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SUBJECT: Fort Benning CPAC Staffing Update 11-2007

1. This publication is issued to ensure the Fort Benning Commanders, managers, supervisors, and employees are kept informed of employment and staffing issues. Future updates will contain updated information on specific employment topics (i.e., compensation, recruiting procedures, travel entitlements, classification issues, NSPS implementation information, etc.) and will be issued on a monthly basis.

This document is a compilation of articles written by CPAC staff [members] as well as information excerpted from various sources which include, but is not limited to, the Government Executive Newsletter, FedWEEK, the Federal Manager's Daily Report, and the ABC-C Newsletter.

2. **Stepping In**. "Everyone says we pay for performance," Jac Fitz-enz told an audience convened by the American Management Association's Federal Learning Institute. "And no one does it. Even in the private sector, people get paid for lots of different reasons. Maybe we feel guilty, so we give them more money."

The message of the man AMA calls "the acknowledged 'father' of human capital performance benchmarking" is this: If federal managers are going to move toward pay for performance, they need to be prepared to assess their employees' work much more aggressively, and to truly compensate workers based on those assessments.

"It is our obligation and responsibility and duty to prove that money spent on training or anything else has a return," Fitz-enz said. "We're not training people because we want to make them nicer or smarter. We're training people because we want them to achieve goals."

Jason Kovac, a compensation expert with the nonprofit organization WorldatWork who is designing training material for managers in the Defense Department's new National Security Personnel System, agrees that managers may have to steel themselves for the transition.

"What happens, and this happens in a lot of organizations, [is] it's sometimes difficult for individuals or managers to feel that they can truly rate their employees, so it's easier to give everyone a 3.5 percent increase than to give one person 6 percent and another person zero," he said. "If the performance management system isn't a very strong and relevant system, the merit system won't work."

That more aggressive approach might be a challenge for managers, but Fitz-enz said there already has been significant improvement in measuring performance since he first began researching the issue.

"Before 1970, all we had was feelings when we talked about our work," he said. "Where we're going now is predictability."

Today, more information is available to managers -- if they're willing to look for it. "You measure any concept by making it a physical activity. We could ask people, 'Are you committed?' But in order to tell if people are really committed, we need to see their behavior," Fitz-enz said. "We've got to get out of our offices. You've got to get involved with your customers, management and employees."
That presence around the office, Fitz-enz said, is critical to gaining the kind of information that gives an accurate picture of what behavior is valuable and ought to be rewarded.

Then comes the hardest part: figuring out how to use pay to further motivate employees who already are performing well, and to signal to employees who are performing poorly that they need to do better, without completely demoralizing them.

"What motivates people is a very interesting question, because it really depends on the individual," Kovac said. "If you give someone a zero or 1 percent increase [that is a de-motivator]. I used to say 5 or 6 percent was pretty motivating, which makes it difficult with the current economy, where you're seeing most merit increases set around 3.8 percent."

Given that the average federal employee will get a pay hike of 3.5 percent in 2008 (an improvement over the 2.2 percent average raise in 2007), getting to that motivating 5 or 6 percent may be a challenge, if not an impossibility.
But maybe there's good news, even if the federal government can't reward its highest performing employees with the same percentage raises the private sector uses.

Kovac said that in his experience, the more active management style necessary for true performance measurement could also help identify struggling employees who could use extra attention and help from their supervisors.
And that timely intervention might translate into job satisfaction -- and job performance -- that money can't buy.
After all, said Kovac, "usually, when people want to leave an organization, they throw more money at them. That may last six months, but there are other aspects of the job that are more important. At that specific time, it could be a big deal to employees, but in the grand scheme of things, it's only one tool of many."

3. **MSPB Looks at Hiring Practices**. A recent MSPB publication examined why the government tends to hire older applicants even for entry-level positions. The article follows.

When you think of an entry-level new hire, what characteristics come to mind? The picture most people see is a recent college graduate, in his or her early 20s, with little professional work experience.

However, the demographics of entry-level new hires tell a different story.

The average age of the Federal new hire in FY 2005 was 33 years old. MSPB compared the average age using a number of different angles, including grade level, competitive/excepted service and median age. While there were some minor differences in these comparisons, the overall results were the same: the average Federal entry-level new hire is in his or her late 20s or early 30s. And this trend persisted as far back as 1990.

These new hires are not necessarily recent college graduates either. In a recent MSPB survey of Federal entry-level new hires, only a quarter (24 percent) of the respondents entered the Government directly out of school. Furthermore, many of them had solid work experience. Thirty-two percent reported having between 1 and 5 years of full-time work experience before accepting a job with the Federal Government. Even more surprising, almost 20 percent claimed to have more than 20 years of work experience.

Having an older, experienced entry-level workforce is an interesting phenomenon. It begs the question of what factors are affecting the age and experience level of entry-level employees.

Some of the factors are logical. For instance, on average, college students today are older than they were 30 years ago. Also, many baby boomers are starting second careers in Government, thereby increasing the average age.

However, this trend can also be partly explained by some agency hiring practices that tend to favor age and experience over potential. Having older, experienced new hires is not a bad thing—provided that selection is based on relative ability, knowledge and skill after fair and open competition. But do current hiring practices meet these criterions? One issue MSPB has raised over the years is that agency assessments tend to rate applicants based on exposure to training and experience, rather than evaluating the actual skills developed during those experiences. This approach not only lowers the ability of the assessment to predict future job performance, but it also benefits older, more experienced applicants simply by virtue of their having worked more years.

In addition, our research indicates that agencies use recruitment methods that are more likely to draw older applicants. Our survey responses indicate that new hires under the age of 30 tend to rely more on personal recruitment sources who come to them, such as a college recruiter or school placement official. New hires 30 and over are more likely to go in search of opportunities, searching out sources such as USAJOBs and agency Web sites. Because agency recruitment efforts rely heavily on posting announcements to USAJOBs, it is not surprising that agencies attract more applicants who are over 30.

Finally, Federal job requirements may also favor people with more experience or education, often without considering future potential. The qualification standards for occupations that agencies often hire into require certain levels of education or have individual occupational requirements. These requirements can weed out applicants with potential but no experience, despite the fact that the relationship between the requirements and future job performance is sometimes questionable. Also, agencies often hire at higher entry-level grades, requiring applicants to have experience or higher educational levels.

These findings suggest that there may be barriers in the Federal hiring process that make it more difficult for younger applicants who do not have work experience but may have great potential. We are not suggesting that agencies redesign processes to favor younger applicants.

Rather, agencies should ensure that their recruitment and assessment practices select the best candidate for the job based on relative ability—regardless of age and years of experience. See our upcoming study, *Attracting the Next Generation: A Look at Federal Entry-Level New Hires*, for more on how agencies can improve their ability to attract entry-level employees.

