JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER AND FORT POLK
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5341

"A Return to Prominence – One Satisfied Customer at a Time"

CPAC INFORMATION BULLETIN
NUMBER 133 **March 2011**

Time changes March 13th at 2 AM … clocks "spring" forward one hour

FLTCIP Open Season
April 4 - June 24, 2011

The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) Open Season is from April 4, 2011 through June 24, 2011, and is the first abbreviated underwriting opportunity (applicants will answer fewer health questions) for non-enrolled applicants since 2002. Please read the eligibility criteria below to see if you can apply with an abbreviated application.

Eligibility

New applicants listed below are eligible to apply with abbreviated underwriting during the FLTCIP Open Season. All employees must be actively at work.

- Federal and U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employees in positions that convey eligibility for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (whether or not they are actually enrolled in FEHB)
- Active Members of the Uniformed Services who are on active duty or full-time National Guard duty for more than 30 days
- Active Members of the Selected Reserve
- Tennessee Valley Authority employees (even though they may not be eligible for FEHB coverage)
- D.C. Government employees first employed by the D.C. Government on or before October 1, 1987
- D.C. Courts employees
- Navy Personnel Command (BUPERS) NAF employees
- Spouses of employees listed above
- Same-sex domestic partners of civilian workforce members who have submitted (either directly or through their partner) a form affirming this status to the partner's employing agency

Note: Non-enrolled annuitants and other qualified relatives can apply for coverage at any time, but must complete a full underwriting application.

Important

- Premiums are based on your age when we receive your application. If your birthday is between now and April 4, you may wish to apply for coverage now with full underwriting to take advantage of the rates at your current age.

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- Certain medical conditions, or combinations of conditions, will prevent some people from being approved for coverage. You need to apply to find out if you qualify for coverage under this program.
- Premiums are set with the expectation that they will be sufficient, but they are not guaranteed. The premium for your group (for example, those with the same plan design or set of benefits) may only increase if it is determined to be inadequate. While the group policy is in effect, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management must approve an increase in premium.

To apply now, please go to the Apply section of our website to download an application or apply online.

To apply during the FLTCIP Open Season, please visit the Apply section of the FLTCIP website between April 4 and June 24, 2011 to download or complete an online FLTCIP Open Season application. Or, use the online information request form on or after March 1, 2011 to request that a FLTCIP Open Season application be mailed to you.

FLTCIP website:
http://www.ltcfeds.com/FLTCIP_OpenSeason.html

Training

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) FOR SUPERVISORS COURSE

The HR for Supervisors course was developed by the Civilian Human Resource Agency (CHRA) to train supervisors in their responsibilities for civilian human resources management. This course is offered on a quarterly basis by the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) Staff. Not only are new supervisors encouraged to attend, but this course is an excellent refresher for all supervisors. We encourage all supervisors "new" and "not so new" to attend this course. Remember "continuous learning" is the KEY to Success!

The course covers HR management legal and regulatory requirements, HR processes, HR services and HR automated tools designed to assist supervisors in requesting and tracking personnel actions. HR for Supervisors is a 5 day course designed to teach civilian and military supervisors of appropriated fund civilian employees about their responsibilities for Civilian Human Resource (CHR) management. The course includes the following modules:

- **Overview of the Army CHR (includes coverage of Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices)**
- **Planning (NSPS, work planning, changes in mission and organizational goals impact on planning in HR)**
- **Structuring (NSPS, Position Classification, including an introduction to CHR automated tools such as CPOL, ART, Gatekeeper, FASCLASS)**
- **Acquiring (Staffing, NSPS)**
- **Developing (Human Resource Development)**
- **Sustaining (Management Employee Relations, NSPS, Appraisals)**
- **Sustaining (NSPS and Labor Relations)**
- **Federal Employees' Compensation Act**
- **Time and Attendance for Supervisors**
- **Staff Judge Advocate**
- **Safety**
- **Employee Assistance**
- **Equal Employee Opportunity**

The dates that we will be conducting the course in ***FY 11*** are as follows:

March 21-25
June 13-17
August 15-19

Supervisors who are interested in attending or those who may desire additional information should call their servicing HR Specialist at the CPAC, 531-4207/1840.

