



CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER
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EMPLOYEE/SUPERVISOR INFORMATION BULLETIN

#11-05 DECEMBER 2005

This bulletin is designed to inform employees and supervisors of new civilian Human Resource issues and refresh their knowledge of existing policies and procedures. If you have topics you would like us to address, please contact your Human Resource Specialist.

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BRAC Decisions

Normally, employees can't carry forward more than 240 hours of annual leave from one year to the next. However, if your organization/activity has been designated for realignment or closure through the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, any excess leave that you forfeit may be restored so long as you continue to work at your current activity.

Annual leave restored under this special BRAC provision is placed in a separate leave account, and employees are not required to use their restored leave before other available annual leave. They're also exempt from the standard requirement of having to previously schedule leave before it can be restored.

The annual leave restoration provision does not apply to employees assigned to organizations or functions that are located at closing installations but designated to continue on-site operations after the activity's closure, or when such organizations or functions relocate within the commuting area of the closing activity.

Your supporting human resources specialist can tell you if you're covered by this benefit. If the restored leave is not used, it will be included in the lump sum payment of your annual leave when you're separated, or it can be used with other annual leave to keep you on the rolls past your scheduled separation date in order to qualify for retirement or [Federal Employees Health Benefits \(FEHB\)](#) coverage. If you move to a non-DoD Federal agency, or to a DoD installation that is not being closed or realigned, the restored leave is paid in a lump sum.

National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Update

DoD voluntarily agreed to delay the implementation of portions of NSPS, until February 1, 2006, at the earliest, after a number of DoD unions sued to block portions of NSPS regulations dealing with labor relations, mandatory removal offenses, and appeals. The Court has set a date of 24 January 2006 to hear the case. Until that time, the Department may go forward with the continuing collaboration process seeking union input on implementing issuances, which provide detailed guidance on the human resources system (e.g., pay banding, performance management, and job classification). These implementing issuances will not be effective before February 1, 2006.

Between now and February 1, DoD will begin or continue training the workforce on the NSPS. Employees in the first phase (Spiral 1.1) could go on NSPS performance standards as early as February. Ft Eustis organizations participating in the first phase include the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, Civilian Human Resources Agency (CPAC, CHRA) and the Watercraft Inspection Branch – Ft Eustis (TACOM).

More information about the regulations can be found at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/> .

[OPM Announces Flexible Spending Account Enhancements for Health Savings Account Enrollees](#)

The Office of Personnel Management has announced a new option under the FSAFEDS Program, a limited expense health care flexible spending account (LEX HCFSA) for federal employees enrolled in high deductible health plans with health savings accounts (HSAs).

The IRS developed regulations that do not allow general health care Flexible Spending Accounts for HSA participants, but the IRS does allow individuals to hold an HSA and a limited health care flexible spending account under certain circumstances, such as eligible dental and vision expenses.

By establishing a LEX HCFSA, federal employees can save money on taxes by using FSA dollars for dental and vision care while preserving their HSA funds for other purposes, including simply saving those funds for the future.

OPM will begin to offer LEX HCFSA for employees enrolled in high deductible health plans with a funded HSA starting with the 2006 Benefits Period.

FEHB carriers will be responsible for notifying HSA enrollees that they are eligible to enroll in a LEX HCFSA. Enrollees will have 30 days, once notified, to establish their LEX HCFSA by calling FSAFEDS. This means that enrollees will not join during the regular FSA open season held concurrently with this year's FEHB open season in November-December, but rather the enrollment date will depend on when employees call to join. Employees will still be able to fully fund their LEX HCFSA up to the \$5,000 maximum.

Following are some key points to consider:

- For the 2006 Benefit Period, OPM will offer a Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Spending Account (LEX HCFSA) for employees in FEHB high deductible health plans (HDHP) with a health savings account (HSA).
- The Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Spending Account (LEX HCFSA) will be for eligible dental and vision expenses only.
- HSA enrollees are not eligible for general health care flexible spending accounts (HCFSA), according to Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code.
- However, employees can have both an HSA and a limited purpose HCFSA.
- OPM will be implementing the dental and vision benefit programs at the end of 2006. With the LEX-HCFSA, HSA enrollees will be able to set aside pre-tax FSA dollars for dental and vision services in 2006, just as non-HSA enrollees can.
- Because the LEX-HCFSA is only for HSA enrollees, the FEHB HDHP plan will be responsible for notifying enrollees that they are eligible to enroll in a LEX HCFSA.
- OPM's FSAFEDS third party administrator (SHPS, Inc.) will administer the accounts.
- Enrollment would take place by phone after the Open season ends on December 12, 2005. Enrollees would have 30 days after being notified by their FEHB plan to establish their LEX HCFSA by calling a special SHPS phone number.
- Employees will not enroll in LEX HCFSA during the regular FSAFEDS Open Season and their effective date may not be January 1, but they will still be able to fully fund their LEX HCFSA up to \$5,000. The effective date will be prospective based on when they contact SHPS to enroll.

