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CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ADVISORY CENTER
FORT POLK, LOUISIANA 71459-5341**



“A Return to Prominence – One Satisfied Customer at a Time”

**CPAC INFORMATION BULLETIN
NUMBER 110**

April 2009

**DO YOUR PART TO KEEP OUR EARTH
CLEAN!
EARTH DAY – APRIL 22ND**



NSPS INFORMATION UPDATE

**DoD and OPM Announce Review of National
Security Personnel System**

The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have announced that they will undertake a review of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). The review will include a thorough examination of all NSPS policies, regulations, and practices. DoD will delay any further conversions of organizations into NSPS until at least October 2009, pending the outcome of this review.

The following are some questions and answers regarding the review.

Q. Why is the Department of Defense (DoD) planning to conduct a review of NSPS?

A. With over 205,000 employees in the system, and with new leadership under a new administration, it is appropriate and important for senior leadership to conduct a review of the program, its underlying policies, and how it

operates. The Department expects the review to result in findings and recommendations that will assist leadership in determining the future of NSPS.

Q. Who will conduct the review? Has the framework and timeline for the comprehensive review been established?

A. DoD and OPM leadership are engaged in discussions with key personnel in the administration to determine the overall framework, scope, and timelines of the review. It is expected to take several months for a review team to gather necessary information and data, reach out to stakeholders, and develop recommendations for leadership consideration.

Q. Will the Department continue to convert employees to NSPS during the review?

A. DoD will delay any further conversions of organizations to NSPS pending the outcome of this review. The Department was planning on converting approximately 2,000 employees this spring, but those conversions have been delayed pending the outcome of this program review. Those organizations and employees have been notified, and are adjusting their plans accordingly.

Q. What does the review mean for organizations and employees already under NSPS?

A. Organizations and employees currently operating under NSPS regulations, policies and procedures will continue to follow those rules. They will continue to hire, assign, promote, reward and carry out other personnel actions necessary to accomplish their missions.

Q. Can employees and interested applicants still apply for NSPS positions during the comprehensive review?

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A. Yes. Employees will continue to be hired into NSPS positions in organizations already covered by NSPS. The program review will not affect the ability of NSPS organizations to conduct normal day-to-day personnel actions.

Q. I am currently under NSPS and my interim review is coming up. Does my supervisor still have to conduct this review?

A. Yes. Rating officials under NSPS must continue to carry out their responsibilities under the NSPS performance management process, including conducting interim reviews. Employees are encouraged to provide a self assessment in preparation for the interim review. Rating officials are also reminded to carry out other performance management responsibilities, including:

- Ensuring that employees are on approved performance plans
- Engaging in ongoing performance discussions
- Completing closeout assessments if the rating official changes during the performance cycle
- Completing early annual appraisals for employees who leave before the end of the performance cycle)
- Completing annual appraisals



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 09 are as follows:

13-17 April 2009
17-21 August 2009

Supervisors who are interested in attending or those who may desire additional information should call their servicing HR Specialist at the CPAC, 531-4020/4207.



Mandatory Birth Month Training for 2009 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, Room 223.

The training dates are:

*22 & 23 April
19 & 20 May
23 & 24 June
14 & 15 July
25 & 26 August
15 & 16 September
20 & 21 October
17 & 18 November
09 & 10 December*

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 contact Larry Moore at 531-4118.



*Heaven forbid if something should happen to you while you are at work! What if you were to fall down the stairs becoming unconscious, get hit by a car, or, maybe, have a heart attack? Who would we get in touch with? To assist us in contacting your next of kin as soon as possible, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you register and complete all information in our Emergency Contact Database...your life may depend on it!*

The Army developed an automated emergency contact data base system as a result of the lessons learned from the September 11th terrorist attacks. All Appropriated and Non-Appropriated fund civilian employees are reminded and strongly encouraged to enter their emergency contact information.

The emergency data you provide will be stored and made available to only those authorized individuals who will be directly involved in the actual process of notifying your emergency contact(s) and processing or assisting with the

necessary documents in the event of injury or death of an employee.

