taking fingerprints**
(The official taking the fingerprints should sign.)
- **Title and Address** *(The official taking fingerprints; NOT the employee)*
- **Position to which appointed**
(Enter employee's job title)
- **Department, Bureau and Duty Station (City and State)** *i.e., USDA, APHIS, PPQ; Raleigh, NC*
- **Date of Birth (DOB)** *(Indicate MONTH, DAY, and YEAR)*
- **Aliases (AKA)**
- **Sex** *(M-Male or F-Female)*
- **Race** *(W-White (include Hispanic); B-Black; I-American Indian/Alaska Native; A-Asian or Pacific Island; U-Unknown)*
- **Hgt.** *(Indicate height in feet and inches)*
- **Wgt.** *(Indicate weight in pounds)*
- **Eyes** *(BLK-Black; BLU-Blue; BRO-Brown; GRY-Gray; GRN-Green; HAZ-Hazel)*
- **Hair** *(BAL-Bald; BLK-Black; BLN-Blond; BRO-Brown; GRY-Gray; RED-Red; SDY-Sandy; WHI-White)*
- **Place of Birth (POB)** *(Indicate City and State or Country if outside USA)*
- **Scars, Marks, and Tattoos** *(Indicate any scars, marks, and tattoos. If none, write NONE)*
- **Social Security No. (SOC)**

Classifying fingerprints depend on clear impressions for accurate pattern differentiation, ridge counting, whorl tracing, and interpretation of whorl types. Best results are obtained by using a light finger pressure. Too much pressure will produce unclassifiable prints by smudging.

Please contact the Personnel Security Team with any questions. Click here for contact information.