

Marketing & Regulatory Programs
HR BROADCAST

Quarter 4 – FY 2015 Issue

**DIRECTOR'S
CORNER**

As the summer winds down, not far behind will be the end of the 2015 fiscal year (FY). With the end of each FY comes the numerous requests for reports to see how we achieved the goals we set out for ourselves



in the beginning of the FY. How much or how little did we get accomplished, how did we execute our budget and support our customers in meeting their hiring needs, were we timely in investigations and case filings and addressing union interactions? What lessons did we learn; what best practices can we apply to our work in the next FY?

Well, I don't know about you, but I think we accomplished a lot this year. I would guess it has been awhile since we had to deal with such significant issues and critical challenges facing HR; having to do more with less people and less money. These challenges, although significant, were not insurmountable, as they motivated us to come up with creative ways to get our work done. We conducted a pilot in Operations by moving it into a matrixed organization and aligning it into self-contained program centered teams. We collaborated with PPD to develop reporting processes and procedures to track and monitor hiring and personnel actions.

Just when we thought we were gaining some traction, we were hit by HPAI.

Employee and Management Services Directorate started the LERIS tracking system and we hired interns to help input case information as well as organize the hard copy files that had been floating from room to room in the South Building for years. Employee Relations continues to lead a Business Process Improvement on Administrative Leave and juggle a demanding case load with Administrative Investigations and Compliance Branch, Worklife Wellness, and Hearings and Appeals Branch while challenged to backfill vacated positions. Most recently the Labor Relations team was able to finalize some contentious negotiations that had lingered for years.

Resource Management, who always handles all the nuts and bolts of day to day operations, took on the new ConcurGov travel system with no additional staff power. They scavenged and recycled office furniture for much needed renovations and were always polite and professional during the day to day grumblings associated with space reductions and parking reallocations, travel pay, webTA and hiring actions, managing supplies, letting contracts, and updating service level agreements while always keeping a watchful eye on the bottom line....the budget.

Our next smallest but certainly no less important Branch, Systems and Reporting Staff, also experienced some significant staff power losses but through it all still managed to continue to provide top notch support to Operations for all the new reporting requirements they took on. As they supported increased internal demands, they continued to actively participate in the Department's fielding of new complex systems. As if that didn't keep us on our roller skates, the APHIS Administrator requested that the Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) develop a new leadership program to provide GS-14s with a comparable leadership training experience....and they did!

Wow! What a year....so I think you would all agree we have had a very busy year; we faced some hurdles but with teamwork, perseverance, and creative thinking we were able to not just deal with each and every challenge put before us....but turn each challenge into a success.

I can't say it enough....thank you for all you do.

Inside this Issue:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------|
| <u>HR Info</u> | <u>1</u> |
| <u>Benefits</u> | <u>2-3</u> |
| <u>Policy</u> | <u>4-5</u> |
| <u>Personnel Security</u> | <u>6</u> |
| <u>Leave & Comp</u> | <u>7</u> |
| <u>Training</u> | <u>8-9</u> |



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

*Marsha Wiggins,
HRD Director*

2015 Benefits Open Season



Open season is your annual opportunity to review and change your enrollment in the 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 2016.

The 2015 Open Season will run from November 9, 2015 to December 14, 2015.

Watch for all-employee emails and check our [website](#) for specific information as Open Season approaches.



FEHB Health Insurance Self Plus One Option Announced

The FEHB Program has introduced the Self Plus One Enrollment Type beginning in pay period 01, January 2016. The first opportunity to enroll in Self Plus One will be during the annual Federal Benefits Open Season beginning in November 2015. Rates will be announced in early October before Open Season begins. When posted, 2016 rates will be available at www.opm.gov/openseason.

For more information, see the Federal Benefits *FastFacts* at <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/fastfacts/self-plus-one-enrollment.pdf>

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Open Season – September 2016

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has announced that a Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Open Season will be held from September 1, 2016 through September 30, 2016. During this time, eligible employees can elect or increase their FEGLI life insurance without submitting physical evidence of insurability. The election or increase in coverage will become effective at the beginning of the first full pay period on or after October 1, 2017. More information will be forthcoming in 2016. Please note: FEGLI Open Seasons are not connected to the annual Open Seasons. Our Annual Open Season is your opportunity to make changes to FEHB, FEDVIP, and FSA only.