Mandatory Birth Month Training for *FY 2011* will be conducted on the dates below. Employees and their supervisors have the opportunity to choose between two dates to attend the training. Two training dates should help to alleviate the workload problems that we now face when scheduling our employees to attend this training. **Seats will be filled on a first come first serve basis.** The classroom fills up quickly. **My recommendation is that you have your employees arrive NLT 0750 to ensure that they get a seat.** Everyone is required to attend this training; mark your calendar and plan to attend. The location of the training classes will be at the new Library/Education Center, Bldg. 660, Rooms 221/223.

The training dates are:

April 5 & 6
May 3 & 4
June 7 & 8
July 12 & 13
August 2 & 3
September 13 &14

Prior to your scheduled date, you may want to check with your Organization Training Coordinator to confirm that the dates above have not been changed.

If you have any questions regarding the above training schedule, please call 531-6814.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where should I apply?

If you are still working, submit your retirement paperwork to the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C).

If you have been separated from federal service for more than 30 days, submit your application to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Who can receive an annuity?

If you meet the eligibility requirements for a retirement benefit, you are eligible to receive an annuity based on your length of service and your high-3 average salary. The information in your application is used to determine if you are applying for a disability option, a regular or early-out option, or a discontinued service annuity. It is also used to check the service listed on your payroll records.

Can I speed up my processing time?

You can help reduce delays in processing by submitting your application in advance. If you submit your paperwork early, ABC-C and payroll offices will be able to complete their action before your retirement date.

How does ABC-C process my application?

ABC-C must take the following actions to process your retirement application:

- Complete the "Agency Check List of Immediate Retirement Procedures," Standard Form 2801, Schedule D (CSRS) or 3701, Schedule D (FERS);
- Prepare and obtain your signature on the "Certified Summary of Federal Service," Standard Form 2801-1 (CSRS) or 3701-1 (FERS);
- Verify any service not fully documented in your OPF; [Note: If documentation is missing, verification may be obtained by contacting federal record centers. If ABC-C is unable to obtain verification, OPM will complete verification upon receipt of your retirement application and records. This process will cause a delay in processing of your claim.]
- Certify and transfer your coverage under the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program to OPM;
- Transfer your enrollment under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) program to OPM;
- Prepare Standard Form (SF) 50, "Notification of Personnel Action."; and
- Send all of your retirement materials to your payroll office.

Who processes my application?

Both ABC-C and payroll office in your agency and OPM are responsible for processing your annuity claim.

How do I know my claim was processed?

When OPM receives your retirement application, they will notify you and will provide a civil service claim identification number (a seven-digit number preceded by "CSA"). You must use that identification number whenever you contact OPM about your annuity.

How does OPM process my claim?

OPM takes the following steps to process your claim for retirement benefits.

- Obtains missing information from your retirement documents;
- Determines your eligibility for an annuity and continued health and life insurance coverage;
- Computes the amount of your annuity;
- Sends you materials concerning:
    - your survivor benefit election;
    - the alternative form of annuity;
    - rollover to an IRA; or,

- if you are a FERS MRA+10 retiree, your annuity commencing date.
- Authorizes your annuity payment by the Department of the Treasury; and
- Sends you an annuity statement.

When will I get my first payment?

In most cases, as soon as OPM gets all of your retirement records, they'll provide interim payments. These payments represent a portion of your final benefit and are usually made on the first business day of each month. OPM tries to provide you with income until they finish processing your application.

Are any deductions withheld from my "interim payments"?

Only Federal income tax is withheld. You may find that the Federal income taxes withheld from your first interim payment will be higher than the Federal tax withholdings from your subsequent interim payments and regular annuity. Any necessary tax withholding adjustments will be made when OPM finishes processing your application. Your health and life insurance coverage will continue while you are receiving interim pay. Withholdings for health and life insurance premiums will be withheld retroactive to the commencing date of your annuity, when OPM completes the processing of your application.

$$ PAY CORNER $$

myPay

Control Your Pay With myPay!

Click on MyPay Key above to be linked to the MyPay System

Or

Type into your browser:
https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

Contribution Allocations

Investing Your TSP Account Contributions

All new money coming into your TSP account is automatically invested in the G Fund. If you would like it to be invested differently, you can do so by requesting a contribution allocation.

Your contribution allocation tells TSP how your own contributions, your agency contributions (if you are a FERS employee), your TSP loan payments, and any transferred or rollover funds from other retirement plans should be invested when they are deposited into your TSP account. You can make a contribution allocation at any time.