For more information about high deductible health plans and health savings accounts, visit <http://www.opm.gov/hsa>.

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season - Reminder

Don't forget Open Season is still in effect. You have until December 12th to make any changes. Following is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (from the OPM Website) pertaining to open season that might be helpful:

Q. When will my open season change to the new coverage be effective?

A. The effective date of the open season change is the first day of the first full pay period in January. For annuitants, this date will always be January 1. In 2006, the effective date will be January 08 for most non-postal employees.

Q. I changed my health insurance during the open season and haven't received an identification card from my new plan and it is now after the effective date of the new enrollment. What can I do?

A. If you are a current Federal employee, you should contact your Human Resources Office and ask them to find out on what date and carrier report number your enrollment information was forwarded to your new health insurance carrier. With this information, your new carrier will be able to locate your enrollment data and forward ID cards to you.

If you are an annuitant, call your plan. If they tell you they haven't gotten the paperwork yet from your retirement system, you may contact your retirement system. If you are a Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuitant or a Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuitant, contact OPM at retire@opm.gov.

Before contacting your retirement system, have your annuity information ready, for instance, your name, civil service annuity number (beginning with CSA or CSF), phone number and address, and information about your plan, such as the carrier enrollment code.

Q. My plan decided to stop participating in the FEHB Program for the next contract year. What happens if I don't make an enrollment change during the open season because I want to be covered by my spouse's private health insurance plan?

A. By regulation, an employee who does not change the enrollment during the open season is considered to have canceled the plan in which enrolled. The cancellation is effective the day before the first day of the first full pay period in January. The plan is responsible for providing coverage only through midnight of that date. If you're not sure of the date, you should contact your Human Resources Office and not the plan for the effective date.

You should be aware that you are not entitled to a 31-day extension of coverage because the action is considered a cancellation not a termination. You cannot reenroll in the FEHB Program until the next open season. Also, this is considered a break in coverage. The 5-

year requirement to continue your enrollment into retirement will begin when you reenroll in the FEHB Program. If you are within five years of retirement, you will have to work additional time to be eligible to continue your enrollment into retirement.

If you are an annuitant, be aware that special rules apply in this situation and you should contact OPM for guidance prior to the end of the open season.

Q. I made an open season enrollment change. If I have to go to the doctor after January 1, which plan do I contact?

A. Your new plan is NOT responsible for providing coverage until the effective date of your enrollment change which for most employees is the first day of the first full pay period in January. If you need medical services before the effective date of your open season enrollment, you should contact your old plan. Please remember, while the new enrollments are not effective until the first full pay period in January, the new plan benefits are effective January 1. Your old plan, therefore will provide coverage according to the new contract. These expenses will count toward your prior year's deductible.

If you are an annuitant, you should contact your new plan. Your open season enrollment is effective January 1.

Q. My HMO stopped participating in the FEHB Program and now I have no plans where I live. What can I do?

A. We are disappointed that we have not been able to offer HMO selections in all areas of the country. If Federal enrollees have HMOs in their local areas that do not currently participate in the FEHB Program, we encourage them to ask their HMOs to consider the FEHBP market for their geographic areas. New plan application packages for the FEHB Program are available at www.opm.gov/insure/carriers/index.asp. Applications are due to OPM by January 31 of each year for the next contract term.

You may not be eligible to enroll in an HMO plan but there are seven fee-for-service plans available nationwide to all Federal employees and annuitants. These plans are: Alliance, APWU Health Plan, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan, GEHA Benefit Plan, Mail Handlers, NALC, and PBP Health Plan. Please review the brochures of each of these plans to determine which plan best meets your medical needs.