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).



Change in Life Insurance Premiums



Effective January 1, 2016, OPM has announced that FEGLI premium rates will change for some types of coverage. There will be no changes for Basic Insurance for employees, and most premium rates for Option A, Option B, and Option C will decrease. If you are 80 years of age or older, your premium for Option B will increase. If you are age 70 or older, your premium for Option C will increase. The FEGLI premium rates will be updated on the FEGLI website (www.opm.gov/insure/life) in January 2016.

Retiring Soon?



Are you planning to retire soon? The end of the year is the most popular time to retire, so plan ahead. Keep your retirement plans on track by following our [checklist](#).

If you haven't already submitted your retirement application and taken the necessary steps to retire, get the forms and information [here](#).

If you have any questions about your retirement or benefits, please contact your servicing Benefits Specialist at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpb/contact_us/downloads/benefits.pdf

Thrift Savings Plan Information

As we near the end of calendar year 2015, remember to check the Year-to-Date column of your Statement of Earnings and Leave for TSP. If you are contributing the maximum contribution of \$18,000 (plus \$6000 if you are making a catch-up election), are you in line with reaching the maximum by pay period 24? If you reach the maximum too early, your contributions will stop and you will miss out on the agency matching funds for the remainder of the year. You can change your TSP contributions through the NFC Employee Personal Page, or you can fax a TSP-1 form (available at www.tsp.gov) to Benefits at 612-336-3545.



FSAFEDS

In 2015, changes were implemented to the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) program and there will no longer be a grace period for incurring health care expenses. All eligible expenses must be incurred between January 1 and December 31, 2015, and you must submit claims on these expenses by April 30, 2016. You can now carry over up to \$500 of unspent funds in your general purposes or limited expense health care FSA accounts from 2015 to 2016. You must re-enroll for the 2016 Benefit Period to be eligible for carryover. The carryover change has no effect on dependent care FSAs. They will continue to have a grace period through March 15, 2016. Dependent care expenses cannot use carryover. For more information see the website <https://www.fsafeds.com/GEM/>



From The Policy Branch

FY 2015 Performance Cycle Ends Soon

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

The FY2015 performance cycle ends on **September 30, 2015**. Managers and supervisors are required to conduct performance evaluations for all eligible employees. Performance evaluations must be completed within 30 days of the end of the cycle (**October 30**). To assist in completing the evaluations, employees are urged to begin preparing their end-of-the-year accomplishment reports and submit them to their supervisors prior to the end of the performance cycle. The [Tips for Preparing Accomplishment Reports](#) document is available on the [MRP Performance Management](#) webpage.

Supervisors are reminded, per the USDA Performance Management Directive, the Mission Results and Supervision elements must be valued at four (4) appraisal units each. Please note this when computing point totals on the rating sheet.

All signed performance ratings (last page of AD-435E or AD-435S) must be submitted to each program's assigned HR Processing Associate by **November 16, 2015** for input into the NFC database. Timely submission of signed performance ratings will ensure MRP compliance with the Department's increased accountability requirements for performance management.

As a gentle reminder, all employees are required to take one performance management training course every 2 years beginning September 30, 2013 (date of directive). New employees must take a course within 3 months of their start date. Courses may be taken via AgLearn or classroom setting and must be documented on the AD-435E and AD-435S forms. A list of course options is available on the Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) SharePoint site at <https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/aphis-svc-ctod/SitePages/Performance%20Management.aspx>

For questions, please contact Gwen Montgomery at (301) 851-2928 or via email at Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov.



PERFORMANCE





Leave Usage Order

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

The MRP Directive and Human Resources Desk Guide Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave, Section B – Annual Leave, has been updated to reflect MRP policy on the order of leave usage as a result of the Office of Personnel Management's updated fact sheet on leave restoration. Starting leave year 2015, employees must use leave in the following order:

1. Use or lose annual leave,
2. Compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay,
3. Compensatory time off for travel,
4. Time off award, and
5. Any other accrued time, e.g., credit hours, annual leave.

Always use sick leave as appropriate. Using use or lose annual leave first prevents leave loss at the end of the leave year.