4. **Stricter Contracting Policies Approved.** In voting on its DoD measure, the Senate accepted an amendment to impose more restrictions on the contracting

out program at DoD, which has most of the government's jobs subject to such competitions, as well as other language that would apply government-wide. For DoD competitions, the language bars contractors from gaining an advantage by offering either health insurance or retirement benefits at a lower cost to the employer than what the government pays toward federal employee benefits. It also would require that during the competition process, DoD would have to consult with affected employees—in unionized settings, through the union—on the process at least monthly and consider their views. The measure also encourages using in-house employees for new work. It also would allow all federal employees affected by contracting decisions to file appeals with GAO in the same way that contractors can appeal; again, in most cases such appeals likely would come from a union. It also would require apply government-wide the requirement now applying to DoD that functions involving more than 10 in-house employees could be converted only if the contractor showed savings of at least 10 percent or $10 million.

The House-passed DoD authorization measure contains many similar contracting provisions. It: continues the general policy that contractors could not gain an advantage in bidding by paying less toward health benefits than the government does for federal employees, and adds a similar requirement regarding retirement benefits; eliminates automatic recompetition of work after the in-house side wins; beefs up the policy of allowing federal employees to compete for new work or work currently performed by contractors in some circumstances; and carries similar language regarding appeal rights and applying a cost threshold for functions involving more than 10 employees.

5. **How Congressional Annuities Are Calculated.** This article is written by Reg Jones, so references to "I" pertain to him as an author. This article was recently posted in FEDWeek.

Members of Congress and their staffs come and go. Have you ever wondered how their annuities are calculated? If you have, you're not alone. That's a question I frequently get. So I thought I'd share the answer with you.

**CSRS**. The formula used for Members and staff is as follows:

2.5 percent x highest three consecutive years of average salary (the high-3) x the number of years of Member or staff service, which can't be fewer than five.

In addition, a maximum of five years of military service – for which he or she is not receiving retired pay – may also be computed at 2.5 percent, with all other years of military service computed at 2 percent. Note: To get credit for periods of military service, a deposit to the retirement fund may be required. The rules are the same for Members and staff as they are for most other employees.

All non-Member and staff service is computed using the standard CSRS formula. The final annuity cannot exceed 80 percent of the final salary.

**FERS**. The formula looks like this:

1.7 percent x high-3 x years of Member or staff service, which must be at least five years and not more than 20.

Any service over 20 years is computed at 1 percent, as is military service, for which a deposit is mandatory, just as it is for most other employees.

All non-Member or staff service is computed using the standard FERS formula.

By now, you've probably come to a slow boil because you've been doing some quick arithmetic and concluded that Congressional Members and staff are fleecing the government. Not so fast. Most of them – especially staffers – have far shorter work histories in government than do career employees. In addition, they have to pay more than you do to get these enhanced benefits. Under CSRS, Members have to contribute 8.5 percent of their salary, staffers 8 percent. Under FERS, it's 1.3 percent for both.

6. **OMB Says One in Five Programs Not Demonstrating Results**. About 20 percent of federal programs are unable to demonstrate results, according to a summary of program ratings compiled through OMB's Program Assessment Ratings Tool for fiscal 2007.

PART ratings are meant to reflect the management and performance of federal programs and have some bearing on White House budget requests, and this year they show that 78 percent of programs are "performing," up from 75 percent a year ago, while 3 percent are "ineffective."

About half of all programs were rated either effective or moderately effective, and in the past programs rated as not effective has been recommended for termination or reductions.

OMB said over 1,000 programs have been assessed with PART totaling over $2.6 trillion in spending.

Of the programs being assessed for the first time, 77 percent were rated as performing and 60 percent are effective or moderately effective, according to OMB.

"The PART holds agencies accountable for achieving results and making government more effective," said OMB deputy management director Clay Johnson.

"Today, we have more information about what works and what doesn't than ever before, and we expect agencies will continue to improve as agencies, the Administration, and Congress make greater use about this information," he added.

OMB said PART assessments were moved up to September this year so they could play an even greater role in developing the White House's budget request.

Program ratings are at www.expectmore.gov

7. **Student Loan Bill Signed**. President Bush signed into law (PL 110-84) a measure that allows forgiveness of certain federally backed student loans after a public servant--including federal employees--has made required payments for 10 years. However, the counting period for that benefit started September 2007, so the benefit won't be available until 2017. The authority is separate from the student loan reimbursement policy that many agencies use as a recruiting and retention tool.

8. **Retirement Planning: Going Private**. This article is written by Tammy Flanagan. Tammy Flanagan is the senior benefits director for the National Institute of Transition Planning, Inc., which conducts planning workshops and seminars. She has spent 25 years helping federal employees take charge of their retirement by understanding their benefits. All references to "I" pertain to her as an author.

Just when I thought I had explored most retirement benefits topics in this column, I received an interesting e-mail question:

*As a Federal Employees Retirement System employee, I am not locked into my retirement so much as someone who is in the Civil Service Retirement System. I won't/can't retire for at least 10 more years. Question: Is there a calculator that shows how much I would have to make on the "outside" to equal or improve on my potential government retirement?*

I don't know of any calculator that compares private sector salaries and benefits with federal pay and benefits. I searched for studies comparing the two sectors and found conflicting conclusions.

The Federal Salary Council says that federal salaries lag behind the private sector by 23 percent. On the other hand, Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, has used data from the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis to conclude that as of 2006, average compensation of civilian federal employees was about twice as high as that of private-sector workers. In this calculation, "compensation" includes wages, salaries and supplements such as employer contributions to social insurance and to pension and health insurance funds.

Since I am not an economic analyst and I don't have the technology expertise to create a calculator, the best I can do is provide a snapshot of federal benefits and allow you to compare them to what you might find in the private sector.

(Note: Since all new employees are hired under the Federal Employees Retirement System, I didn't include the older Civil Service Retirement System benefits in my comparison. The standard advice to a CSRS employee is to retire first and then look for a job in the private sector.)

