



April 2007, Number 2007-3

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NSPS: Making Progress and Positive Adjustments

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently completed the first performance appraisal cycle for employees in NSPS Spiral 1.1. Results show that employees successfully worked with supervisors and managers to develop meaningful, mission-aligned job objectives; performed work that helped meet the organization's strategic goals; and regularly communicated with supervisors and managers on performance.



The first performance-based payouts were completed in January, and NSPS employees were rewarded based on meaningful distinctions in work performance and significant contributions to DoD's mission.

Since Spiral 1.1 conversion, the Program Executive Officer (PEO) hosted several Lessons Learned Workshops with Spiral 1.1 senior leaders to review progress and chart the way forward. Feedback collected during the workshops identified areas for attention and paved the way for incremental program adjustments, as follows:

- **CONVERSION WINDOW.** Organizational leaders requested more flexibility in scheduling NSPS conversion to ensure sufficient time for training and implementation. NSPS provided a conversion window for Spirals 1.2 and 1.3, versus a single date.
- **ROBUST AUTOMATION.** Leaders offered numerous suggestions for functional improvements of the automated tools that support NSPS. The PEO is working with technical experts to enhance the program.
- **MORE TRAINING.** Employees and supervisors expressed the need for additional training on writing job objectives and self-assessments. NSPS expanded its training program and recently launched *iSuccess*, a Web-based course to assist employees.
- **MORE GUIDANCE.** Supervisors requested further guidance in the areas of pay setting and compensation management. NSPS developed a pay setting guide and a compensation guide for supervisors and managers.



By the end of April, approximately 114,000 civilian employees are scheduled to work under the NSPS pay-for-performance system. The PEO will continue to collect feedback, identify adjustments that meet organizational and employee needs, and enhance the system.



Troops Say CPMS “Saved the Day”

CPMS sponsorship made a difference for the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), deployed downrange in Iraq. A soldier with that unit, who must remain anonymous for operational security reasons, recently sent an e-mail of thanks to CPMS.

CJSOTF had just returned from a long mission, the soldier said. “We were out there forever, it seemed,” when a snow-storm delayed the troops’ return to base. As time went on, it



The weather was troublesome for CJSOTF troops on a recent mission.

was difficult to continue operating in the harsh weather.

Previously, CPMS had sent the troops a “care package” with hand warmers, snacks, and other items. According to the soldier, that package “saved the day. It was so

cold, we used a whole box [of hand warmers] in one day. We had them everywhere—pants, pockets, socks, underwear, hat, and face—that’s how cold it gets out here.

“Plus, being cut off from home, we only packed so much food. We ran out, but under my seat, I had about eight packs of beef jerky and the pretzel-cookie things (I think you made those). They lasted us about three days. While all that was happening, we still had to fight the battle.”

He concluded by saying, “I hope we can stay in touch. The thoughts and gifts received from the CPMS organization help make our deployments successful.”

If you wish to buy a gift certificate or make a donation for CJSOTF or other deployed troops, you may do so by using this [link](#).



Aerial view from open cargo bay

BRAC Transition Assistance

The Department is committed to helping employees affected by Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) to continue their Federal careers or pursue other endeavors. The BRAC Transition Web site at www.cpms.osd.mil/brac/brac_index.aspx provides employees, managers, and Human Resources (HR) Specialists information—and answers to frequently asked questions—about transition assistance programs offered by the Department and other agencies.

This site has links to other Web sites that will help employees learn more about BRAC. If you have specific questions, the BRAC Web site provides contact information for each Component and the CPMS Civilian Assistance and Re-Employment (CARE) Division. During the BRAC process, the BRAC Transition Web site will serve as the DoD one-stop source for civilian transition assistance information. -Civilian Assistance and Re-Employment



Field Advisory Services (FAS)

NSPS Questions? Ask FAS!

The following is just one of the many frequently asked questions posted on the CPMS Web [site](#).

Q: An employee occupying a GS-560-12 position has been selected for a position in YA-2. How is pay set?

A: For this movement, [SC1950.6.3.3.8.7](#) provides that comparable levels of work of employees from other pay systems, such as the General Schedule, may be determined using guidance found in [SC1911](#) and [SC1920](#), Appendix 5. Since the candidate in this situation occupies a GS-560-12 position, the movement into pay band YA-2 would be a reassignment ([Table SC1911-1](#) reflects that YA-2 is a comparable level of work to grades GS-9 through 13).