[Employee Leave Transfer Program for Katrina Victims](#)

To assist employees affected by Hurricane Katrina, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) has delegated to Commanders of Major Army Commands the authority to administer an emergency leave transfer program. More detailed guidance is expected from the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, in accordance with 5 C.F.R.630.1101 and other delegating issuances from the various MACOMS within the next week or two. Until then the following general information is provided:

a. Annual Leave Contributions: Employees may donate annual leave to the program using OPM Form 1638, Request to Donate Annual Leave Under the Emergency Leave Transfer Program, available at http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/opm1638.pdf. The information requested on the form is self-explanatory except block 8, where donors

should enter "Hurricane Katrina." Donors may only donate annual leave. The maximum amount of leave an employee may donate is one-half his/her annual leave accrual. The minimum amount is 1 hour. Leave donation forms will be submitted as directed by the [United States Army Civilian Human Resources Agency \(CHRA\)](#).

b. Leave Recipients: Employees eligible to be leave recipients under the program are those who have been adversely affected or who have family members who have been adversely affected by Hurricane Katrina. Covered family members are the spouse and the spouse's parents, children (including adopted children) and their spouses, parents, brothers and sisters and their spouses, and any other person related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. Eligible employees must complete and submit OPM Form 1637, Application to Become a Leave Recipient Under the Emergency Leave Transfer Program, available at http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/opm1637.pdf. If an employee is not capable of making written application, a personal representative of the potential leave recipient may make written application on his or her behalf. In block 6, enter "Hurricane Katrina." Block 7 should contain the nature and severity of the emergency as it relates to the applicant, as well as the number of hours and the recovery efforts planned when the requested hours are used. In blocks 9 and 10, instead of the dates the emergency began and ended, enter the estimated beginning and ending dates of the requested leave hours. Approved leave recipients under the ELTP are not required to exhaust other available leave before receiving or using donated leave. First level supervisors are responsible for approval of the OPM Form 1737. The supervisor must notify the leave recipient (or his or her personal representative) of approval or disapproval within 10 working days after the date the application is received (or within 10 days after the date of this document, whichever date is later). If the supervisor disapproves the application, he/she must notify the applicant (or the personal representative who made application on behalf of the potential emergency leave recipient) he/she will discuss with the next level supervisor, and that supervisor's concurrence in the disapproval will be documented by signature in block 14. Approved forms will be submitted as directed by the United States Army Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA).

c. Leave Distribution: At the end of each pay period, DFAS will distribute donated leave by comparing available hours of donated leave to the number of hours requested by approved recipients for that pay period. If the number of donated hours is the same as, or more than, the number of requested hours, all requested hours will be distributed to approved recipients. If the total number of hours in the approved requests exceeds the numbers of donated hours, the donated hours will be allocated equally among approved recipients, except that no recipient will be allocated more leave than requested. An emergency leave recipient may receive a maximum of 240 hours of donated annual leave at any one time from an emergency leave transfer program for each disaster or emergency.

Approved recipients under the ELTP may use donated leave only for purposes related to situations involving Hurricane Katrina. Employees may use surplus donated leave to substitute retroactively for any leave without pay used during the period covered by the hurricane disaster or may use it to liquidate an indebtedness incurred for advanced annual or sick leave during the period covered by the hurricane disaster. Any unused donated leave remaining at the termination of the ELTP will be returned to the donors on a pro-rata basis when comparing the share of the hours donated by individual donors to the total number of donated hours.

Remember, additional guidance is forthcoming!

Annual Appraisals – Reminder

The rating period for employees occupying GS/WS1-8 & all WG/WL positions serviced by the Fort Eustis CPAC will end as follows:

All Fort Eustis/Story Employees (except ATSC)	-	31 December
ATSC Employees	-	31 January

All supervisors should remember the following tips when completing DA Forms 7223 and 7223-1:

- Make sure that the employee information is accurate.
- Check assigned rating chain to make sure it is accurately reflected for each employee.
- Ensure that all counseling sessions are properly documented. Key points made during the sessions should be annotated and initialed.
- When using Part III of DA Form 7223 to document a performance award, make sure the approving signature and fund cites are included. Note: A Request for Personnel Action (RPA) must be created to effect an award. Appraisal ratings must be received and entered into the DCPDS database, prior to submission of the award RPA for processing by the CPOC.
- Make sure a rating for each responsibility has been completed to include responsibilities 5 & 6 for positions with supervisory duties.
- Last, but not least, make sure that the overall success level is reflective of the responsibility ratings assigned.

If there are any questions, contact the HR Specialist assigned to your organization. For more information check out the CPAC website at: www.eustis.army.mi/cpac/tapes

Computing Dollar Amounts for Monetary Awards

The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act allows awards to be computed as a percentage of an employee's pay including the **locality rate**. Previously, awards were computed as a percentage of basic pay only. Additionally, to determine the percent of basic pay for employees under a retained rate of pay, the maximum rate (to include the locality pay) for the employee's actual grade is used, not the retained rate of pay.