You can now enter this information through MyBiz. Access MyBiz by clicking the link [MyBiz \(CAC required\)](#).

After you've logged into My Biz, click on Update My Information, Emergency Contact Information Tab and follow instruction to Update, Remove or Add data.

If you have previously entered your information through this Emergency Contact link, your data will have been transferred into your My Biz record.

If you have any questions, contact your servicing CPAC Human Resources Specialist.

As a practical tip, if the primary emergency contact listed is not an immediate relative, it is important for you to inform your emergency contacts in advance about how to locate your next of kin and/or dependents.

Your cooperation is needed to enable us to promptly notify the emergency contact of your choosing. Failure to provide this information could result in delay in the notification to your next of kin in the event of an emergency or death. You'll be asked to review your emergency contact data on an annual basis and help keep the information current.

If you do not have access to a personal computer or the internet, you should contact your first line supervisor.

You should also consider updating designation of beneficiary forms if you believe the information is out of date.

\$\$ PAY CORNER \$\$



Control Your Pay With myPay!

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

Or

Type into your browser:

<https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>



APRIL 12TH IS EASTER SUNDAY!

'T WAS THE DAY BEFORE EASTER

'Twas the day before Easter..and all through the woods,

The bunnies were busy packing their goods.
The eggs were all colored so pretty and bright,
All things were "go" for the big, special night.

The baskets were waiting, all decorated with care,
In hopes that the Bunny soon would be there.
My little brother Sam was asleep in his bed,
While visions of Easter eggs rolled round his head.

And I in my pajamas with the cat on my lap,
I had just settled down for a quick little nap.
When outside the window I heard a great noise,
I sprang from my chair and jumped over some toys.

As quick as a flash to the window I flew,
I pulled up the shade and, OH, what a view.
The moon on the meadow cast a bright golden glow
And the wind blew the flowers to and then fro.

Then all of a sudden from out of nowhere,
Came some lively bunnies, hopping here, hopping there!

Leading the group with ears long and funny
Was a plump, all-white rabbit...
That's right...the EASTER BUNNY!

The bunnies hopped past, one, two, three, four,
The rabbit called out and then there were more.
"Come, Peter!, Come, Flopsy!, Come, Benny!, Come,
Joe!

Now hop along! Hop along! Hop along! GO!"

So up on each doorstep the bunnies did hop,
With baskets of eggs. (Let's hope they don't drop)!

Just at that moment, on the porch down below,
Came the stomping of feet
'Twas the rabbit, I know!

As I stepped from my window I heard a loud sound.
Through the door came the rabbit with a leap and a bound.

He was furry and soft from his head to his feet.
To see him so close was really quite neat.

He was surrounded by eggs that had been carefully dyed.

Easter eggs galore he soon would hide.

His eyes were all twinkles,

His nose was so pink,

And I can't be too sure, but I think he did wink.

He had a kind face and a big fluffy tail
That bobbed up and down like a boat with a sail.
A twitch of his nose and a flick of his ear
Was his way of saying, "You've nothing to fear."

He uttered no sound as he hopped all about
Hiding the eggs and leaving no doubt,
That the Easter bunny had come like he does every
year...

Bringing baskets of happiness to children so dear.

from John Paul of Homespun



TSP CORNER

WHAT'S NEW?

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 2009 is \$16,500. The limit for 2008 was \$15,500. See the Fact Sheet "[Annual Limit on Elective Deferrals.](#)"

I.R.C. Section 415(c) Limit — The limit for 2009 is \$49,000. The limit for 2008 was \$46,000.

Catch-up Contributions — The limit on catch-up contributions for 2009 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 2009), 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 2.500%.

Annuity interest rate index: 2.750% for annuities purchased in March 2009 and 3.125% for April 2009. [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 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 April 1, 2009

(Figures in parenthesis indicate a negative return)

	G Fund	F Fund	C Fund	S Fund	I Fund
Mar 2009	0.24%	1.38%	8.81%	8.64%	7.20%
Last 12 Months	3.49%%	3.25%	(38.01%)	(38.97%)	(46.40%)

(04/01/2008-03/31/2009)

*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 2040	L 2030	L 2020	L 2010	L Income
Mar 2009	7.08%	6.30%	5.35%	2.82%	2.06%
Last 12 Months	(33.16%)	(28.96%)	(24.04%)	(10.74%)	(5.80%)

(04/01/2008-03/31/2009)

*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

Who is entitled to receive agency contributions?