Since this is an employee-initiated reassignment action, the pay setting provisions of [SC1930.10.4.1](#) apply. These provisions permit any one of the following outcomes: an increase in pay of up to five percent; no change in pay; or a decrease in pay (in any amount agreed to by the employee). -Classification and Pay



Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI): Keys to Improvement in Processing Actions for Separated Employees

Timeliness and accuracy really matter when you process life insurance actions for separated employees. Here are four items the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently identified as Government-wide keys to improvement in this area.

TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE. Standard Form (SF) 2821, Agency Certification of Insurance Status, must be signed by two agency officials: one who has access to personnel records; and the other, to payroll records. Dual signatures serve to—

- Guard against error or fraud;
- Verify that payroll and personnel have maintained the same level of coverage for the employee; and
- Surface any enrollment and premium accounting discrepancies before the employee separates.

FE-6 DOES THE TRICK. When certifying FEGLI coverage for a deceased employee, do not furnish only the SF 2821 and any designations on file. Instead, follow the instructions on the Form FE-6, Claim for Death Benefits, to provide all other FEGLI-related file documents.

There is one exception: If no documents exist or obtaining them would be difficult, the Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (OFEGLI) will accept a copy of the separation SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action.

12 MONTHS-PLUS OF NONPAY. Do not certify FEGLI coverage for a deceased employee who has been in a continuous nonpay status for more than 12 months.

In such a case, FEGLI coverage stopped after 12 months in a nonpay status.

After 12 months in nonpay status, you must issue the employee the SF 2821 plus SF 2819, Notice of Conversion Privilege. These forms for an active employee must be filed in the employee's official personnel folder.



If after 12 months in nonpay status, the employee is eligible to continue coverage as a compensation or annuitant (5-year/first opportunity requirement), complete the SF 2821 and SF 2819.

The employee should be asked to complete the SF 2818, Continuation of Life Insurance as an Annuitant or Compensation. Send all paperwork for compensationers and annuitants to the OPM Retirement Office.

On the other hand, if the employee is ineligible to continue coverage as a compensation or annuitant, coverage terminates at the end of the 12 months in a nonpay status, with 31 days of free coverage and the right to convert (SF 2821 and SF 2819).

Additionally, you must notify the Office of Workers' Compensation Program via the Notice of Life Insurance Ineligibility to stop FEGLI premium withholdings.

At the time of death, if an employee has been on the rolls in a nonpay status for more than 12 months, the individual should not be certified on the SF 2821 as a "death of an employee."

Even if the employee was still on agency rolls and the SF 2821 was not timely completed, the deceased is not covered by FEGLI, because coverage as an employee ended after 12 months in a nonpay status.

ORIGINAL IS STILL THE GREATEST. Do not accept a photocopy or fax of designations, assignments, and court orders from employees. Only original designations and assignments, and certified copies of court orders, will be accepted for filing or when certifying a deceased employee's coverage to the OFEGLI. However, a faxed designation is valid under the following conditions:

- The appropriate office receives the *faxed* designation before the death of the insured;
- The appropriate office receives the *original* designation within 30 days after receiving the faxed designation; and
- The original designation is identical to the faxed designation.

When these conditions are met, the original designation should be received on the date the fax was received. -Benefits and Entitlements





Defense Employee & Labor Relations Symposium

In support of the Department's Civilian Human Capital Strategic Plan goals to develop workforce competencies, CPMS will sponsor the first training symposium for employee and labor relations practitioners. The concept is similar to the Symposium on Employee and Labor Relations, which was sponsored by OPM in the past.

The Defense Employee and Labor Relations Symposium (DELRS) will be held in St. Louis, MO, at the Renaissance Grand Hotel and Suites on May 14-17.

On May 14, three pre-conference workshops will be offered from which participants may choose. You may attend only one of the following sessions:

- **COMPLEX MEDICAL ISSUES.** Ms. Marilyn Mattingly, a former Defense employee and recognized expert, will present this workshop. She will explain how to unravel the intricacies of complicated medical cases involving conduct and performance problems, Office of Workers' Compensation issues, reasonable accommodation, inability to perform, and related matters.
- **LEGAL WRITING SEMINAR.** Mr. William F. Kullman, a Justice Department attorney and Adjunct Professor at the George Washington University School of Law, will explain the importance of articulating information in a clear, persuasive legal opinion or brief.