| Benefit | Federal | Private Sector |
|---|---|---|
| **Retirement Savings** | The Thrift Savings Plan has an automatic 1% contribution from the agency plus matching contributions totaling an additional 4% of basic pay. Employees may shelter wages up to $15,500 (in 2007) from taxes. Employees 50 and older can contribute an additional $5,000 in tax-deferred compensation. Investment choices include five diversified funds and five Lifecycle funds to choose from. Withdrawal options include a series of monthly payments and annuity options in addition to taking cash payment or transferring the balance to another retirement savings plan. | Policies on matching funds vary in 401(k) plans. Non-discrimination rules may limit the contributions of higher salaried employees based on the contributions of other employees |
| **Basic Retirement Benefit** | FERS: Employees contribute 0.8% of salary. Agency contributions fund the remainder of the cost. Employees are vested after five years of civilian service for a lifetime benefit that is computed at 1% x high-three average salary x years and months of creditable service. Some employees are entitled to a higher computation and a supplemental benefit may be paid for employees who are eligible for immediate unreduced benefits before age 62. There are | Only 20% of private sector companies offer a basic pension benefit. For every $1,000 per month in COLA-adjusted retirement benefits, you will need to save at least $250,000 more in your retirement savings plan |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | immediate, early retirement, disability and survivor benefit options available. Retirement benefits are increased by an annual cost of living adjustment. | (based on the investment earning a 5% return and including a 3% annual increase in the payout. |
| **Social Security** | On both the federal (FERS) and private sector sides, employees and employers both contribute 6.2% of pay up to $97,500 (in 2007) for the FICA tax. Employees and employers also pay 1.45% of pay towards the Medicare hospital insurance tax. | |
| **Sick Leave** | Federal employees can earn 104 hours of sick leave each year and ca accumulate 2087 hours (1 year) for every 20 years of service. Employees may use leave for family and medical reasons. | Some companies may offer short and long-term disability insurance in addition to sick days. |
| **Annual Lave** | Depending on their amount of service, employees can earn 13-26 days of paid annual leave per year. Employees can generally carry over 30 days of annual leave each year. | Two weeks of paid leave is standard (sometimes more with additional service) |
| **Paid Holidays** | Ten paid holidays annually plus other holidays the president may declare. | Usually not this many paid holidays. |
| **Health Insurance** | The government pays 72% of the average premium. There are a wide variety of plans to choose from during annual open season periods. There are no waiting periods or exclusions for pre-existing conditions. Most retirees, family members and even former spouses may continue enrollment in the federal health plan. | Some companies pay the premium for health insurance, but may offer limited choices of plans. Most offer limited or no retirement health insurance. |
| **Life Insurance** | The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance program is the largest group plan in the world, covering over 4 million federal employees, retirees and family members. | Check to see if you can continue group life insurance into retirement -- federal retirees can. |
| **Long Term Care Insurance** | The Federal Long Term Care Insurance program offers group premiums and comprehensive benefits. Retirees, family members ad even separated employees can continue this coverage. | Some companies may offer discounts and some may pay your premiums. |
| **Dental and Vision** | The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance program is available to eligible federal | Some companies also offer such benefits. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Benefits** | employees, retirees and family members on an enrollee-pay-all basis | |
| **Flexible Spending Accounts** | Separate health care and dependent care accounts are available | Varies |
| **Flexible Schedules** | Agencies may establish flexible and compressed work schedule programs for their employees | Varies |
| **Student Loan Repayment** | Agencies are allowed to repay federally insured student loans as a recruitment or retention incentive. | Varies |

I'm self-employed, and I have to admit I'm glad I'm married to someone who works for the federal government. I share in all of my husband's insurance benefits, which is a big savings compared to having to enroll in an individual plan. We also have the security of lifetime coverage on both insurance and retirement benefits.

Finally, remember that there are some things that can't be measured by statistics - like the pride that comes with fighting crime and terrorism at the FBI or searching for cures for diseases at the National Institutes of Health. The deciding factor of continuing in your government career or heading for the private sector might have something to do with benefits, but it could also boil down to the feeling you get when you go to work every day.

9. **MEDICARE & Federal Retirees**. With the great medical insurance coverage that the Federal program offers in retirement, many who retire under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program (FEHB) wonder whether they should enroll in the Medicare Program. Is it necessary insurance and what are the pros and cons for enrollment?

First, Public Law 97-248 which was enacted in 1982 provides Medicare Part A coverage at age 65 for federal employees actively employed beginning January 1983. Federal employees who retired prior to January 1, 1983 must be eligible for a Social Security benefit based on their non-federal employment or have a spouse with coverage to obtain Part A without a monthly cost. Part A helps to cover costs of hospitals, skilled nursing facilities following a hospitalization, home health care and hospice care. Individuals who are eligible for this premium-free insurance should enroll especially Federal employees who are age 65 or older and still federally employed as this is excellent secondary insurance to FEHB.

Medicare Part B is different. Anyone who is age 65 or older, a U.S. citizen residing in the United States or a lawfully admitted alien residing in the United States for five years prior to filing an application is eligible. It is not necessary to be eligible for monthly Social Security benefits, or for Medicare Part A. Medicare Part B is for medical needs outside of a hospital. It covers doctors' services, outpatient hospital services, durable medical equipment, medical supplies, and other medical services not covered by Part A. Should Federal retirees enroll in

Medicare Part B when eligible? It depends on your FEHB plan enrollment, participation with a PPO, where you live and affordability.

The combination of a low-cost, standard option fee-for-service FEHB plan and Medicare Parts A and B provides excellent coverage of medical services. For example, under Blue Cross and Blue Shield Standard Option and Medicare A and B, Blue Cross/Shield will waive the deductibles, co-payments except prescription drugs, and co-insurance. Payments for the deductible, co-payments and co-insurance can sometimes become quite expensive depending on the illness and treatments a patient is receiving. With Medicare A and B, the retiree would only have to pay the out-of-pocket cost for prescription drugs. The retiree can use any Medicare participating physician—he does not have to be a Blue Cross/Blue Shield preferred provider.

In the above scenario, if the retiree uses a preferred provider, the payments for treatment could be lower than Medicare depending on the PPO agreement. However if the retiree uses a non-PPO physician who also does not accept Medicare, the doctor is allowed to charge an amount equal to 115% of the Medicare determined approved amount, which the retiree would have to pay.

For Federal retirees, Medicare pays first for most services, and FEHB picks up the difference or in some cases pays for services not covered by Medicare. Medicare and the fee-for-service plans in FEHBP combine to provide complete coverage, and federal enrollees find they have little or no out-of–pocket expenses.

HMO’s cover most medical care with only a small co-payment. If a retiree plans to remain in an HMO in retirement, there may be little advantage in enrolling in Medicare Part B. However, federal retirees who travel extensively in the United States may want to have Part B for non-emergency medical services outside of the HMO’s servicing area, or to go out-of-network to consult specialists without a referral from the primary physician. Last, if a person who is in an HMO waives Part B, then later changes to a fee-for-service plan (example: the HMO drops out of the federal program, or retiree moves to an area where HMO choices are limited), the retiree could still enroll in Part B late and pay a penalty. The penalty is a premium surcharge of 10 percent of the monthly Part B premium for each 12-month period the retiree could have been enrolled in Part B but was not. The surcharge is permanent.

Since HMO’s do leave the FEHBP periodically, a retiree may still want to enroll in Part B as soon as eligible to ensure complete coverage should he need to change his FEHB plan.

Those who are interested may look into the Medicare Part C, the program called Medicare Advantage. The Medicare Advantage Plans are similar to an HMO under Medicare. The retiree is required to enroll in Medicare Part B, and while there are some benefits, there are restrictions such as not being allowed to consult specialists without a referral from the primary care physician. The federal retiree may notify OPM that he wants to suspend FEHB coverage to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan. As long as he suspends and does not cancel, he will retain the right to reenroll in FEHB should his coverage in Medicare Advantage end.