***Keep the following in mind*:**

- ✓ Your contribution allocation will not affect the money that is already in your account. To manage those funds, visit Interfund Transfers.
- ✓ Your contribution allocation will remain in effect until you submit another contribution allocation request.

Making or Changing Your Contribution Allocation

There are several ways that you can make or change your contribution allocation.

❖ **Online**

Visit My Account: Contribution Allocations. You will need your account number (or user ID) and your 8-digit password.

❖ **Telephone**

Call the ThriftLine. You will need your TSP account number and your 4-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN).

❖ **Mail**

Request Form TSP-50, Investment Allocation (TSP-U-50, uniformed services), from your agency or service. Complete the Contribution Allocation section of this form and mail it to the TSP.

Form TSP-50, Investment Allocation, (TSP-U-50, uniformed services), is not available from the TSP website.

When Do Contribution Allocations Take Effect?

♦ **Online and Telephone**

Contribution allocations made on the TSP website or the ThriftLine before 12 noon Eastern time are generally processed on that business day. Requests made after 12 noon Eastern time are generally processed the next business day.

- **Mail**

A contribution allocation made by submitting a paper Form TSP-50, Investment Allocation (TSP-U-50, uniformed services), will generally take effect within 5 business days from the date the TSP receives the form.

L 2050 Fund opens — The new Lifecycle Fund, the L 2050 Fund, opened on January 31, 2011. Visit Lifecycle Funds to see how L 2050 Fund investments are allocated among the five TSP funds.

Employee Contributions — There are no longer any percentage limits on employee contributions to the TSP. TSP contributions are limited only by the restrictions imposed by the Internal Revenue Code.

Elective Deferral Limit (I.R.C. Section 402(g)) — The elective deferral limit for 2011 and 2010 is $16,500. See the Fact Sheet "Annual Limit on Elective Deferrals."

I.R.C. Section 415(c) Limit — The limit for 2011 and 2010 is $49,000.

Catch-up Contributions — The limit on catch-up contributions for 2011 is $5,500. If you are at least age 50 (or will become age 50 during the calendar year) and if you have made or will make the maximum amount of employee contributions for the calendar year (e.g., $16,500 in 2011), you may also make catch-up contributions to your TSP account. See the Fact Sheet "Catch-up Contributions."

Participant statements are on-line in Account Access on this Web site. Click on Your TSP Participant Statement for more information.

Loan interest rate for new loans is 3.000%.

Annuity interest rate index: 3.500% for annuities purchased in mARCH 2011 and 3.375% for February 2010. Click here for historical annuity interest rates.

Your account balance is updated each business day. To access your account balance on this Web site, you will need your TSP 13-character account number and your 8-character Web Password. To obtain your account balance from the ThriftLine, you will need your TSP account number and 4-digit TSP Personal Identification Number (PIN).

Civilian TSP participants who are members of the Ready Reserve — If you are a civilian TSP participant with an outstanding TSP loan and are placed in non-pay status to perform military service, make sure your agency provides the TSP with documentation to certify your status and suspend loan payments. The Internal Revenue Code allows the TSP to suspend loan payments for all participants placed in non-pay status for up to one year of non-pay. However, participants placed in non-pay status to perform military service for more than one year are authorized suspension of loan payments for the entire period of military service. For more information, see the Fact Sheet Effect of Nonpay Status on TSP Participation.

TSP RATES OF RETURN

Rates of Return were updated on March 1, 2011

(**Figures in parenthesis indicate a negative return**)

****

	G Fund	F Fund	C Fund	S Fund	I Fund
Feb 2011	**0.22%**	**0.26%**	**3.42%**	**4.52%**	**3.33%**
Last 12 Months	**2.74%**	**5.09%**	**22.55%**	**33.43%**	**20.37%**

(03/01/2010-02/28/2011)

*The G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns for the last 12 months assume unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month, and assume that earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

	L Income	L 2020	L 2030	L 2040	L 2050
Feb 2011	**0.90%**	**2.15%**	**2.6%**	**2.95%**	**3.28%**
Last 12 Months	**7.06%**	**15.00%**	**17.93%**	**20.22%**	

(03/01/2010-02/28/2011)

