

New Employee Information

Agencies of USDA, Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) provide a variety of services and programs that touch the lives of all Americans. Learn more about USDA programs at www.usda.gov and about GIPSA programs at www.usda.gov/gipsa. The required topics for GIPSA new employee orientation are located under training at <http://ingipsa.usda.gov:8010/>.

As a supplement, this brochure provides you with a quick reference on matters important to all employees. For more detailed information, visit your servicing personnel office, the MRP Human Resources Home Page at www.aphis.usda.gov/mb/mrphr, or the New Employees Guide to the Federal Government at <http://www.fedweek.com/publications/fed101.pdf>.

PAY

Payday for employees is the second Thursday of the pay period. Receipt of your salary that day depends primarily on your Time and Attendance Report (T&A). Most Federal payments are electronic funds transfers (EFT) through the financial institution of your choice. EFT is safe, convenient, and reliable. However, if receiving your payment electronically would cause you a hardship, submit a written waiver request to your servicing personnel office. For more information go to www.opm.gov/oca/pay/index.htm.

EARNING STATEMENT

An earning statement is issued by the National Finance Center (NFC) in New Orleans, LA, and mailed to your home address each pay period. The earning statement lists all deductions by type and amount, i.e., Federal and State taxes, payroll allotments, health and life insurance, etc. In addition, annual and sick leave balances are shown on the statement.

- The NFC PERSONAL PAGE (www.nfc.usda.gov/personal/index2.asp) is a personalized web site that allows you to use a web browser and view your payroll, leave, travel, insurance, savings bond, and other personal information online.
- EMPLOYEE EXPRESS (www.employeeexpress.gov) is an automated system that empowers you to

initiate the processing of discretionary personnel-payroll transactions electronically.

TYPES OF LEAVE

Annual Leave - For personal time off and vacation. To earn annual leave, you must have a 90-day or longer appointment. Accruals are per pay period.

Full-time employees:

- 0 to 3 years of service: accrue 4 hours
- 3 to 15 years of service: accrue 6 hours
- After 15 years of service: accrue 8 hours

Part-time employees earn a pro rata share:

- 4 hr category: 20 hours in pay status accrues 1 hour
- 6 hr category: 13 hours in pay status accrues 1 hour
- 8 hr category: 10 hours in a pay status accrues 1 hour

Employees have a 30-day (240-hour) maximum limitation per leave year. You will lose any hours above 240 not used by the end of the leave year.

Sick Leave - For illness, medical, dental, optical examination, or treatment. Full-time employees earn 4 hours of sick leave per pay period. Part-time employees earn 1 hour for every 20 hours in a pay status. Unused sick leave carries over year to year.

Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act (FEFFLA)

Allows you to use sick leave:

- To care for family members
- To arrange for or attend funeral services of family members
- For absences related to adopting a child
- To serve as a bone marrow or organ donor.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) - Employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year for personal and family medical emergencies. For more information, go to www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/fflafact.htm.

Federal Holidays - Employees receive 10 Federal holidays per year. Only employees in a pay status the day before and/or the day after will be paid for these holidays. For more information, go to www.opm.gov/oca/leave.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

- FEHB program is a voluntary program.
- All permanent employees with a regularly scheduled tour of duty may participate.
- Generally, employees with short-term appointments limited to 1 year or less are excluded.
- Standard Form 2809, Health Benefits Registration Form, must be completed and returned within 60 days from the date of your appointment, whether you elect coverage or not.
- An "Open Season" is conducted in November of each year. During open season, employees can make changes to their Health Benefits Plan.
- For more information, go to www.opm.gov/insure.

Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI) (<http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.htm>)

- FEGLI program is a voluntary program.
- All permanent employees may participate.
- Generally, employees with short-term appointments limited to 1 year or less are excluded.
- Eligible employees are automatically enrolled in basic life insurance coverage and deductions will be made (unless the coverage is waived) before the end of the first pay period of your employment. If you want more coverage than basic coverage, you will need to select one or more of the three types of optional coverage within 31 days of your appointment.
- Standard Form 2817, Life Insurance Election, is the form used to waive coverage or change enrollment in the program.
- There are no regular open seasons for increasing life insurance.

Federal Retirement - Coverage will depend on your type of appointment. If you are on a permanent or provisional appointment, you are eligible for coverage. First-time Federal employees are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), a three-tiered system consisting of:

- Social Security benefits

- A basic benefit plan
- A Thrift Savings Plan

If you were previously employed with the Federal government, you may be covered either by FERS or a combination of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Social Security coverage CSRS Offset. Your servicing personnel office can provide more information if needed.

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) (www.tsp.gov) - Both CSRS and FERS employees can participate in the TSP. TSP provides the opportunity to save a percentage of your salary on a tax-sheltered basis; invest the money in various investment funds; and have all money earned on the investment be tax-deferred until retirement. TSP open seasons are held each year (November to January and May to July.) While newly hired employees have 60 days to apply to begin participating in TSP, they must wait until the second open season after their hiring to receive Agency matching contributions. If you are a rehired FERS or CSRS employee with a break-in-service of more or less than 31 calendar days, contact your servicing personnel office for more information.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

A career appointment becomes final only after successful completion of a one-year probationary period. This probationary period begins on the effective date of the personnel action appointing you to the Federal position and ends one calendar year later.

PERFORMANCE PLAN

A performance plan identifies performance standards based on your duties and responsibilities. The appraisal period is October 1 through September 30 of the following year for most employees. Normally, the performance plan is communicated to you within 30 days after the beginning of the appraisal period and assignment to a position. The minimum appraisal period is 90 calendar days. At least one progress review will be given to ensure that specific information is provided to you about your performance as compared to the performance plan. For more information, go to www.opm.gov/perform/index.htm.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with employment-related issues, contact your office's administrative personnel or GIPSA's MRP servicing personnel office:

Field employees MRP Business Services
 Minneapolis Business Site
 Butler Square, 100 N. 6th Street
 Minneapolis, MN 55403-1588
 PHONE: (612) 336-3281
 FAX: (612) 370-2082

Headquarters employees (2 locations) MRP Business Services
 Riverdale/Washington Business Sites
 14th & Independence Avenue, SW
 Room 1714, South Agriculture Building
 Washington, D.C. 20250
 PHONE: (202) 720-5161
 FAX: (202) 690-0866
 4700 River Road, Unit 22, Room 2B07
 Riverdale, MD 20737
 PHONE: (301) 734-8428
 FAX: (301) 734-4984

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GIPSA Training Office (202) 720-6242

USDA MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS

GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION



NEW EMPLOYEE INFORMATION QUICK REFERENCE