TRICARE is the health care program serving active duty service members, retirees, their families, survivors and certain former spouses worldwide. Tricare coverage at age 65 and after requires enrollment in Medicare Part B. In this case, Medicare will become the primary insurance and Tricare secondary. If the federal retiree also has FEHB in addition to Medicare and Tricare, then Medicare is primary, FEHB secondary and Tricare is third payer. The retiree in this situation is also allowed to suspend FEHB if it is not necessary, and use Medicare and Tricare. This can only be done in retirement. Later should the need for FEHB arise, the retiree will be allowed to reenroll.

Some retirees find the cost of Medicare Part B prohibitive as the standard fee tends to go up each year, and the monthly premium is per individual. For this year, 2007, the standard part B premium is $93.50 monthly, per individual. It could be higher depending on the amount of income you filed for tax purposes (see www.medicare.gov for the entire list of Part B premium costs).

Remember, enrollment in Medicare A, B or C is separate from enrollment in the Medicare Prescription Program which is Medicare Part D. It is not necessary to enroll in Medicare Part D for most federal retirees because generally, the prescription drug program with your FEHB plan is as good as and in some cases better than the prescription drug benefit under Medicare Part D. However this is not true in all cases, and a federal retiree who is covered by a standard option fee-for-service plan with high deductibles and co-pays for prescription drugs may find that a Medicare Part D plan that serves their area is less expensive. Should you decide to sign for Medicare Part D later on, you will need proof that you were insured in an FEHB plan (within 60 days of signing for Part D) in order to avoid a late enrollment penalty.

The retiree should look closely at the individual plan brochures, under the section "Coordinating Benefits with other Coverage." Then weigh the costs against present and future benefits as well as illnesses before deciding.

10. **Search Me? Can An Agency Root Around in an Employee's Desk, Office, Briefcase, or Computer?** This article is written by Bob Gilson, so the references to “I” pertain to him as an author. Mr. Gilson is a consultant with a specialty in working with and training Federal agencies to resolve employee problems at all levels. Both before and since retiring, Mr. Gilson has negotiated on behalf of Federal clients. A retired agency labor and employee relations director, Bob has authored or co-authored a number of books dealing with Federal issues.

*Law & Order*, the ever present drama on some cable channel 24/7, returns again and again to milk the matter of searches for a story. The show teaches us all about such things as obtaining a warrant; "probable cause" for a warrantless search; and how even bad guys get off if the search is improper. Federal employees with things to hide or who have issues with authority shouldn't take much comfort from the show when it comes to searches on the job.

Gnarly Jack McCoy and his always stunning co-counsels on *Law & Order* regularly go to the fourth amendment of the constitution which protects citizens against a search of their private property without a warrant or without proper consent unless "probable cause" exists to believe a crime has been committed. Since a government search of private property is unreasonable and unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment without a warrant or proper consent, a couple of questions are important. First, is an employee's workplace in any way private property; and second, can an Agency ever search an employee's workplace without a warrant?

**Is a Federal employee's workplace in any way private property?**

The Supreme Court has found that employees who enjoyed a reasonable expectation of privacy in their work areas may be protected from warrantless searches. However, according to a case titled *O'Connor v. Ortega*, the degree to which an Agency exercises control over its space lowers an employee's expectation of privacy and limits the resulting right to privacy. So. simply, the answer is that since the property belongs to Uncle Sam, employees' expectation of privacy depends on the Agency's notice to them concerning how its space and other property may be used or examined. In other words, if the Agency says it can look in desks, files, computer data, etc., the employee has no reasonable expectation of privacy.

**Can an Agency ever search an employee's workplace without a warrant?**

In *Ortega*, the Supreme Court ruled that warrant requirements were inappropriate when the burden of obtaining a warrant was likely to frustrate the governmental purpose behind the search. The Court recognized that employers will frequently need to enter the offices and desks of employees for legitimate, work-related reasons.

The Court decided that the applicable standard is "reasonableness under the circumstances." Whether the search is a non-investigatory, work-related intrusion or an investigatory search for evidence of suspected work-related employee misconduct, the proper approach (assuming that the search is reasonable and not arbitrary) is to balance the employee's legitimate expectations of privacy against the government's need for supervision, control, and efficient operation of the workplace.

Government space and furniture are used by employees for employees to do the work of an agency. So government searches to retrieve work-related materials or to investigate violations of workplace rules do not violate the Fourth Amendment. Supervisors are not, in most cases, required to obtain a search warrant whenever they wish to enter an employee's desk, office, or file cabinet.

**How about handbags, briefcases, backpacks and the like?**

Items such as handbags, briefcases, backpacks are not usually considered part of the workplace and, therefore, a search warrant or authorization is generally required before searching them in the workplace unless there is probable cause to suspect a connection to a crime. However, if an Agency advises employees that such property may be examined coming or going for security reasons, they may be searched in that context. Employees can always avoid the risks of opining their bags and exposing their belongings at work by leaving them at home.

**What about computers?**

There's a great online resource for those who want to know about computer security. It's a hypertext guidance paper from the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section, Criminal Division, United States Department of Justice entitled "Searching and Seizing Computers and Obtaining Electronic Evidence in Criminal Investigations."

Despite the title, the report has a lengthy discussion of public sector workplace searches not related to a crime. The gist of it is that the same rules apply to computers, email, computer files, and other media (disks, thumb drives, etc.) as described above regarding office searches. The report includes "banners" developed by Agencies and suggested by the article as a dialog box that employees must agree with before they may access the network.

Bryan R. Lemons with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glenco, GA also has a useful article that is titled: *Warrantless Workplace Searches of Government Employees*.

So what's the lesson?

For a business reason, a far cry from probable cause or a search warrant, and particularly if employees have been notified that no expectation of privacy exists in the workplace, supervisors and managers can look at work areas, inside desks, file cabinets, and computers. One would have to be pretty dumb to keep anything at work that might indicate any misconduct on your part or really stupid to keep anything at work that could link someone to a crime. Of course, there is a saying in employee relations that the charge line in a disciplinary action could always be replaced by "too stupid to continue working" since getting yourself disciplined is not a high I.Q. business.

General advice on handling personnel problems may not be applicable to specific situations. Be sure to check with your servicing HR Specialist for guidance on your particular personnel situation.

11. **Retirement Planning: A Little Lower**. This article, written by Tammy Flanagan, was posted in the 12 Oct edition of the Government Executive Newsletter. References to "I" pertain to her as an author.

A few weeks ago, I wrote about how to decide whether to retire from federal service to work in the private sector or continue in your federal career. Several readers commented about the salary rates I used in the examples, saying they'd like to see how scenarios would work out for employees who don't earn executive-level pay. Others had some questions about computations of Social Security benefits discussed in the column.

