



GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

March 2004

The No FEAR Act

Eugene Bass, Washington, DC

On May 15, 2002, President Bush signed the Notification and Federal Employee Anti-discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act) into law. The No FEAR Act, with an effective date of October 1, 2003, requires Federal agencies to be accountable for violations of anti-discrimination and whistleblower protection laws.

The Act was designed to hold agencies and employees more accountable for discrimination. The Act's reporting and reimbursement requirements were designed to serve as a deterrent against discrimination and an incentive for agencies to hold managers accountable for discrimination or retaliation.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued rules regarding posting of Equal Employment Opportunity complaint processing data. Those rules include posting summary statistics for the current fiscal year on a cumulative (year-to-date) quarterly basis and statistics for each of the preceding 5 years. The posting of EEO complaint data on agency public web sites is intended to help Congress, Federal agencies, and the public assess the extent to which agencies are living up to their EEO responsibilities.

Section 301 of the No FEAR Act requires each agency to post quarterly on its public Web site certain summary statistical data relating to equal employment opportunity complaints filed against them under 29 C.F.R. Part 1614.

GIPSA's No FEAR Act information is posted on the Department of Agriculture's web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/nofear/gipsa/>. The information is accessible from the "About Us" section of GIPSA's web site (http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/aboutus/about_us.htm).

If you have any questions regarding the requirements of the No FEAR Act, please contact the Civil Rights Staff.

Mark the Calendar

The Grain Inspection Advisory Committee will meet May 4-5, 2004, in Kansas City, MO. The agenda will include GIPSA's financial status, general program plans, and grain end-use functionality research.

*National Women's
History Month*



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Names in the News

Issuances

Fred Kelley, Washington, D.C.

PERSONNEL

Welcome to **Jaime Adams**, economist, who recently joined the Economic/Statistical Support Staff in Washington, DC. **Jaime** formerly worked for Triangle Economic Research, a consulting firm in Durham, NC. She has a Masters degree in Agribusiness and International Development from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

30-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS

Samuel Brundage, Portland, OR
Jimmy Cadle, Jonesboro, AR
Milton Clayton, New Orleans, LA
Edward Duncan, New Orleans, LA
Christopher Gray, Aurora, CO
Paul Hadyka, Washington, DC
Raymond Hart, Washington, DC
Stephen Michel, New Orleans, LA

10-YEAR SERVICE AWARD

Kaye Burnep, Toledo, OH

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help? Let your voice be heard.

Call the EEO Advisory Committee at...

1-800-639-5167

Civil Rights Hotline

New Issuances

- GIPSA PN-04-05, "GIPSA Computer Incident Response Procedures," dated January 23, 2004 (Distribution: GIPSA-All).
- GIPSA PN-04-06, "GIPSA Annual Security Plans For Information Technology (IT) Systems And Security Programs," dated January 23, 2004 (Distribution: GIPSA-All).
- FGIS Directive 9180.76, "Inspection of Buckwheat," dated February 13, 2004 (Distribution: A, U, X).

Please call me at 202-720-0259, Fax to 202-690-2755 or e-mail to Fred.H.Kelley@usda.gov if you have any concerns or suggestions.

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Advisory Committee Meeting. Published March 1, 2004.
- Designation for the Champaign (IL), Detroit (MI), Eastern Iowa (IA), Enid (OK), Keokuk (IA), and Michigan (MI) Areas. Published March 1, 2004
- Opportunity for Designation in the Amarillo (TX), Cairo (IL), Louisiana, North Carolina, Belmond (IA), and Wisconsin Areas, and Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas. Published March 1, 2004.

For confidential assistance,
call your

Employee Assistance Program

Washington, DC personnel, call...
301-570-3900
or 1-800-222-0364

Field personnel, call...
1-800-222-0364

Going “Phishing” for Your Money

Carol Remmers, Washington, DC

Internet scammers casting about for people’s financial information have a new way to lure unsuspecting victims: they go “phishing” (pronounced “fishing”). Phishing, also called “carding,” is a high-tech scam that uses spam to deceive consumers into disclosing their credit card numbers, bank account information, Social Security numbers, passwords, and other sensitive information.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the e-mails appear to be from businesses with which the potential victims deal, e.g., their Internet service provider (ISP), online payment service, or bank. The fraudsters tell recipients that they need to “update” or “validate” their billing information to keep their accounts active, and direct them to a “look-alike” Web site of the legitimate business, further tricking consumers into thinking they are responding to a bona fide request. Unknowingly, consumers submit their financial information -- not to the businesses, but to the scammers, who use it to order goods and services, and obtain credit.