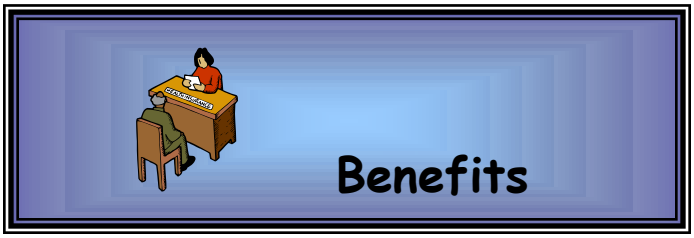
*The monthly G, F, C, S, and I fund returns represent the change in their respective share prices for the month. The changes in share prices reflect net earnings after accrued TSP administrative expenses have been deducted. The F, C, S, and I fund share prices also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The TSP is a retirement savings plan for civilian federal employees. The monthly G, F, C, S, and I Fund returns represent the actual total rates used to allocate monthly earnings to participant accounts. Allocations are usually completed by the fourth business day of the month. The returns are shown after deduction of accrued TSP administrative expenses. The F, C, S, and I Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The TSP performance history for the past 12 months can be accessed through the following link:
http://www.tsp.gov/curinfo/annuity_history.html

HOLIDAY/LIBERAL LEAVE SCHEDULE FOR FY 2011

DAY/DATE	HOLIDAY	Training/Liberal Leave Day
Monday, 11 October 10	Columbus Day	Friday, 8 Oct *
Thursday, 11 November 10	Veterans Day	Friday, 12 Nov*
Thursday, 25 November 10	Thanksgiving Day	Friday, 26 Nov *
Friday, 24 December 10	Christmas	Monday, 27 Dec*
Friday, 31 December 10	New Year's Day	Monday, 3 Jan*
Monday, 17 January 11	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.	Friday, 14 Jan*
Monday, 21 February 11	Washington's Birthday	Friday, 18 Feb*
Monday, 30 May 11	Memorial Day	Friday, 27 May*
Monday, 4 July 11	Independence Day	Friday, 1 Jul*
Monday, 5 September 11	Labor Day	Friday, 2 Sep*
*DESIGNATES TRAINING HOLIDAY FOR MEDDAC		



ATTENTION!!!! Employees Transferring to Fort Polk from another Agency or Whose Payroll Office Changes

None of the programs listed below are administered by Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C). OPM has contracted with private companies to administer these programs. What that means is that there are no data fields in Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) that allows us to 'transfer in' your FEDVIP, FLTC, and/or FSA. **It is your responsibility to contact the contracting agency for transferring over your FEDVIP, FLTC, and FSA so it continues.** Below are the phone numbers that you **must** call to ensure your FEDVIP, FLTC, and/or FSA continues:

1) If you have **DENTAL** or **VISION** coverage under FEDVIP you ***must*** contact BENEFEDS by calling 1-877-888-FEDS (1-877-888-3337). Hearing impaired employees should contact BENEFEDS by calling TTY 1-877-889-5680. The website address, if you should want further information, is www.benefeds.com.

2) If you have **Federal Long Term Care (FLTC)** you ***must*** contact the provider by calling 1-800-LTC-FEDS (1-800-582-3337). Hearing impaired employees should contact the provider by calling TTY: 1-800-843-3557. The website address, if you should want further information, is www.ltcfeds.com.

3) If you should have **Flexible Spending Account (FSA)** you ***must*** contact them by calling 1-877-372-3337. Hearing impaired employees should contact FSA by calling TTY 1-800-952-0450. The website address, if you should want further information, is www.fsafeds.com.

IMPORTANT!!!! FEGLI & FEHB Coverage of Family Members

When you have family coverage for FEGLI (Option C) and/or FEHB and your **last *eligible* family member** is no longer eligible to be covered, **it is your responsibility** to drop Option C on your FEGLI and, if you also have Self and Family coverage for FEHB, you must change to Self-Only. This change is made electronically through your ABC-C EBIS account.

Such events are:

- Divorce and you have no other *eligible* family member
- Death of last *eligible* family member
- Last *eligible* family member turns age 22 for FEGLI purposes and age 26 for FEHB purposes

In the event you have overlooked this process, you should contact ABC-C at 1-877-276-9287 (you will need your EBIS PIN) and request the change be made retroactive to the end of the payperiod in which the date occurred. If it is necessary for the change to be made retroactive, you **DO NOT** want to make the change electronically (without contacting ABC-C), because the change will be effective prospective (beginning of next payperiod) instead of retroactive. The ABC-C counselor may request copies of documents (i.e., death certificate or birth certificate) to verify that this event did actually occur.