This week, I'll respond to each of those issues, using a couple of scenarios involving a hypothetical employee I'll call "Daniel." He's among the 43 percent of federal employees (as of 2004) who earn less than $50,000 per year.

Please keep in mind that all of the numbers below are approximate and based on estimates of such variables as salary level, insurance premiums and tax withholdings.

**Daniel Under CSRS**

For the first scenario, let's assume Daniel is in the Civil Service Retirement System, and that the following factors apply:

- High-three average salary: $40,000
- Length of federal service: 30 years
- Age: 55

The first set of two columns in the chart below illustrate Daniel's current federal salary and withholdings. The second set shows his retirement income plus pay from a second career.

| | **Current Salary** | | **Retirement Income + Second Career** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Annually** | **Monthly** | **Annually** | **Monthly** |
| Current federal salary | 42,000 | 3,500 | | |
| CSRS Retirement | | | 22,500 | 1,875 |
| Insurance | -3,000 | -250 | -3,000 | -250 |
| TSP Contributions | -2,100 | -175 | | |
| Income Taxes | -7,380 | -615 | -3,375 | -281 |
| CSRS Retirement Contributions | -2,940 | -245 | | |
| Medicare Tax | -609 | -50 | | |
| Net Income | **25,971** | **2,164** | **16,125** | **1,343** |
| New Salary | | | 30,000 | 2,500 |
| 401k Contributions | | | 14,000 | 1,167 |
| Income Taxes | | | 3,200 | 267 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Security Taxes | | | 2,295 | 191 |
| Net Income from Second Career | | | 10,505 | 875 |
| Total Net Income While Employed | **25,971** | **2,164** | **26,630** | **2,219** |

After three years of working a second career and receiving his federal retirement, the increase to Daniel's Social Security benefit (assuming he had some credits from other work prior to his federal career) would be about $900 per year or $75 per month. In addition, the income from saving $14,000 a year in a 401(k) plan could result in about $2,700 per year, or $225 a month, of additional investment income.

In the above example, Daniel could begin a second career and, at the end, he would have increased his investment income and his Social Security benefit. If he decided to continue working in his federal career for three more years instead of retiring early, the increase to his CSRS benefit would be about $2,853 per year, or $238 per month. He also would have an increase in his Thrift Savings Plan income for being able to continue saving 5 percent of his salary.

For Daniel, the key to improving his situation by retiring early from federal service would be the ability to shelter $14,000 a year in his new 401(k) and live on about the same income he had while he was working for the government. Daniel may not be able to afford to retire completely at the end of three years in either situation, since his retirement may not replace enough of his current income. Whether he stays in his federal career or whether he retires early to pursue a private sector job would depend on careful planning and diligence in continuing to save. With the right job offer, Daniel might be able to transform his career into something completely new, or if he prefers less upheaval in his life, he could also do quite well to finish his career in federal service.

**Daniel Under FERS**

In this scenario, let's assume Daniel is covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System and is going to retire from federal employment at his first opportunity and immediately return to work in the private sector using the valuable skills he's gained. And let's apply the following factors:

- High-three average salary: $40,000
- Length of service: 30 years
- Age: 56 (minimum retirement age)

| | **Current Salary** | | **Retirement Income + Second Career** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Annually** | **Monthly** | **Annually** | **Monthly** |
| Current Federal Salary | 42,000 | 3,500 | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FERS Retirement | | | 12,000 | 1,000 |
| Insurance | -3,000 | -250 | -3,000 | -250 |
| TSP Contributions | -2,100 | -175 | | |
| Income Taxes | -7,380 | -615 | -1,800 | -281 |
| FERS Retirement | -2,940 | -245 | | |
| Contributions and the FICA Tax | | | | |
| Medicare Tax | -609 | -50 | | |
| FERS Supplement | | | ~~7,200~~ Earned income will offset supplment | ~~+600~~ |
| TSP Income | TSP will continue to accrue interest until full retirement. | | | |
| Net Income | **25,971** | **2,164** | **7,200** | **600** |
| New Salary | | | 30,000 | 2,500 |
| 401k Contributions | | | 4,500 | 375 |
| Income Taxes | | | 5,100 | 425 |
| Social Security Taxes | | | 2,295 | 191 |
| Net Income from Second Career | | | 18,105 | 1,508 |
| Total Net Income while employed | **25,971** | **2,164** | **25,305** | **2,108** |

Under FERS, Daniel's basic retirement benefit would increase by only 1 percent per year by staying in federal service, and there would be no inflation adjustment until after he turned 62 (unless he's in a special group, such as law enforcement officers or firefighters). He would be able to accumulate additional retirement savings (hopefully with matching contributions from his new employer) and Social Security benefits, whether he continued in his federal career or chose a private sector job. He would be able to save a little more in his 401(k) plan for his future retirement than he had saved in his TSP while working for the government since he would be able to begin receiving his FERS basic benefit while he also was earning his salary.

Daniel also would have the benefit of maintaining his federal health insurance upon retirement, so he wouldn't need health benefits in his second career.

### Social Security Considerations

When I wrote about these kinds of comparisons before, one reader responded, "I believe you made a mistake. Under FERS, the Social Security supplement is reduced if the retiree earns above a threshold amount. This has to been taken into account when calculating the benefit of working after retirement."

Another commented, "We were told in a retirement seminar that you can retire and get another job but you can't make more than $12,000 a year or you will lose the Social Security bridge payment that goes with the FERS retirement plan."

Here's an explanation: The FERS basic benefit is payable regardless of whether the retiree is entitled to receive the supplement or not. The supplement is considered an extra temporary payment meant to "bridge" the time between retirement under FERS and qualifying for Social Security retirement.

I didn't consider the supplement in my analysis, since as both of these readers have pointed out, the supplement is not fully payable unless the individual is no longer working (or at least they have earnings below $12,960 per year, which is the 2007 limit that applies before the supplement begins getting reduced). I included the supplement in the chart above, but have crossed out the amount since the earned income would have eliminated this benefit.
Another reader wrote, "I am thinking of retiring, but am a bit confused as to what my retirement would be. I have 23 years of service, so I am under FERS. Based on my birth year, I am eligible for retirement when I reach 60. I am currently 58, so in two more years I will have 25 years. Will I receive a pension plus TSP distribution?"

This person is entitled to a reduced FERS basic benefit today since he or she is over the FERS minimum retirement age with more than 10 years of service. If the employee waits until age 60 to retire, then he or she would be entitled to an unreduced benefit plus the FERS supplement. For a more detailed discussion of retirement eligibility, see my previous columns on this topic: Eligibility: Facts and Myths (July 6, 2007) and Retirement Estimate: The Details (May 11, 2007).