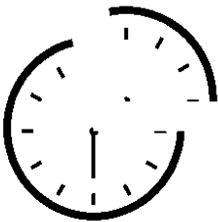
If you choose to use earned time off in a different order and it results in the loss of annual leave at the end of the leave year, then leave restoration **will not** be an option and the leave will be permanently lost. Your RMS/AO staffs have been advised of the policy and are available to answer questions as well as HRO, Minneapolis. As you are planning, please remember the 2015 leave usage order policy.



Scheduling Use or Lose Annual Leave

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

TAKING



TIME OFF

While the end of the leave is not yet here, it is fast approaching and will be here before you know it! Now is a good time to plan ahead and schedule your use/lose annual leave. The 2015 leave year ends pay period 26, January 9, 2016. Use or lose annual leave must be scheduled by the end of pay period 23, November 28, 2015. While it must be scheduled by the end of pay period 23, you have until the end of pay period 26 to use it. This means that the leave must either be scheduled electronically (email or WebTA), or in writing by the end of pay period 23, 2015. If the leave is not properly scheduled and it is lost at the end of the leave year, it will not be subject to restoration because it did not meet the scheduling requirement.

So while you are planning, pay particular attention to your leave balances. Work closely with your supervisor to schedule and use any use/lose annual leave. And lastly, if you have any questions, contact your servicing Leave and Compensation Team Specialist or me.





Interesting Information Regarding Your LincPass

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

As a new employee, you will undergo a process to receive your USDA Personal Identity Verification Credential (called a LincPass). Briefly, here are the steps involved in the process:

- You will be notified to enroll for your LincPass by receiving an email from *HSPD12*.
Please note: It is vitally important that you bring two forms of identification (in their original form) with you for the enrollment process. For a list of acceptable ID types, please refer to the USAccess program web site's list of acceptable ID documents here: <https://www.fedidcard.gov/viewdoc.aspx?id=109>. At a minimum, one of the identity source documents must be from the Primary List.
- Once you complete the enrollment process, your LincPass will be printed at a central printing facility and then it will be shipped to your enrollment station (typically that occurs within 2-3 days).
- When your LincPass arrives, you will be alerted via email from *HSPD12* to go back to the enrollment station where your LincPass will be activated.
- If you have any questions, please send an email to the Personnel Security mailbox at: lincpass.security@aphis.usda.gov.



Personal Identity Verification (PIV) Credential

Protecting and keeping Government assets secure such as facilities, computers, or information systems, are a fundamental responsibility of Government employees. To ensure consistent implementation across the Federal Government, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12) was enacted. It provides for a new standardized Federal identity credential that is designed to enhance security, reduce identity fraud, and protect the personal privacy of those issued Government identification.

The GSA HSPD-12 Managed Service Office (MSO) established the USAccess program as an efficient way for Federal agencies to issue common HSPD-12 approved credentials to their employees and contractors. You will receive a USAccess credential if your agency has elected to participate in the USAccess Program. The PIV credential may be referred to as a different name within your agency because some agencies have opted to re-brand their program and credential. Different names include, but are not limited to; Link Pass, Smart Card, and CAC card.



When Can I Expect to Receive My Paycheck?

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

Every 2 weeks the National Finance Center (NFC) processes payroll for over 650,000 Federal employees. The process is as follows:

1. Employees/Timekeepers submit the T&A through WebTA,
2. The supervisor approves the T&A,
3. NFC receives and processes the T&A,
4. NFC sends the payroll information to the US Department of Treasury for payment, and
5. All employees receive their monies from the US Department of Treasury.



The official payment date of record with the US Treasury is the Monday following NFC's payroll processing (the second Monday of each pay period). The settlement date for all direct deposit payments is also the Monday following the completion of the payroll process (Tuesday for those pay periods when Monday is an official Federal holiday). **Please note: Saturday is not the official payment date.**

In many instances, financial institutions place funds in an employee's account early and post them as "pending" or "memo posting" transactions with a settlement date of Monday. This early posting to personal bank accounts is a courtesy by some, but not all, financial institutions. **NFC clients should not rely on their financial institution providing a courtesy "memo post" of their Direct Deposit salary payment on Saturday.** The first business day after a 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 you check the status of your direct deposit at your financial institution (online or otherwise), and you don't see the monies, please contact someone who works with the ACH.* Usually, the people at your financial institutions working with the ACH can see the status of your deposit (pending, available, etc.).