Adverse Weather Procedures

It's that time of year again! Remember when installation operations are affected by adverse weather or other emergency situations, the following guidelines will apply:

DISRUPTIONS BEFORE THE WORKDAY BEGINS

The Fort Eustis Public Affairs Office will provide one of the following four announcements to the media when a disruption occurs before the workday begins. These announcements do NOT apply to individuals who are designated as "mission essential employees." Mission essential employees are expected to report for work on time unless excused by their supervisors.

Announcement	What Announcement Means
1. "Fort Eustis is OPEN ; employees are expected to report for work on time."	Employees are expected to report for work on time.
2. "Fort Eustis is OPEN under a LIBERAL LEAVE policy."	Employees who cannot report for work may take unscheduled leave for their entire scheduled workday. When a " liberal leave " policy is announced, employees should contact their supervisor to request annual leave, leave without pay, and/or the use of previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours under an alternative work schedule. Mission Essential employees are expected to report for work on time.
3. "Fort Eustis is OPEN under a DELAYED ARRIVAL/LIBERAL LEAVE policy. Employees should plan to arrive for work no more than xx hours later than they would normally arrive, and employees who cannot report for work may take unscheduled (LIBERAL) leave."	Employees should plan their commutes so that they arrive for work no more than xx hours later than they would normally arrive. Employees who arrive for work more than xx hours later than their normal arrival time will be charged annual leave or leave without pay for the additional period of absence from work. Employees who cannot report for work may take liberal leave for their entire scheduled workday. When a " liberal leave " policy is announced, employees should contact their supervisor to request annual leave, leave without pay, and/or the use of previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours under an alternative work schedule. Mission Essential employees are expected to report for work on time.

4. "Fort Eustis is **CLOSED**."

Mission Essential employees are expected to report for work on time.

DISRUPTIONS AFTER THE WORKDAY BEGINS

The following announcement will be made when a disruption occurs after the workday begins. This announcement does not apply to individuals who are designated as "mission essential." Mission essential employees are expected to remain at work unless excused by their supervisors.

Announcement	What Announcement Means
"Fort Eustis is operating under an EARLY DISMISSAL policy. Employees should be dismissed by their supervisors xx hours earlier than their normal departure time from work."	<p>Employees should be dismissed by their supervisors relative to their normal departure times from work. For example, if a 3-hour "early dismissal" policy is announced, workers who normally leave their offices at 4:00 p.m. should leave at 1:00 p.m. Employees who must leave work earlier than their official dismissal time will be charged annual leave or leave without pay from the time of their departure through the remainder of their scheduled workday.</p> <p>Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire day should be charged leave for the entire day.</p> <p>Mission essential employees are expected to remain at work.</p>
"Fort Eustis is operating under an EARLY DISMISSAL policy. Employees should be dismissed by their supervisors at xx:xx time."	<p>Employees should be dismissed by their supervisors at the time listed in the announcement. For example, if 1:00 p.m. "early dismissal" policy is announced, workers should leave at 1:00 p.m. Employees who must leave work earlier than their official dismissal time will be charged annual leave or leave without pay from the time of their departure through the remainder of their scheduled workday.</p> <p>Employees on pre-approved leave for the entire day should be charged leave for the entire day.</p> <p>Mission essential employees are expected to remain at work.</p>

For future reference this and more information on the procedures for Adverse Weather/Emergency situations is available on the CPAC Website at

www.eustis.army.mil/cpac .

[Army e-Learning Tool – SkillPort](#)

Do you know that in your spare time you can utilize a very special Army e-Learning tool called SkillPort? This resource of 2000 online courses allows you to go in and update your skills pertaining to your overall job and much, much more. So when time permits, go to the following website <http://www.chra.army.mil/tmd.htm> or follow these steps.

Go into Civilian Personnel On-Line (CPOL) Portal cited above.

Click on “Distance Learning and On-Line Courses.”

Scroll down and click on “My Smart Force – Computer Courses for Army” and select.

Read the pop-up box that appears and close it.

Click on “Login into Army e-Learning.”

Here you can register for a SkillPort course or review the course catalog. If you don’t have a login/password, read the directions to find out how to secure access.

Now you are ready to master some of the Army’s e-Learning courses.

[New Form will Enhance Diversity Data](#)

Standard Form (SF) 181, Ethnicity and Race Identification, has been revised. The revision will enable agencies to report more specific information. The revised form will become the Government-wide standard for accessions occurring on or after January 1, 2006.