12. **MSPB Offers Coaching Tips for Supervisors**. Supervisors need to be effective coaches and provide more than just feedback to their subordinates, the Merit Systems Protection Board has said, likening coaching a work unit to coaching a sports team.

MSPB described coaching as the process of helping employees perform better by analyzing what can be changed and helping them make changes, and is forward-looking, as opposed to feedback, which tends to emphasize past performance.

Continuing the sports analogy, MSPB said a basketball coach might recall good plays and mistakes from a game as a starting point to discuss future performance, adding that a supervisor might take a similar tack.

"A good coach builds a bridge from current to improved performance by objectively identifying how employees can improve, providing candid feedback and assisting employees in planning how they can enhance their performance," MSPB said.

It identified certain situations as appropriate for coaching, such as helping employees transfer new knowledge and skills learned in training to the workplace, preparing employees for a challenging assignment, and equipping employees for career advancement.

MSPB recommended formulating answers to a few questions before a coaching session to ensure it is productive -- those include: What is your analysis of the situation? In what areas can the employee improve or change? What is the goal for the coaching session?

Supervisors should encourage employees to share their perspectives or ideas during coaching sessions, or collaborate with the employee to develop a plan for moving forward and follow through on the plan over time, said MSPB.

It added that good coaches do not try to win popularity contests by avoiding saying something an employee might find unpalatable.

13. **Tightening Labor Market Projected**. Demographic trends that show slower population growth through 2014 will result in fewer workers ages 35 to 54, representing the largest segments of the workforce, an updated version of the 2005 Partnership for Public Service (PPS) report said, foreshadowing areas where the labor market will tighten.

For example, the U.S. economic base will continue to shift from manufacturing to an economy dominated by "knowledge workers," which will in turn emphasize "soft skills" such as communication and collaboration, something PPS said is confirmed by future projections of the occupations with the largest job growth.

The report said that from 2004 through 2014, the occupations with the highest projected growth rates are in IT, math, health care, education, training and library science.

However, many of those occupations require degrees that fewer college graduates are coming away with, PPS said, citing a National Science Foundation study showing the share of bachelor's degrees awarded in the U.S. in sciences and engineering dropped from 36 percent since the 1960s to 32 percent in 2001.

Further, while more immigrants are filling U.S. jobs, nearly all federal jobs require that the applicants be citizens, which means a smaller segment of the civilian labor force the federal government can hire from, according to the report.

14. **Report Cites Some Gaps in Defense Payroll Security**. The Defense Department can provide "reasonable, but not absolute assurances" that information in its civilian payroll system is secure, according to a recent audit report.

The report by the Defense inspector general noted that because the civilian payroll systems are moving to different facilities as part of the Base Realignment and Closure process, some security lapses might be expected. But the processing centers could do more to increase the physical security of data in the Defense Civilian Pay System and to perform appropriate security checks, the auditors said.

The pay system covers 5.9 million military and civilian personnel in the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments.

"We noted during an observation of the document storage warehouse, that one of the cipher-locked doors was propped open," the report said, describing a visit to the processing facility in Pensacola, Fla., that handled the civilian payroll for Veterans Affairs employees until May of this year. "We noted electronic records, such as CDs, are stored in the locked Pensacola Payroll Office; however, [they] are not required to be locked in a cabinet."

In Indianapolis, which took over VA pay processing for Pensacola, "visitors with a valid Common Access Card, law enforcement badge or military identification can enter the [Defense Finance Accounting Service] building, and are not required to sign in and out with security," the auditors stated.

The report also noted that in Indianapolis, "terminal rooms are not located in physically secured locations within locked rooms, and data entry terminals are connected to the system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The terminals are located in shared spaces with other agencies and nonpayroll office personnel, increasing the risk of unauthorized access to sensitive payroll information."

The report found that pay facilities frequently made errors in filling out the System Authorization Access Request forms required to use the payroll system and the Personnel Interface Invalid Reports issued when data is rejected or records are suspended.

Almost a quarter of the authorization access forms the inspectors examined lacked required signatures from security managers. At the Pensacola office, when inspectors asked to examine 45 invalid report forms, 16 could not be located.

DFAS managers told the inspectors that those errors were administrative rather than systematic, and were not indicative of an overall security failure at processing facilities.

The report seemed to concur that the issues identified were more a matter of compliance than of weak procedures. "The controls . . . were suitably designed to achieve the control objectives . . . if those controls were complied with satisfactorily, and user organizations applied those aspects of internal controls contemplated in the design of the controls," the report stated.

The inspectors said they would present their recommendations in a later report. A spokesman at the Indiana facility did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday afternoon on whether the facility would adopt new security procedures.

15. **Survey Indicates Dissatisfaction with Government Management**. Nearly 90 percent of Americans believe the federal government does a poor job spending taxpayer dollars and managing its programs efficiently, according to a new online survey.

The results of the "America Inc." survey, conducted in August by Primavera Systems, a software firm based in Bala Cynwyd, Pa., and O'Keefe & Co., a marketing and communications firm based in Alexandria, Va., also indicate a difference between the public's and federal managers' perceptions of the government's performance.

The survey asked 677 members of the public about the government's overall management efficiency and steps for improvement. The survey posed a number of more narrowly focused questions to 151 federal managers from across government and throughout the country. The public section had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percent while the federal manager component had a margin of plus or minus 8 percent.

By and large, the public gave government failing grades for management efficiency and fiscal responsibility. The questionnaire asked if they were satisfied with government's management practices and spending habits. Eighty-nine percent offered a grade of C, D or F.

Among those expressing the least satisfaction with performance were retirees, citizens with at least a high school diploma and those who identified themselves as politically independent.

And, it appears Americans are even less satisfied with oversight of federal contractors. Ninety-two percent of those surveyed said they "do not believe or are unsure if the federal government appropriately manages and gets the best value out of private-sector contractors."

Respondents said that to change this perception, the government should hold contractors more accountable for successes or failures, better explain how contracts are awarded and require contractors to deliver clear and consistent progress reports.

Meanwhile, roughly two-thirds said they are confused about how the government spends its money. A majority said they would like to see greater transparency, more accountability and standardized management practices to compare efficiency among agencies.

Part of the problem may stem from a lack of understanding of the President's Management Agenda. Just 10 percent of respondents said they understood the administration's directive to improve management efficiency through a traffic light-style score card that grades agencies in five main performance categories.

The Office of Management and Budget, which administers the management agenda, did not return a call for comment.

Those working inside the government had a slightly different take on the efficiency of federal management systems. Eighty percent of federal managers surveyed said their system as a whole met or exceeded basic requirements while more than 60 percent said their agency did not need program management reform.

But when the questions focused on specific objectives and successes, the results were far less rosy. Nearly 70 percent of federal managers said that only one in five projects are completed on time and on budget, while 75 percent said their agency lacks a standardized project management system.