Among civilian TSP participants, only [FERS](#) employees are entitled to receive agency contributions. If you are a FERS employee, your agency makes two different types of contributions to your TSP account as part of your FERS benefits. These contributions are not taken out of your pay, nor do they increase your pay for income tax or Social Security purposes.

First, when you become eligible for agency contributions, your agency will automatically contribute to your TSP account an amount equal to 1 percent of your basic pay each pay period. These are your *Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions*. You will receive these contributions whether or not you contribute your own money to your TSP account.

Second, if you are contributing to your TSP account, your agency also makes *Agency Matching Contributions* once you are eligible for them. If you do not contribute your own money, you will not receive Agency Matching

Contributions. Matching contributions apply to the first five percent of pay that you contribute each pay period. Your contributions are matched dollar-for-dollar on the first three percent of pay you contribute each pay period and 50 cents on the dollar for the next two percent of pay. Your agency will not match the contributions that you make above five percent of your pay. However, you will still benefit from before-tax savings and tax-deferred earnings on those contributions.

The fact that your agency adds to your contributions will make your TSP account grow faster. Your Agency Automatic (1%) and Matching Contributions can add up to five percent of your basic pay. Here's how it works:

Percent of Basic Pay Contributed to Your Account (FERS Employees Only)			
You put in:	Your agency puts in:		And the total contribution is:
	Automatic (1%) Contribution	Agency Matching Contribution	
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

Amounts that you contribute above 5% are not matched.



EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND BENEFITS OF FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORM ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY

Civilian Federal employees who are members of the Uniformed Services and who are called to active duty (or volunteer for active duty or full-time National Guard duty) are entitled to the following rights and benefits:

1. PAY. Employees performing active military duty will receive compensation from the Armed Forces in accordance with the terms and conditions of their military enlistment or commission. They will not receive any compensation from their civilian employing agency unless they elect to use military leave or annual leave as described in paragraphs 2 and 3, below. As usual, agencies should continue the payment of availability pay for criminal investigators and annual premium pay for administratively uncontrollable overtime (AUO) work, or regularly scheduled standby duty, on days of military leave or annual leave.

2. MILITARY LEAVE. Employees who perform active military duty may request paid military leave, as specified in 5 U.S.C. 6323(a). Under the law, an eligible full-time employee accrues 15 days (120 hours) of military leave each fiscal year. See OPM's fact sheet on military leave at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/military.HTM> and Frequently Asked Question on Military Leave at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/LEAVE/HTML/MILQA.asp>.

3. ANNUAL LEAVE. Employees who perform active military duty may request the use of accrued and accumulated annual leave to their credit (under 5 U.S.C. 6303 and 6304), and such requests must be granted by the agency. In addition, requests for advanced annual leave may be granted at the agency's discretion. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/ANNUAL.HTM> for more information on annual leave.

Employees who use annual leave will receive compensation from their civilian position for all hours charged to annual leave in addition to their military pay for the same period. Employees who enter into active military duty may choose to (1) have their annual leave remain to their credit until they return to their civilian position, or (2) receive a lump-sum payment for all accrued and accumulated annual leave. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/lumpsum.htm> for more information on lump-sum payments for annual leave.

4. LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP). The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) generally requires an agency to place an employee entering the military on leave without pay (LWOP) unless the employee chooses to be placed on military leave or annual leave, as appropriate, or the employee requests to be separated. Full-time employees do not earn annual or sick leave in a pay period in which they have accumulated 80 hours of LWOP. In addition, part-time employees on LWOP also earn less annual and sick leave, since they earn leave based on the number of hours in a pay status.