Mr. Kullman will provide practical writing and editing methods to present your basis for legal opinion or argument in the best possible light. This session will be of value to both attorneys and HR practitio-

ners who want to develop their skills in legal writing.

- **ADVANCED STATUTORY TRAINING.** A Federal Labor Relations Authority staff member will address complex issues in the areas of negotiability, unfair labor practices, arbitration, and representation. This workshop will provide a unique opportunity to hear the Authority's perspective on the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute.

The full Symposium, on May 15-17, will include sessions on topics such as the following:

- Strategies for handling unfair labor practice charges;
- Representation case process and procedure;
- Framing adverse action charges;
- Duty to bargain and bargaining obligations;
- NSPS update;
- Reasonable accommodation; and
- Managing performance under title 5, United States Code, Chapter 75.

The cost for the full Symposium is \$400. Additional cost for a pre-conference workshop is \$60.

Participants are also responsible for travel, per diem, and lodging expenses.

For more information and to register, please visit the DELRS Web site at http://www.cpms.osd.mil/faslerd/delrs/delrs_index.aspx.

-Labor and Employee Relations



New FEHB Rule on Disaster Situations

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program has long-standing provisions for discontinuing a health plan that goes out of business or withdraws from the program. On January 17, OPM issued a final rule amending the FEHB regulations (title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 890) to respond to disaster situations.

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina prompted this change. OPM has now redefined "discontinuance of a health plan" to include situations in which a plan becomes incapable of providing services, either on a permanent or temporary basis, because of a disaster. If one occurs, enrollees are now allowed to change health plans.

Depending on the nature of the disaster, it may not be possible to locate enrollees and notify them of the need to change health plans. To prevent loss of coverage, anyone unable to make a change in these circumstances will be transferred automatically to the standard option of the nationwide Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan.

To the extent practical, OPM will work with carriers and agencies to notify affected employees. Additionally, OPM will make general notifications or announcements on its Web site.

This change will affect employees, retirees, survivor annuitants, and former spouses in affected regions.

-Benefits and Entitlements





Inform New Hires Promptly about Insurance

In recent years, the Government has implemented several new benefit programs that go beyond traditional health and life insurance. When individuals are first hired as Federal employees, HR Specialists should inform them of their options to enroll in the following programs:

- Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP);
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI);
- Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSA-FEDS);
- Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP); and
- The new Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

Why is it important to notify Federal employees promptly when they are first hired? One reason is the very nature of insurance. Enrollment in these programs provides long-term security, financial savings, and protection to employees as well as their eligible family members.

Another reason is that various time limits apply to enrollment. Although employees should take a proactive approach to learning about available benefits, HR Specialists are ultimately responsible for informing employees about the time limits associated with each insurance program. These are outlined below.

- FEHBP, FSA-FEDS, and FEDVIP allow employees 60 days from the date of hire to enroll. After the initial 60 days, employees must have a qualifying life event such as a change in

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Pension Protection Act Makes a Number of Enhancements to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

During 2006, Congress enacted improvements to private sector retirement plans. However, certain portions of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-280), August 17, 2006, affect the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) as well. TSP enhancements are outlined below.

Previously, when an unmarried TSP participant died, the non-spouse beneficiary would receive their TSP funds in a single lump sum payment and be subject to a 10 percent tax penalty. Under the new provisions, non-spouse beneficiaries can receive TSP funds without the tax penalty if they transfer the funds to an "inherited" Individual Retirement Account (IRA). An "inherited" IRA is an IRA that the non-spouse beneficiary received from another individual. In other words, the non-spouse beneficiary is not the original owner of the IRA.

In addition, the retirement-savings tax credit available to lower income participants is now a permanent tax credit. Lower income participants receive this credit as an enticement to contribute to TSP. These participants may lower the amount they owe for Federal taxes by up to \$1,000, or \$2,000 if they file a joint return. For more information about this tax credit, visit the TSP Web site at www.tsp.gov.