"As a whole, everything seems OK, but the devil is in the details," said Margo Visitacion, an industry marketing manager for Primavera Systems. "When you drill down, you can see where there might be some challenges."

On a personal level, federal managers don't appear to be particularly happy with their workplace environment. More than 70 percent reported that their agency does an inadequate job recognizing their accomplishments while 60 percent said they spend more than half their day working on projects without measurable goals.

The survey indicated that many of the problems may stem from an outdated and inefficient management system.

One out of four federal managers said they cannot easily access a complete and current database of agency-wide investments. Only 15 percent said they have regular access to data needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the Federal Information Management Security Act or the 1996 Clinger-Cohen Act.

To rectify their grievances, more than half of the surveyed managers suggested that their agency enact a standardized project management system; 42 percent wanted to move away from a spreadsheet management approach; and 40 percent said they believed agencies should deploy standardized systems for reporting and tracking project updates and changes.
The survey concluded that federal managers should view these results as an opportunity to develop a standardized and more effective management infrastructure.

"But you have to eat the elephant one bite at a time," Visitacion said. "So, [federal managers] can start by developing consistent practices that will help them manage programs one by one."

16. **The Bigger Picture.** The next several snippets address retirement and financial planning issues. As such, any questions you may have on these topics should be brought to the attention of a Financial Analyst, Investment Counselor, an Attorney, etc. We strive to bring you the latest information; however, the expertise to entertain questions in this arena is not available at the CPAC.

Articles excerpted from the Retirement and Financial Planning Report.

**Family Ties**

Many people go into a second or third marriage with children from a previous marriage. This can create an estate planning problem. How can you provide for your new spouse, if he or she is widowed, and also leave an inheritance for your children?

One solution is to include a qualified terminable interest property (QTIP) trust in your estate plan. The assets you leave to the trust can provide your surviving spouse with lifetime income. Any assets remaining in the trust at your survivor's death will pass to beneficiaries you name, who can be your children from a previous marriage.

With a QTIP trust, you specify that no one other than your surviving spouse can receive income or distributions of principal as long as that survivor is alive. If so, the assets you leave to a QTIP trust can escape estate tax at your death. Instead, they will be included in your survivor's taxable estate.

**Creditor Check**

If you are concerned that your assets might be exposed to creditors, safe places include:

Retirement plans. Federal law protects money in employer-sponsored retirement plans from creditors. Also, a combination of federal and state law generally shelters money held in an IRA.

Trusts. Some trusts are irrevocable, meaning that they cannot be canceled or changed without the consent of the trust beneficiary.
Assets you transfer into such trusts generally are out of your reach, so they may be out of the reach of your creditors.

Some states and foreign locations have trust rules that make it especially difficult for creditors to collect on their claims.
Despite the barriers you create for creditors, assets may be distributed to trust beneficiaries such as your spouse and other family members.

Life insurance. Some states protect life insurance policies from creditors. With some types of life insurance, you can do your investing inside the policy, tax-free. Eventually, you may be able to tap the investment account for spending money.

**Multiple Choice**

If you and your siblings join forces to support an elderly parent, none of you may be able to claim a dependency exemption. That would be true if no one sibling provides over 50 percent of the parent's support.

In such situations, you and your siblings can agree to file Form 2120, a Multiple Support Declaration, on your tax return. Each signer must contribute at least 10 percent of the parent's support for the year, and the total must exceed 50 percent. In addition, the parent's income can't exceed the dependency exemption amount: $3,200 in 2005.

Assuming those conditions are met, the siblings can agree that one brother or sister will take the dependency exemption in a given year, and take a tax deduction. The next year, another sibling may claim it, by agreement. However, a sibling with income over $220,000 should not be included in the rotation because he or she will get little or no tax benefit, because of a phaseout of the dependency deduction.

**IRA Insights**

An inherited IRA will pass to beneficiaries under the terms of the contract the account owner has signed with the IRA custodian. Such a contract typically overrides anything spelled out in a will or a trust. Thus, a simple mistake on this document can ruin your entire estate plan.

What's more, IRA custodians generally are governed by state law, in terms of the contracts into which they can enter. That's especially true with banks and credit unions, which act as IRA custodians for millions of Americans.

If you plan on opening an IRA with your local bank, for example, remember that you'll be dealing with bank personnel. The person opening your account might be a new employee, one who was working at a retailer just a few weeks earlier. Therefore, although you can hope for the best, you must realize you may be working with someone who literally doesn't know a primary from a contingent beneficiary.

The better prepared you are, the more likely you'll wind up with a satisfactory arrangement. Know exactly how you'd like your IRA to be distributed, at your death.

**Home Sweet Tax Shelter**

Homeowners generally can deduct the interest they pay on their mortgages-- but that's not the only tax benefit available if you own a home.

* Real estate property taxes are usually deductible.

* Anyone who builds a home can deduct the sales tax paid on homebuilding materials. That amount can be added to the sales tax number from the IRS table, if you choose to deduct state sales tax rather than state income tax.

* Frequently, homebuyers pay "points"--extra charges--at closing in order to obtain a mortgage. They might be called discount points, loan discounts, loan origination fees, or maximum loan charges. Because points are usually paid in return for a lower interest rate, they're really prepaid interest so they are generally tax-deductible.

* Points paid during refinancing must be deducted over the life of the loan. For a thirty-year loan, you get to deduct 1/30 of that amount each year.

However, if you do a "cash out" refinance and use some of the funds to improve your primary residence, a portion of the points are deductible in the year you paid them. For example, if you obtained a $200,000 loan via refinancing and $50,000 was used for home improvement, then one-fourth of the points are deductible in the year you obtained the loan.

17. **Launch of NAF Lunch and Learn Sessions**. Soon to be conducted on a monthly basis, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center NAF staff will administer a Lunch and Learn Program for the installation's NAF managers and supervisors. Topics identified for discussion include, but are not limited to, staffing, pay administration, labor issues governed by the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA), leave administration, and classification. If you wish to request additional discussion topics, you may do so. The point of contact for this Program is Ms. Debra Burns, 545-2833. Location announcements will proceed each session.

18. **CSRS Retirees to Get 2.3 Percent Pension Increase in 2008**. Retirees in the Civil Service Retirement System will receive a 2.3 percent boost to their pension checks in 2008.

The government unveiled next year's cost-of-living allowance Wednesday. It is based on the change in the Labor Department's Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners from the third quarter of one year to the same quarter of the next.

The 2.3 percent boost is smaller than the 3.3 percent increase for 2007. It also falls below the 2006 increase of 4.1 percent, which was the highest since 1991. The COLA will not be the same for retirees in the newer Federal Employees Retirement System, who will receive a 2 percent adjustment. FERS retirees also receive Social Security benefits, which are calculated by the change in the CPI (2.3 percent).

FERS retirees only get the cost-of-living allowance if they are at least 62 years old.