5. HEALTH BENEFITS. Employees who are put in a nonpay status or separated while on military duty for more than 30 days may keep their Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage for up to 18 months from the date the absence to serve on military duty begins. For further information on FEHB coverage see <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/eligibility/reservists.asp> and Frequently Asked Questions About FEHB for Federal Civilian Employees Called to Active Duty Service at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/qa/reservists.asp>.

NOTE: Many agencies, including the Department of Defense, are paying the employee's health benefits premium share, in addition to the employer's health benefits premium share for covered employees ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation. Employees should check with their human resources office to see if their agencies offer this benefit.

6. LIFE INSURANCE. Employees who are put in a nonpay status while on military duty may keep their Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) coverage for up to 12 months. This coverage is free. At the end of 12 months in nonpay status, the coverage terminates. Employees get a free 31-day extension of coverage and have the right to convert to a nongroup policy. For more information on life insurance benefits see <http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/faqs/qa.asp?id=16> and <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm>.

7. RETIREMENT. An employee who is placed in a LWOP status while performing active military duty continues to be covered by the retirement law--i.e., the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Death benefits will be paid as if he or she were still in the civilian position. If the employee becomes disabled for his or her civilian position during the LWOP and has the minimum amount of civilian service necessary for title to disability benefits (5 years for CSRS, 18 months for FERS), the employee will become entitled to disability benefits under the retirement law. Upon eventual retirement from civilian service, the period of military service is creditable under either CSRS or FERS, subject to the rules for crediting military service.

If an employee separates to enter active military duty, he or she generally will receive retirement credit for the period of separation when the employee exercises restoration rights to his or her civilian position. If the separated employee does not exercise the restoration right, but later re-enters Federal civilian service, the military service may be credited under the retirement system, subject to the rules governing credit for military service.

8. THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN. For purposes of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), no contributions can be made, either by the agency or the employee, for any time in a LWOP status or for a period of separation. Agencies should refer to the Thrift Savings Plan Bulletin for Agency TSP Representatives, No. 01-22, dated May 3, 2001. For additional information, agency representatives may contact the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board at (202) 942-1460. Employees should refer to the TSP Fact Sheet - Effect of Nonpay Status on TSP Participation. Both issuances are available from the TSP Internet web site at <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/index-factsheets.html>.

If employees are subsequently reemployed in, or restored to, a position covered by FERS or CSRS pursuant to 38 U.S.C. chapter 43, they may make up missed contributions. FERS employees are entitled to receive retroactive Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and, if they make up their own contributions, retroactive Agency Matching Contributions.

Also, if FERS employees separate and their Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and associated earnings are forfeited because they did not meet the TSP vesting requirement, the employees are entitled to have these funds restored to their accounts after they are reemployed. In addition, if employees separate and their accounts are disbursed as automatic cashouts, the employees may return to the TSP an amount equal to the full amount of the payment after they are reemployed. For additional information see the TSP Fact Sheet - "Benefits that Apply to Members of the Military Who Return to Federal Civilian Service" at <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/index-factsheets.html>.

9. RETURN TO CIVILIAN DUTY. An employee who enters active military duty (voluntarily or involuntarily) from any position, including a temporary position, has full job protection, provided he or she applies for reemployment within the following time limits:

(A) Employees who served less than 31 days must report back to work at the beginning of the next scheduled workday following their release from service and the expiration of 8 hours after a time for safe transportation back to the employee's residence.

(B) Employees who served more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, must apply for reemployment within 14 days of release by the military.

(C) Employees who served more than 180 days have 90 days to apply for reemployment.

Employees who served less than 91 days must be restored to the position for which qualified that they would have

attained had their employment not been interrupted. Employees who served more than 90 days have essentially the same rights, except that the agency has the option of placing an employee in a position for which qualified of like seniority, status, and pay.

Upon return or restoration, an employee generally is entitled to be treated as though he or she had never left for purposes of rights and benefits based upon length of service. This means that the employee must be considered for career ladder promotions, and the time spent in the military will be credited for seniority, successive within-grade increases, probation, career tenure, annual leave accrual rate, and severance pay. An employee who was on a temporary appointment serves out the remaining time, if any, left on the appointment. (The military activation period does not extend the civilian appointment.)