*Automated Clearing House (**ACH**) is an electronic network for financial transactions in the United States. **ACH** processes large volumes of credit and debit transactions in batches. **ACH** credit transfers include direct deposit, payroll, and vendor payments.

Please feel free to contact the Leave and Compensation Team with any questions.
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/lct.pdf



New USDA and APHIS Requirements for New and Experienced Supervisors

By the Center for Training and Organization Development, 301-851-2947



The USDA Virtual University (VU) has issued new Departmental Regulations that directly impact agency training activities. The APHIS Center for Training and Organization Development (CTOD) has worked actively to modify its training approaches to support the new regulations. We are now rolling out the new approaches.

This article provides a picture of the training requirements for new and experienced supervisors in APHIS and AMS.

The good news is that APHIS and AMS already follow many of the new requirements!

What stays the same?

- The requirement that every supervisor establish an Individual Development Plan.
- Requiring every supervisor to undergo a 360-degree assessment. NOTE: While the need to undergo the 360-degree assessment continues, the new regulation establishes a 3 rather than 5 year cycle between assessments.
 - For more information on 360 assessments, click [here](#)
- Requiring each new supervisor to take Fundamentals of Human Resources Management (FHRM). FHRM has been reviewed and approved to meet USDA's New Supervisor Training Standard.
- The use of the APHIS Leadership Roadmap to guide leadership development activities across the Agency. We're happy to report that the Department has adopted the APHIS Leadership Roadmap for use USDA-wide in the form of the USDA Leadership Competency Framework!

The spirit and intent of the policy is to support new and experienced leaders in acquiring knowledge and skills for individual and organizational success.

While the policy contains the "must do" training of supervisors, managers and executives, CTOD strongly encourages all supervisors, managers, and executives to engage in training and development opportunities that support each individual's career goals.



Continue to page 9...



Continued from page 8 “New USDA and APHIS Requirements for New and Experienced Supervisors” ...

What Changes?

The main area of change involves the requirements for experienced supervisors.

1. Beginning in FY2015, there is no longer a:
 - a. 24-hour per year continual learning requirement for experienced APHIS supervisors, managers, and executives
 - b. 40-hour per year continual learning requirement for experienced AMS supervisors, managers, and executives
2. Beginning in FY2015, APHIS supervisors, managers, and executives no longer self-certify their completion of training. CTOD will track training compliance for all APHIS and AMS supervisors, managers, and executives.
3. All USDA supervisors must complete training at least once every 3 years on the following four topics:
 - a. mentoring their employees
 - b. improving the performance and productivity of their employees
 - c. identifying and assisting their employees when they have unacceptable performance, and
 - d. conducting performance appraisals according to their applicable USDA agency performance appraisal systems.
4. APHIS and AMS experienced supervisors choose what training they will take in these four topic areas from a large selection of options listed on the [APHIS CTOD SharePoint site](#). This link is for APHIS supervisors; AMS supervisors will soon have access to a dedicated page on AMS supervisory training policy.
5. In FY 2015, all USDA supervisors, managers, and executives must take the AgLearn course, [Maximizing Employee Engagement](#).

While these changes to experienced supervisor training policy may seem complicated, they are actually quite simple. Remember the key points above, and you will easily meet the new policy requirements.

To see the specific regulations, click [here](#).

For help identifying your goals, figuring out the skills you need to attain those goals, finding the learning resources to build the skills you identified, and creating an individual development plan (IDP), visit the [Career Development Center](#) on the CTOD SharePoint site.

Agency Directives in Revision:

- APHIS Directive 4315.1, Training Policy for APHIS Supervisors, Managers, and Executives
- AMS Directive 4120.2., Training and Development Policy for AMS Supervisors, Managers, and Executives

We salute our supervisors, managers, and executives for guiding employee and organizational success!
For questions on the supervisory training policy, please contact:

APHIS: Amy Kokesh at amy.c.kokesh@aphis.usda.gov

AMS: Loretta Gladden at loretta.gladden@aphis.usda.gov