Previously, Federal employees were able to select only the single race/ethnicity category with which they most closely identified. The new form asks them two questions: First, if they are Hispanic or Latino: and second regardless of their first answer, which of the five racial categories they most closely identify with (“Check as many as apply”: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; Black or African American; or White).

Allowing employees the opportunity to select any combination of the above five racial categories will let them self-identify at a greater level of detail. Breaking out the previous “Asian or Pacific Islander” category will also provide more specificity.

While old race and national origin (RNO) codes will not be terminated, all employees appointed on or after January 1, 2006, will be required to complete the revised SF181. Current employees will not be required to update their current RNO information.

[Electronic LES Through myPay - Reminder](#)

On April 29, 2005, the Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness signed the new Policy for Electronic Wage and Tax Statements and Leave and Earning Statements. As a result of this Policy, effective July 1, 2005, all military members and Department of Defense (DoD) non-bargaining unit civilian employees with a customized PIN, who access myPay are consenting to receive only an electronic W-2 and Leave and Earning Statement (LES).

All other civilian employees who use myPay may elect to receive electronic statements in lieu of a hard copy W-2 and LES through the myPay system.

To turn on the hard copy LES print, you must elect “HARD COPY” by using the turn on/off hard copy LES option on myPay. If this option is selected you will receive a hard copy

LES. You will also be able to view your LES on myPay. MyPay maintains 26 pay periods of civilians' LES's. For active duty military members, 12 months of LES's are maintained, and 3 months of LES's are provided for Reserve/National Guard members. To access, print and retain the myPay electronic W-2 and LES, you must use an accepted browser.

To access myPay go to the CPAC website at www.eustis.mil/cpac and select "Pay" from the Topics list on the left.

[Dealing With Your Employees' Personal and Health Issues](#)

From time to time, employees have personal or health problems that could affect office operations. There may be times when they need to take leave to deal with certain issues or there may be times when employees can report to work, but need a special accommodation or arrangement to perform their duties. While this can sometimes be disruptive to a manager's ability to effectively meet the mission, he or she must remember to remain sensitive to the employee's needs and to treat each situation on a case by case basis with the intent of making a fair and equitable decision for all those involved.

Usually, employees are not required to provide medical documentation for periods of less than three days. Managers should keep in mind that even though employees are entitled to take sick leave for extended absences, it must relate to a medical condition and after three days the employee is expected and may be required to provide that documentation prior to approval of leave. Managers, however, need to remember that they are not entitled to demand medical documentation that goes beyond the scope of the specific medical issue for which leave is requested. In those cases when an employee can not come to work, the manager should consider how that employee's work can be covered by others in the office or devise and implement options to alleviate the temporary loss of the employee.

In those cases where an employee has a medical condition requiring a reasonable accommodation, managers are entitled to request medical documentation. As in the case of sick leave requests, requested medical documentation can only be related to the disability claimed by the employee. Keep in mind that not every employee will be entitled to a reasonable accommodation. Managers will need to evaluate a variety of factors to decide whether or not an accommodation request should be granted.

When attempting to do the right thing, the manager must keep in mind that there is a delicate balance to maintain when considering employee request against the requirements of the mission. A balance that requires the consideration of management's needs vs the needs of the employee. You are encouraged to consult with the Equal Employment Opportunity and Civilian Human Resource Offices to determine the best ways of meeting employee needs as well as continuing to meet the mission of the organization.

[Things to Know About Leave Without Pay \(LWOP\)](#)

The following information is provided to help you understand how Leave Without Pay (LWOP) affects your benefits. **(Information does not pertain to LWOP for military service and workers compensation)**

Health Benefits (FEHB): You may terminate your enrollment when you go on LWOP **OR** continue it for up to 365 days. You can agree to pay the premiums or incur a debt that you

will be obligated to pay when you return to a pay status. If you do not elect to terminate or continue your health coverage, it will automatically terminate at the end of the last pay period in which premiums are paid from your earnings.

Life Insurance (FEGLI): Your life insurance will continue until your time in a non-pay status totals 12 months. This is at no cost to you. After 12 months, your life insurance coverage will terminate.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP): Your contributions to the TSP will stop when your pay stops and will not resume until you begin receiving pay again. FERS employees will not receive agency contributions during this time.

Retirement Credit: Time in excess of six months (per calendar year) will cause your service computation dates (SCDs) to be recalculated. This may affect your time counting towards retirement.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) & Long Term Care (LTC) Insurance: For information concerning LWOP and these benefits, contact the respective plan administrator at www.fsafeds.gov or www.ltcfeds.com.