An employee performing active military duty is protected from reduction in force (RIF) and may not be discharged from employment for a period of 1 year following separation (6 months in the case of a Reservist called to active duty under 10 U.S.C. 12304 for more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, or ordered to an initial period of active duty for training of not less than 12 consecutive weeks), except for poor performance or conduct or for suitability reasons.

Short Age Humor

A reporter was interviewing a 104 year-old woman: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?" the reporter asked.

She simply replied, "No peer pressure."



What Happens When I Retire?

When will I get my first payment?

In most cases, as soon as we get all your retirement records, you are provided "interim" payments. These payments represent a portion of your final benefit and are usually made on the first business day of each month. We

try to provide you with income until we finish processing your application.

What is withheld from my interim pay?

We only withhold Federal income tax. 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. We will make any necessary tax withholding adjustment when we finish processing your application. Your health and life insurance coverage will continue while you are receiving interim pay. We will begin withholding health and life insurance premiums retroactive to the commencing date of your annuity, when we finish processing your application.

What information will I get about my benefits when the Office of Personnel Management finishes processing my application?

We will send you a personalized statement titled "Your Federal Retirement Benefits". It details, among other things, how much your monthly payment will be. It also confirms such things as health and life insurance coverage, and provides information you will need to prepare your tax returns.

Will I be able to pay to get credit for Federal civilian service if I made no contributions?

Under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), you will be given the opportunity to pay for temporary service prior to January 1, 1989. Under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), if you had service on/after October 1, 1982, for which no contributions were made, we will give you the opportunity to pay the contributions, and will tell you what difference it makes to your monthly benefit. If you had unpaid service prior to October 1, 1982, we do not notify you before we finish processing your application because it generally is not to your advantage to make the payment.

Can I change my health insurance coverage?

Yes. After you retire, you will still have the opportunity to change your enrollment from one plan to another during an annual open season. You cannot change to another plan simply because you retired.

Can I change my life insurance coverage?

You can cancel or decrease your coverage at any time. You cannot increase your coverage.

I retired in the last year. Will I get a cost of living increase?

Yes, but you will receive only a portion of the first increase payable. We will prorate the first increase based on how long you were retired before it is given. At that time, we will send you a notice explaining the increase. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) cost of living increases are not provided until age 62, except for disability and survivor benefits. Read about this year's [cost-of-living adjustment](#) for those who receive benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System.

How much of my retirement benefit is taxable?

Use our calculator to figure the [tax-free portion](#) of your annuity payment.

Use our calculator to figure the amount of your monthly [federal income tax withholding](#). Then, use [Services Online](#) to change the federal tax withheld from your annuity payment.

Reprinted from the OPM website

HOLIDAY/LIBERAL LEAVE SCHEDULE FOR FY 2009

<u>Holiday</u>	<u>Date Designated</u>	<u>Training/ Liberal Leave</u>
Columbus Day	13 Oct 2008	10 Oct 2008**
Veterans' Day	11 Nov 2008	10 Nov 2008
Thanksgiving Day	27 Nov 2008	28 Nov 2008**
Christmas Day	25 Dec 2008	26 Dec 2008**
New Year's Day	01 Jan 2009	02 Jan 2009**
MLK's B-Day	19 Jan 2009	16 Jan 2009
President's Birthday	16 Feb 2009	13Feb 2009
Memorial Day	25 May 2009	22 May 2009
Independence Day	03 Jul 2009	06 Jul 2009**
Labor Day	07 Sep 2009	04 Sep 2009

****Designates Training Day/Training Holidays for MEDDAC Employees.**

The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall.
 ~ Vince Lombardi ~



**ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL'S WEEK
 APRIL 19th – 25th**



Seasonal Pollen Allergies

What is a Seasonal Allergy?

A seasonal allergy is an allergic reaction to a trigger that is typically only present for part of a year, such as spring or fall. This type of allergy refers to a pollen allergy, such as trees, weeds and grasses. Perennial allergies, on the other hand, are usually present year-round, and include allergens such as pet dander and house dust mite. Molds can be a seasonal or perennial allergy trigger.