CSRS annuitants must have been retired one full year to receive the full COLA. If they do not meet that threshold, they receive prorated annuities, amounting to one-twelfth of the applicable increase for each month they've received their pension.

Jill Crissman, a spokeswoman for the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, said Wednesday that the annual COLA is essential to ensuring the income security of federal annuitants. "This year's COLA -- the smallest in four years -- is moderate despite retirees experiencing significant rises in food prices and medical costs," she said.

Federal retirees will receive their first checks reflecting the increase in January 2008.

The 2.3 percent figure does not apply to active federal employees, who receive a pay hike determined by Congress and approved by the president. Lawmakers still are considering a 3.5 percent raise, 0.5 percent above the president's fiscal 2008 budget request.

If civilians get a 3.5 percent raise, the Federal Salary Council recommended it be allocated between an across-the-board boost of at least 2.5 percent and a 1 percent locality pay hike. With a 3 percent raise, the breakdown would be 2.5 percent and 0.5 percent. The Office of Personnel Management has projected locality pay rates based on either scenario.

19. **OPM Changes Policy on Credit for Part-Time, Workers' Comp Service**. This information is provided by the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE).

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is changing the way it credits service for employees on workers' compensation who work part time but have full-time appointments. These are employees who were given full-time appointments, but as a result of a work-related injury covered by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) are able to work only part of a day and use leave without pay for part of the day.

The change came about as a result of a case brought by a retiree before the Merit Systems Protection Board. In *Hatch v. Office of Personnel Management*, the Board ruled that the retiree should have been treated as a full-time employee for the period of time he worked four hours per day and received OWCP benefits for the other four hours while in a leave-without-pay status.

Prior to the Hatch decision, OPM had interpreted the retirement laws and regulations to mean that employees in these cases were not entitled to full-time credit for time worked when they worked four hours, for example, and were paid for the additional four hours in their full-time schedule by OWCP. This interpretation could have severe consequences in computing the high three years average salary used in the annuity computation if it included only half-time pay for the position of record. It could also have led to erroneous part-time computations when the annuity should have been computed as full-time.

Employees with full-time appointments and in receipt of OWCP benefits, who work part of the day and are on approved leave without pay for part of the day, will now be given full-time credit. However, if an employee is not under a full-time appointment (e.g. part-time flexible or limited tour), the usual part-time rules apply. The position of record is used. If the employee is employed at a lower grade than before the injury, even if he is also receiving OWCP, the lower grade is the position of record, and the salary of the lower grade is used in the annuity computation. The decision also does not apply to re-employed annuitants.

It is not possible for OPM to identify every annuitant who fits the Hatch profile with part-time service who would qualify. Federal agencies have been asked to review their payroll files for pending retirement cases. If you believe your retirement computation was affected, you should contact OPM at 1-888-767-6738; in DC, 202-606-0500.

20. **Human Resources (HR) for Supervisors**. The HR for Supervisors Course is highly recommended for all Department of Army civilian (DAC) and military supervisors of appropriated fund (APF) civilian employees who supervise at least 3 appropriated fund DAC employees. The course is 40 hours long and is intended to help the supervisor in performing his/her HR management duties. In addition to teaching the participants about HR regulations and processes, the course introduces them to the automated HR tools. Completion of this course

can enhance the supervisor's confidence and performance. The course includes the following modules:

- Overview of army CHR (includes coverage of Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices)
- Staffing
- Position Classification (includes an introduction to CHR automated tools such as CPOL, ART, Gatekeeper and FASCLASS)
- Human Resource Development
- Management Employee Relations
- Labor Relations
- Equal Employment Opportunity

The course includes lectures, class discussion and exercises. Additionally, there is a pre and post test administered at the beginning and end of the course. The course does not address supervision of non-appropriated fund (NAF) or contractor employees. The course dates for FY 08 are highlighted below. Each class will be conducted from 0800 to 1630 in building #6, classroom #225. Course registration information will be disseminated not less than 3 weeks from course start date.

**DATE**

3 -7 December 2007
3 -7 March 2008
2 – 6 June 2008
15 – 19 Sep 2008

21. **RPA and ART Workshop**. The Fort Benning CPAC HR specialists are available to conduct RPA and ART desk-side walkthroughs and/or workshops to assist managers/supervisors and new DCPDS account holders with accessing and using DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating Gatekeeper Checklists, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing SF 50s. Training can be accomplished via individualized sessions or activity specific workshops upon request. If you desire training of this nature, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange for scheduling.

22. **Job Aids Available on the Web**. Lotus ScreenCams (how-to-movies) are available to assist DCPDS users with DCPDS, Army Regional Tools (ART), Oracle 11i and other automation tools. ScreenCam movies ART Logon, Ghostview, Gatekeeper, Inbox Default, Initiating an RPA, Logging On, Navigator,

RPA Overview and RPA Routing are available on the web at: http://www.chra.army.mil/. Click on HR Toolkit and then click on the name of the movie to download or play it. Managers/supervisors and administrative personnel responsible for initiating RPAs are encouraged to review this site and check out these new tools. ART Users Guide has been updated and provides descriptions of and instructions for using tools available in ART, including such tools as Employee Data, Inbox Statistics (timeliness and status information about personnel actions), Organization Structure (information about positions in various organizational elements), and many more tools. It is intended for use by managers, resource management officials, administrative officers, and commanders as well as CPAC and CPOC staff members. There is both an on-line and downloadable Word version (suitable for printing).

In addition, to the ART Users Guide, there is a Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Desk Guide which provides how-to information about tasks and functions that end users might need to perform in DCPDS, such as initiating a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) and creating a Gatekeeper Checklist. The ART Users Guide and the Desk Guide can be accessed from the CHRA web page at: http://www.chra.army.mil/, by clicking on HR Toolkit. In addition to these tools the Fort Benning CPAC staff is available to assist you in accessing DCPDS, ART, initiating RPAs, creating a Gatekeeper Checklist, forwarding and tracking RPAs, generating reports and printing an SF 50. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your servicing HR specialist to arrange a time so we can come to your office to help you.

23. **Emergency Contact (Next of Kin) Database**. Information on the Emergency Contact Database is located on the Civilian Personnel on Line (CPOL) website http://www.cpol.army.mil/. It can be accessed from the CPOL homepage by clicking on the link for “Emergency Guidance and Resources,” and then clicking on “Emergency Contact Database” Managers need to keep reminding their civilian employees of the need to have their current emergency contact information on file in the Emergency Contact Data Base. In addition, supervisors and managers are required to conduct periodic validations, with employees, to ensure the accuracy of their data. If assistance is needed, please contact project e-mail account at echelp@asamra.hoffman.army.mil.

24. **Fort Benning CPAC Homepage**. Please log on to our website at https://www.benning.army.mil/Cpac/Index.htm. If you have suggestions for improvement or recommendations for information to add, please contact the undersigned.

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