Saint Patrick's Day
Thursday, March 17th

St. Patrick's Day is an enchanted time - a day to begin transforming winter's dreams into summer's magic.

--Adrienne Cook--

Colorectal Cancer Screening: Basic Facts

What Is Colorectal Cancer?

Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. Sometimes it is called colon cancer. The colon is the large intestine or large bowel. The rectum is the passageway that connects the colon to the anus.

It's the Second Leading Cancer Killer

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States, but it doesn't have to be. If everyone aged 50 years or older had regular screening tests, at least 60% of deaths from this cancer could be avoided. So if you are 50 or older, start getting screened now.

Who Gets Colorectal Cancer?

- Both men and women can get it.
- It is most often found in people 50 or older.
- The risk increases with age.

Are You at High Risk?

Your risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if:

- You or a close relative have had colorectal polypor colorectal cancer.
- You have inflammatory bowel disease.
- You have a genetic syndrome such as familial adenomatous polyposis (FAP) or hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer. People at high risk for colorectal cancer may need earlier or more frequent tests than other people. Talk to your doctor about when to begin screening and how often you should be tested.

Screening Saves Lives

If you're 50 or older, getting a colorectal cancer screening test could save your life. Here's how:

- Colorectal cancer usually starts from polyps in the colon or rectum. A polyp is a growth that shouldn't be there.
- Over time, some polyps can turn into cancer.
- Screening tests can find polyps, so they can be removed *before* they turn into cancer.
- Screening tests also can find colorectal cancer early. When it is found early, the chance of being cured is good.

Colorectal Cancer Can Start With No Symptoms

Precancerous polyps and early-stage colorectal cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first. This means that someone could have polyps or colorectal cancer and not know it. That is why having a screening test is so important.

What Are the Symptoms?

Some people with colorectal polyps or colorectal do have symptoms. They may include:

- Blood in or on your stool (bowel movement).
- Stomach pain, aches, or cramps that don't go away.
- Losing weight and you don't know why.

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor. These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer. However, the only way to know what is causing them is to see your doctor.

Types of Screening Tests

Several different screening tests can be used to find polyps or colorectal cancer. Each can be used alone. Sometimes they are used in combination with each other. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends colorectal cancer screening for men and women aged 50–75 using high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing (FOBT), sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy. Talk to your doctor about which test or tests are right for you. The decision to be screened after age 75 should be made on an individual basis. If you are older than 75, ask your doctor if you should be screened.

• High-Sensitivity FOBT (Stool Test)

T here are two types of FOBT: One uses the chemical guaiac to detect blood. The other—a fecal immunochemical test (FIT)—uses antibodies to detect blood in the stool. You receive a test kit from your health care provider. At home, you use a stick or brush to obtain a small amount of stool. You return the test to the doctor or a lab, where stool samples are checked for blood.

How Often: Once a year.

• Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

For this test, the doctor puts a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum. The doctor checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon.

How Often: Every five years. When done in combination with a High-Sensitivity FOBT, the FOBT should be done every three years.

• Colonoscopy

This is similar to flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the doctor uses a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. During the test, the doctor can find and remove most polyps and some cancers.

How Often: Every 10 years.

Colonoscopy also is used as a follow-up test if anything unusual is found during one of the other screening tests.

Other Screening Tests in Use or Being Studied

Although these tests are not recommended by the USPSTF, they are used in some settings and other groups may recommend them. Many insurance plans don't cover these tests, and if anything unusual is found during the test, you likely will need a follow-up colonoscopy.

• Double Contrast Barium Enema —You receive an enema with a liquid called barium, followed by an air enema. The barium and air create an outline around your colon, allowing the doctor to see the outline of your colon on an X-ray.

• Virtual Colonoscopy—Uses X-rays and computers to produce images of the entire colon. The images are displayed on the computer screen.

• Stool DNA Test—You collect an entire bowel movement and send it to a lab to be checked for cancer cells.

Will Insurance or Medicare Pay?