What are Pollens?

Pollens are tiny egg-shaped powdery grains released from flowering plants, which are carried by the wind or insects, and serve to cross-pollinate other plants of the same type for reproductive purposes. When pollen is present in the air, it can land in a person's eyes, nose, lungs and skin to set up an allergic reaction. Symptoms may include allergic rhinitis (hay fever), allergic conjunctivitis (eye allergies) and allergic asthma.

Pollens that are spread by the wind are usually the main cause of seasonal allergies, while pollens that rely on insects (such as the honeybee) to be carried to other plants do not. Most plants with bright, vibrant flowers (such as roses) are insect pollinated and do not generally cause seasonal allergies since the pollen is not usually present in the air.

Pollen can travel long distances and the levels in the air can vary from day to day. The pollen level can be quite different in various areas of a particular city or area. Levels of pollen tend to be highest from early morning to mid-morning, from 5AM to 10AM.

What Causes Springtime Allergies?

Spring allergies are a result of pollen from trees, which can start pollinating anytime from January to April, depending on the climate and location. Trees that are known to cause severe allergies include oak, olive, elm, birch, ash, hickory, poplar, sycamore, maple, cypress and walnut.

In some areas of the world, some weeds will also pollinate in the springtime.

What Causes Summertime Allergies?

Grass pollen is typically the main cause of late spring and early summer allergies. Grass pollen is highest at these times, although grass may cause allergies through much of the year if someone is mowing the lawn or lying in the grass. Contact with grass can result in itching and hives in people who are allergic to grass pollen, this is called contact urticaria.

Grasses can be divided into two major classes, northern and southern grasses. Northern grasses are common in colder climates, and include timothy, rye, orchard, sweet vernal, red top and blue grasses. Southern grasses are present in warmer climates, with Bermuda grass being the major grass in this category.

What Causes Fall Allergies?

Weed pollen is the main cause of seasonal allergy in the late summer and early fall. Depending on the area of North America, these weeds include ragweed, sagebrush, pigweed, tumbleweed (Russian thistle) and cocklebur.

In some areas of the world, some trees can pollinate in the fall as well.

How Do I Know What Pollens are Present?

In most areas, pollen is measured and counted, with the different types of pollen identified. This may be reported in terms of trees, weeds and grasses, or may be further divided into the types of trees and weeds identified. Specific grasses are not usually identified on pollen counts, as grasses look the same under a microscope.

How Do I Know Which Pollens I am Allergic To?

An allergist can help determine if you have seasonal allergies, and to which types of pollens to which you are allergic. This is accomplished through allergy testing, which typically involves skin testing or a blood test (RAST). Allergy testing can be helpful in predicting the times of the year that you are likely to experience allergy

symptoms, and is needed if you are interesting in taking allergy shots.

How Can I Avoid Pollen Exposure?

Unlike avoidance of pet dander and dust mites, it is more difficult to avoid exposure to pollens, since it is present in the outdoor air. Here are some tips to minimize pollen exposure:

- Keeping windows closed prevents pollens from drifting into your home
- Minimize early morning activity when pollen is usually emitted - between 5-10 a.m.
- Keep your car windows closed when traveling.
- Stay indoors when the pollen count is reported to be high, and on windy days when pollen may be present in higher amounts in the air
- Take a vacation during the height of the pollen season to a more pollen-free area, such as the beach or sea.
- Avoid mowing the lawn and freshly cut grass
- Machine dry bedding and clothing. Pollen may collect in laundry if it is hung outside to dry

Daniel More, MD, About.com

BRAIN TEASER

How many seconds are there in a calendar year?

Answer on page 12



Safety Boudreaux's Den

The Myths About Tornadoes

When it comes to tornadoes, knowing what NOT to do can often be just as important as knowing what TO do. There are five prevailing myths about tornadoes that have cost the lives and homes of innocent people who thought they

were doing the right thing. Don't be fooled. It could save your life.