Another change involves reservists who are called to active duty. They may be exempt from the 10 percent early withdrawal penalty if they meet certain conditions:

- They must make the withdrawal between the beginning date of the order or call to active duty and the close of the active duty period; and

- They must have completed more than 179 days or an indefinite period of active duty service between September 11, 2001, and December 31, 2007.

Furthermore, these reservists may be able to repay their TSP funds into an IRA up to 2 years after the military service ends or August 17, 2008, whichever is later.

The next improvement applies to members of the uniformed services who contribute their tax-exempt money into their TSP account. These individuals may also transfer tax-exempt money from their TSP account into a 403(b) annuity contract if the 403(b) administrator allows this transfer of funds.

The final change, which will take effect on January 1, 2008, pertains to separating employees who withdraw their TSP funds. They may now transfer these funds into a Roth IRA. This change also applies to employees who take an age-based withdrawal. The Thrift Savings Plan will provide more information once the Internal Revenue Service has published its regulations.

-Benefits and Entitlements



CPMS Employment

CPMS vacancies are posted on USAJOBS. To access employment opportunities for status candidates, click [here](#).

For other CPMS vacancies, click [here](#).



CPMS Personnel-ity Profile

Wage and Salary Division's Ben Jarvis Enjoys Sports, Travel, and City Life

"My family tells me 'football' was the first word I ever said, but my sport turned out to be baseball," says Virginia native Ben Jarvis of the CPMS Wage and Salary Division (WSD). "I love playing sports and coaching—teaching, being a mentor."

While attending Christopher Newport University, "I got a chance to pitch during all Division 3 tournaments and the Division 3 NCAA College World Series, where we competed twice."

Ben transferred as an upperclassman to James Madison University. As a rising senior, he was gratified when his mentor helped him to obtain a summer internship with Motorola in China. Sports played a prominent role in that experience, as well.

"In Beijing I visited Tsinghua University, the 'MIT of China,' with two friends. One of them stands six-foot-seven. We started a pickup game of basketball," Ben says. The three Americans soon realized that to onlookers, they were something of a novelty. "A crowd of about 100 Chinese students gathered to watch. Afterwards, our opponents took us out to dinner at a mom-and-pop restaurant. We ended up being great friends."

While his internship had its lighter moments, Ben did serious work that summer. "My mentor had introduced me to Six Sigma," Motorola's trademarked measurement methodology for quality control. "Its statistical formulas alone are fascinating! More broadly, I was interested in how performance and pro-

duction could be increased, while still maintaining morale."



Ben Jarvis

After graduating, in January 2006 Ben accepted a position as a Data Collector with the WSD Non-appropriated Fund (NAF) Pay Systems Branch. WSD is responsible for local prevailing

rate wage surveys to develop and adjust pay schedules under various systems, including NAF. Ben's experience has convinced him that the DoD process for establishing pay schedules is impartial and fair.

"My job requires travel, which I love. I enjoy meeting people so much that you could almost say it's my hobby, and I also get to teach and give presentations when I'm out on the road."

Teaching runs in the family. "My mother, sister, and older brother all teach, so coaching and teaching are a big part of my life." Giving back to the community is important, too. "When my father retired from the Bank of America, he asked his colleagues to take the funds donated for his party and send them instead to the children's hospital. I admire him for that."

Ben is enjoying life in the city. He and some friends have just rented a four-bedroom, brick colonial-style house in the historic Tenleytown neighborhood of

Washington, DC, within walking distance of Metrorail. "I like the diversity this area offers, with so many different ethnicities, age groups, and ideas." His new location gives Ben a short, convenient commute to CPMS in Arlington. It also lets him continue volunteering as the head coach of an Arlington Little League team.

CAREER BRIEF

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Science (major in psychology; minor in HR development), James Madison University, VA, 2005.

EXPERIENCE: January 2006 to date, HR Specialist (Compensation), CPMS.

Inform New Hires

(Continued from page 5)

marital, dependent, or employment status; otherwise, employees may enroll only during an annual open season.

- For FEGLI, enrollment is automatic for basic coverage, and employees may enroll for various forms of optional coverage up to 31 days after the date of hire.
- Employees and their spouses enrolling in FLTCIP within 60 days from the date of hire may use abbreviated underwriting applications. Those who enroll later must submit full underwriting applications.

-Benefits and Entitlements