Many insurance plans and Medicare help pay for colorectal cancer screening tests. Check with your plan to find out which tests are covered for you. To find out about Medicare coverage, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit www.medicare.gov.

The Bottom Line

If you're 50 or older, talk with your doctor about getting screened. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/screenforlife or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). For TTY, call 1-888-232-6348.

Printed from: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In recognition of National Colorectal Cancer Screening Month, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, Health Promotion Program will be providing health awareness on **11 March 2011 from 10 AM to 1 PM at the hospital** and on **25 March 2011** from **10 AM to 1 PM at the Main Post Exchange**. Health Promotion will provide Fecal Occult Blood Testing packets with instructions to beneficiaries age 50 or older who have not completed their annual colorectal screening requirement.

BRAIN TEASER

What has a foot on each side and one in the middle?

Answer on page 12

First day of spring
Sunday, March 20th

Safety Boudreaux's Den

Lawn Mowing Safety Tips

As lawn mowing season is quickly approaching, listed below are a few safety tips that you should keep in mind as you go about your lawn-mowing chores.

1. Always make sure you have read the operating guide for your lawn mower. The better you understand how to use your lawn mower, the safer you will be.
2. Never run over anything other than grass with your mower. If there is something in the lawn that cannot be removed, such as sprinkler heads or drainage caps then make sure the blade will go over it while the engine is off first. If the blade can't, then mow around the object.
3. Always use care on inclines. Push walk-behind mowers across slopes and drive riding mowers up and down slopes unless slope is too steep.
4. Never let grass or other debris accumulate on top of your mower, especially if it's dry. If the mower gets too hot, the grass could ignite and start a fire.
5. Never run your lawn mower if you notice that it is leaking. That leak is most likely gas or oil. In either case, it can be harmful not only to you, but the grass you are mowing as well.
6. If you are using a riding mower, never let anyone else ride on the mower with you. They could fall off then you might run them over and cause serious injury/amputation.
7. Never run your lawn mower while you're on pavement. On the pavement, objects are much more likely to be thrown at very high speeds.
8. Always stay clear of a hot engine after mowing a lawn. Mufflers can reach up to 1200˚ F which is plenty hot enough to burn you.
9. Always make sure your mower is in good working condition. The lawn mower is safest when everything runs properly.
10. Never continue to run your lawn mower if it starts smoking. Smoke from your lawn mower means something is way too hot or on fire.
11. Always keep all four wheels on the ground. Tilting the mower could cause something to unexpectedly fly out from underneath.
12. Never leave a running mower unattended. You never know who or what can get caught up in your mower while you are not there.
13. Always disconnect the spark plug when you work on your mower. This will prevent the engine from accidentally starting.
14. Never leave your gas-powered lawn mower running in an enclosed area. This will cause that area to fill up with toxins that are harmful to breathe.
15. Never empty the grass-catching bag while the engine is running. Not only will the grass fly everywhere and make a mess, a rotating blade increases the chances of cutting off fingers.
16. Always set the wheel height of your mower prior to starting the engine. Making adjustments to your mower should always be done while the blade can't slice anything off.
17. Always shut off the engine before unclogging the discharge shoot. This is a good way to prevent cutting off your fingers.
18. Never use your mower for something it is not designed to do. For example, don't use your mower as a form of transportation.
19. Never modify your lawn mower to make the engine more powerful or blade rotate faster. It won't cut the lawn any better and will only make your lawn mower more dangerous.

20. Never remove a safety feature from your mower. They are there for a reason.

Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well.

~ Josh Billings ~

First day of Spring Facts

Did You Know?

If you were standing on the equator during either the vernal or autumnal equinox, you would see the sun pass directly overhead, the only two times in the year when that is true.

The two equinoxes are also the only times during the year when the sun rises due east and sets due west.

In spring, the Earth's axis is tilted toward the sun, increasing the number of daylight hours and bringing warmer weather that causes plants to bring forth new growth.

March 2011 On Cyber Patrol

A Dangerous Game of Tag

Technology is once again giving us capabilities that on one hand are really cool and on the other hand are very dangerous. Geo-tagging, or having your phone or camera imbed the location of each picture in the digital file, is yet another example of this. With easy to obtain software, many digital photographs provide the exact location via longitude and latitude information at which the photo was taken. This is a widely known threat and protections have been put in place at popular picture posting web sites. Yet, even the protections put in place by popular social media and photography sites don't provide a complete blanket of protection. Twitter and email still don't offer this protection and in some cases the protection can be circumvented by the poster.