Myth #1: When traveling by car seek shelter under an overpass. While it's true that seeking shelter is always safer than being out in the open during a tornado, stopping under a bridge or overpass is extremely dangerous. Why? The wind speed increases as it is squeezed through the opening of the bridge or overpass, increasing the risk of being blown away or being blasted by flying debris.

The best defense according to a meteorologist for the National Weather Service is to be aware of the weather and potential dangerous conditions and to not put yourself at risk out on the open road.

Myth #2: Open the windows in your house. At one time scientists thought that the low pressure in a tornado caused the normal air pressure in houses to rise, causing houses to explode. But it turned out that tornado damage is caused by strong winds and flying debris. So opening the windows will not save your house if a tree decides to fall on it, or a car comes flying through the living room window. If the tornado wants your windows open, it will open them for you. Don't waste precious time scurrying around to open them. Get to the basement.

Myth #3: The safest place in a basement is the southwest corner. This myth seems to have come from a government newsreel back in the 1950s. It is based on the belief that since tornadoes usually come from the south or the west, debris is more likely to land in the opposite, or northeast corner, of the basement.

However, the fact is that tornadoes do not travel in straight lines and could arrive from any direction. So the safest place is in the center of the basement, preferably under a sturdy structure such as a workbench or staircase or in a small interior room such as a bathroom or closet.

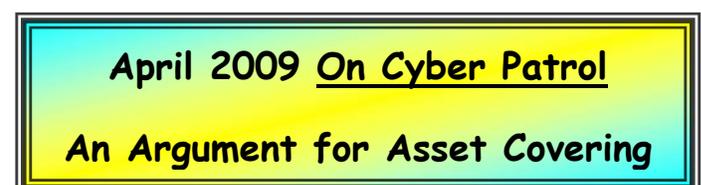
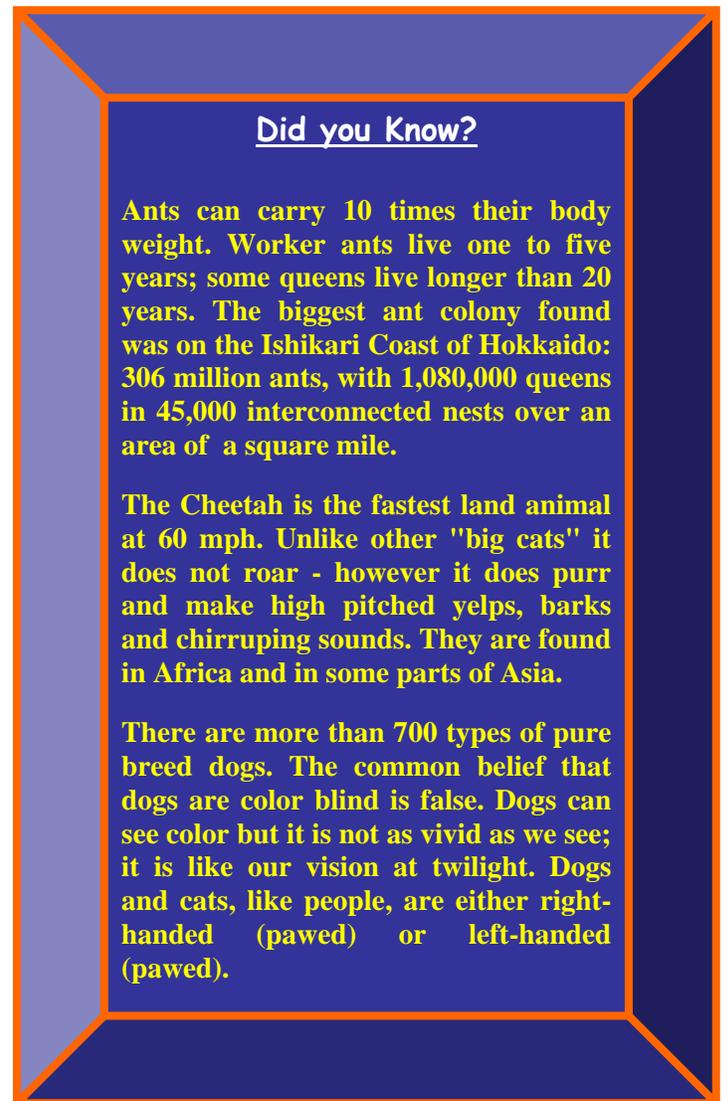
Myth #4: Tornadoes never strike big cities. People seem to think that tornadoes are deflected off large objects, such as mountains, rivers, or big buildings. The fact is, a strong enough tornado can penetrate almost anything. Recent reports have seen them plow through the downtowns of many major cities, including Dallas, Miami, Nashville, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Omaha, and Salt Lake City. No city or town is protected, so take precautions if a tornado warning is issued in your city -- big or small.