What's the threat? Taking a photograph with any device that has geo-tagging enabled can be the same as calling in fire coordinates to your own position or letting people know that your house is a prime target for break-in. Letting bad guys, from foreign combatants to domestic creeps, know your exact location at any given time is an obvious risk. Yet people, even people who keep up on technology, have been tracked for one simple reason. They forgot to turn the function off on their digital device.

When the On Cyber Patrol Editorial Team prepared to write a piece on Geo-tagging, it became obvious that the subject has already been thoroughly and extensively covered in the mainstream, internet, and electronic media. Policies, procedures and presentations on the topic have been developed and distributed throughout DoD and Army. There's not much else to say on the subject that hasn't been said before. So we won't beat that dead horse. Instead, we'll take our Information Assurance frustrations out on another dead equine: Personal Responsibility.

It is up to the individual users to turn off the geo-tagging functionality on their digital devices. It only takes a few thumb-strokes. It's less effort than Tweeting about what you had for breakfast. It's up to you or in other words: Tag! You're it.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Religious Discrimination

Religious discrimination involves treating a person (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because of his or her religious beliefs. The law protects not only people who belong to traditional, organized religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, but also others who have sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs. Religious discrimination can also involve treating someone differently because that person is married to (or associated with) an individual of a particular religion or because of his or her connection with a religious organization or group.

The law forbids discrimination when it comes to any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoff, training, fringe benefits, and any other term or condition of employment. It is illegal to harass a person because of his or her religion.

Harassment can include, for example, offensive remarks about a person's religious beliefs or practices. Although the law doesn't prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that aren't very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted). The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.

Religious Discrimination & Reasonable Accommodation

The law requires an employer to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs or practices, unless doing so would cause more than a minimal burden on the operations of the employer's business. This means an employer may be required to make reasonable adjustments to the work environment that will allow an employee to practice his or her religion. Examples of some common religious accommodations include flexible scheduling, voluntary shift substitutions or swaps, job reassignments, and modifications to workplace policies or practices.

Accommodation applies not only to schedule changes or leave for religious observances, but also to such things as dress or grooming practices that an employee has for religious reasons. These might include wearing particular head coverings or other religious dress (such as a Jewish yarmulke or a Muslim headscarf), or wearing certain hairstyles or facial hair (such as Rastafarian dreadlocks or Sikh uncut hair and beard). It also includes an employee's observance of a religious prohibition against wearing certain garments (such as pants or miniskirts).

When an employee or applicant needs a dress or grooming accommodation for religious reasons, he should notify the employer that he needs such an accommodation for religious reasons. If the employer reasonably needs more information, the employer and the employee should engage in an interactive process to discuss the request. If it would not pose an undue hardship, the employer must grant the accommodation.

An employer does not have to accommodate an employee's religious beliefs or practices if doing so would cause undue hardship to the employer. An accommodation may cause undue hardship if it is costly, compromises workplace safety, decreases workplace efficiency, infringes on the rights of other employees, or requires other employees to do more than their share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work. When identifying costs, the supervisor must consider the resources of the Army (agency), not the installation. Finally, an employee cannot be forced to participate (or not participate) in a religious activity as a condition of employment.

This article was taken from eeoc.gov. For more information, please call the EEO office at 337-531-1804/1802.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Corner

Bath salts apparently aren't being used just to make bath time more fun anymore.

Authorities are interested in reports that people are buying a version of the products marketed as "concentrated bath salts" not so much for their added relaxation, but instead to get high.

The fine powdered substance is sold in 500-milligram containers and is available locally for $29.99. It is sold behind the counter at some gas stations and head shops around Southeast Texas. It comes in screw-top jars about an inch high and an inch around.

Law enforcement officials and medical experts aren't sure exactly what's in the bath salts and the packages don't list any ingredients.

Jason Glenn, an assistant professor at the Center for Addiction Research at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, said bath salts are popular in pro-marijuana circles. Many pro-marijuana websites advertise legal smoking blends of tobacco as well as bath salts, he said. Some of the products are said to give off a tranquil, calming feeling similar to marijuana, he added.....

According to the United Kingdom's Guardian newspaper, St. George's University in London analyzed a popular bath salt product, Ivory Wave, in 2009. The medical school hospital found it contained two ingredients that might imitate the effects of cocaine - methylene dioxy pyrrolidin ketone, or MDPV, and lidocaine. MDPV is a powerful stimulant and lidocaine is a numbing agent, according to the newspaper.....

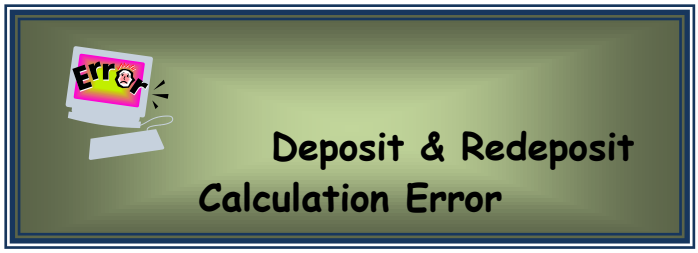
The group found that people commonly ingest the MDPV-containing bath salts orally, rectally, by snorting, smoking or with an IV. The chemical is supposed to have stimulant-type effects and cause increased energy, sociability, mental stimulation or increased concentration and limited, if any, euphoria.

As people come down from their high, they could experience fatigue, nausea, muscle twitches, kidney pain, numbness or problems breathing, the Psychonaut WebMapping Research Group found. The substance also can cause severe anxiety attacks, suicidal thoughts and confusion, according to the group.

They had an article about this on Daily Mail UK. Apparently it is fairly common in Europe. And people are dying from it.

BRAIN TEASER ANSWER

A yardstick.



Retirement System Service Credit – Deposit & Redeposit Calculation Error

Service Credit is a program that allows employees to make payments into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) for certain periods of service during which they either did not contribute to the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (i.e., deposit service), or for which they received a refund of their retirement contributions (i.e., redeposit service). In statutorily defined circumstances, an employee may make service credit deposits or redeposits, which include both principal and interest, to maximize the benefits he or she will receive upon retirement.

In July 2008, it was discovered that the system in place was not correctly calculating the amount of interest employees had to pay as part of their service credit deposits on a number of accounts. Interest on pre-October 1, 1982, deposits and redeposits under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) is fixed at an annual rate of 3 percent and accrues daily. Interest on post October 1, 1982, deposits and redeposits under both CSRS and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) is variable and accrues annually. In some cases, interest was applied at the variable interest rates instead of the fixed 3 percent rate and in other cases the reverse happened. There were also some instances where interest was not charged at all for the year. Consequently, interest was either understated or overstated on many accounts.

So major aspects of the system were shut down to begin backup and contingency efforts, including providing manual calculations of deposit amounts upon request. Since the system was down so long, OPM also needed to reconcile all the affected accounts, in essence turning back the clock and reapplying payments and recomputing the interest correctly, to bring the accounts current.

OPM is finalizing this effort now and are resuming normal operations. Accordingly, they are sending out letters and current statements to affected account holders, including anyone who had made a payment and did not get a receipt. Due to the length of time it took to adjust the system, OPM is providing those account holders with a one-time six

month grace period in which to pay off their current balance without accruing additional interest. Because of the grace period, additional interest will not be assessed on active accounts from January 1, 2011 through June 30, 2011. If the account is not paid off during the grace period, interest will be charged on the balance that is effective on July 1, 2011.

ANTITERRORISM

ANTITERRORISM

- **Combines security related programs**
- **Defensive measures to reduce vulnerability**
- **Is a collective effort of many activities**

IT'S EVERYONES' RESPONSIBILITY!!!

To report suspicious activities, contact the Antiterrorism Hotline at 337-531-6584. For all emergencies, contact the Military Police at 337-531-COPS/2677 or dial 911.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Site Visit

DATE: Thursday, 31 March 2011
TIME: 1000 –1200 hrs
Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC)
2271 Louisiana Avenue, BLDG 3304
(directly across the street from Burger King)

Representative will be available to discuss your insurance needs/questions. No appointment needed.
NOTE: This is not Open Season!

ARTICLES FOR BULLETIN

If you have any suggestions on topics or issues that you would like addressed in future bulletins, please call **531-1847.**

Suggestions will be reviewed and addressed if at all possible.

// original signed //
DONALD R. MALLET
Director, Civilian Personnel Advisory Center