Myth #5: My town is "protected" from tornadoes. Some small towns have natural barriers or defenses, such as rivers, streams, outcroppings, etc., which have spawned the idea that they are "protected." Unfortunately, this myth is wishful thinking, similar to the misconception that "it won't happen to me." As with any potential threat, we

need to be aware and informed to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Reprinted from safety.com -- Beth Adamo

<http://www.avertdisasters.org/html/thunder2.html>



Securing the Enterprise does not mean locking down a starship, yet. But what does it mean? The "computer

guys” know. But even they think about it in terms of boxes and wires or digital data. For the rest of us it means knowing where our computer “stuff” is and whether it is under physical and digital lock and key. It’s true that keeping track of all that “stuff” requires a lot of work. Some think it’s not worth the effort. Those who have fallen victim to a cyber attack or a breach of cyber security because of lost or unsecured assets would strongly disagree.

What does it take to enter your computer assets into an appropriate data base? Obviously, the answer is time and effort, two things in short supply. What do you get after taking the time and effort? On the surface, maybe not much. There’s no formal ceremony or high-fiving when the work is done. Job satisfaction? Maybe only for a few highly organized types. It’s just another administrative task that no one gets too excited about. Your work day doesn’t change. At the very least it’s another task crossed off your list. In fact, there’s a good chance you put it pretty far down your list.

What do you get if you don’t enter them into the database? A potential security breach because assets were unknowingly lost, stolen or because a critical security patch was not automatically installed. Then things get exciting.

We all do similar mundane tasks in our everyday lives. We keep financial records for tax purposes and balance our checkbooks. We collect and organize bills for timely payment. There are those who collect and organize store coupons. While that seems a waste of time and effort for some, others find the cash savings worth it, especially when the economy is bad.

The fact is that a great deal of administrative work goes into enabling the military to do its job. It also plays a major role in ensuring force protection. The tracking of computer assets is a critical task in our information assurance efforts. It’s the only way of keeping tabs on what we have, where it is, who is using it and how secure it is. That is a huge task when you think about how many computers and related pieces of hardware are out there. Yet we know that a smart, aggressive, opportunistic and hostile hacker can do a great deal of damage through just a single flaw in our cyber armor. That fact makes completing that task all the more important. Certainly the CIO of the Army thinks so, as do many of his fellow general officers and cyber security experts in all military branches and throughout the Federal government. Also, these experts make it clear that this critical task be performed from an Enterprise perspective. Local asset tracking alone does not create a unified, seamless, and secure network-centric enterprise environment.

In the big picture, tracking your computer assets protects missions and personnel. It also saves time and money due to the cost and effort of cleaning up after a cyber security breach. “Securing the Enterprise” is just a fancy name for covering our assets. In reality, it’s securing mission success and supporting the safety of the warfighter.

BRAIN TEASER ANSWER

Twelve! January second, February second,
March second. . .



Blue Cross/Blue Shield Visit

A Blue Cross/Blue Shield representative will be visiting Fort Polk on **Tuesday, 5 May 2009, from 1100 - 1300**. They will be set up at the CPAC office, 2271 Louisiana Avenue, building 3304 (directly across the street from Burger King). The representative will be available to discuss insurance needs and/or questions. No appointment is 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 submit them to one of the following:

1. Janette.Nolde@us.army.mil
2. Call 531-1847

Suggestions will be reviewed and addressed if at all possible.

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