Last year saw the proliferation of a phishing scam in which users received e-mails supposedly from eBay claiming that the user’s account was about to be suspended unless she/he clicked on the provided link and updated the credit card information that the genuine eBay already had. Because it is relatively simple to make a Web site look like a legitimate organization’s site by mimicking the HTML code, the scam counted on people being tricked into thinking they were actually being contacted by eBay and were subsequently going to eBay’s site to update their account information. By spamming large groups of people, the “phisher” counted on the e-mail being read by a percentage of people who actually had listed credit card numbers with eBay legitimately.

How Not to Get Hooked by a ‘Phishing’ Scam. To avoid getting caught by one of these scams, the FTC, the nation’s consumer protection agency, offers this guidance:

 If you get an e-mail that warns you, with little or no notice, that an account of yours will be shut down unless you reconfirm your billing information, do not reply or click on the link in the e-mail. Instead, contact the company cited in the e-mail using a telephone number or Web site address you know to be genuine.

 Avoid e-mailing personal and financial information. Before submitting financial information through a Web site, look for the “lock” icon on the browser’s status bar. It signals that your information is secure during transmission.

 Review credit card and bank account statements as soon as you receive them to determine whether there are any unauthorized charges. If your statement is late by more than a couple of days, call your credit card company or bank to confirm your billing address and account balances.

 Report suspicious activity to the FTC. Send the actual spam to uce@ftc.gov. If you believe you’ve been scammed, file your complaint at www.ftc.gov, and then visit the FTC’s Identity Theft Web site (www.ftc.gov/idtheft) to learn how to minimize your risk of damage from identity theft.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Excess Baggage Fees. The current limits for checked luggage are 2 pieces (50 pounds each). The limits for carry-on luggage are 2 pieces (40 pounds each). Luggage that is over the weight limits will be assessed a \$25 excess baggage fee. It may be more prudent to pack 2 smaller bags rather than 1 large one in order to avoid the possibility of the excess fee.

Rental Car Surcharge. Car rental companies have begun assessing a Government Administrative Rate Supplement on all U.S. Government business rentals. Companies may assess up to a \$5 per day surcharge.

Export Grain Quality Report Available

The “2003 U.S. Grain Exports: Quality Report” is now available. This is the twentieth edition of this annual report that summarizes the quality of export wheat, corn, soybeans, sorghum, barley, flaxseed, sunflower seeds, and canola. It is based on data collected during the official inspection of export grain shipments in calendar year 2003.

The report is available electronically on GIPSA’s web site at <http://www.usda.gov/gipsa/pubs/03ex/03export.htm>. Hard copies are available in limited quantities from Dana Stewart, telephone 202-720-5091, e-mail dana.b.stewart@usda.gov.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

For Your Heart's Sake. Scientists can't say for sure that stress is a direct cause of heart disease. What is known is that if you use unhealthy means to handle stress such as smoking, overeating and couch-potato living – your risk of heart disease goes up. Here are better ways to cope:

✓ **Take stock of stress.** List all the stressors in your life then divide them into two columns: those you can do something about and those you cannot. Spend time dealing with things you can change and stop wasting time worrying about things over which you have no control.

✓ **Ponder the positives.** Even the most negative circumstances have an up side if you look hard enough. Try using the “at least” strategy. When something troubles you, think, “At least....” and fill in the thought. Example: If you are in debt, think “At least I recognize the situation, and that is the first step to getting it under control.”

✓ **Dump the downers.** Spend less time with negative thinking people and in situations you know will cause you stress. Think of it as limiting your exposure to germs that can infect your attitude.

✓ **Soak stress away.** A warm (not hot) bath can restore blood circulation that tension takes away. The effect signals your body that things are normal again and it is okay to relax.

✓ **Give your temples tender loving care.** Pressing your fingers gently against your temples can relax muscles elsewhere, mainly in your neck where tension often gathers.

✓ **Take 10.** Whenever a stressful situation arises, take a deep breath and exhale slowly for 10 seconds. This gives your body time to get off “red alert.” Your brain will release fewer stress hormones into your bloodstream. And, in the long run, your heart will thank you.

The Truth about Anti-Aging Products. People have searched for a fountain of youth for thousands of years. Has it been found in the form of certain dietary supplements currently on the market?

Proponents of supplements containing DHEA, a hormone made in the adrenal gland, claim that it does everything from slowing aging to burning fat to fighting many chronic illnesses. But there is no credible clinical evidence that it does any of these. In fact, DHEA may cause certain cancers and increase risk of high blood pressure.

Testosterone, a male sex hormone, is sold as a dietary supplement to improve energy, sense of well-being, complexion, and sex drive. These claims remain unproven. In high doses, testosterone can lead to prostate problems, higher cholesterol, premature heart disease, and fertility problems.

Melatonin is produced in the brain and helps regulate sleep. It may help treat insomnia and jet lag. Melatonin is not proven to fight aging and cancer.

The bottom line: no product is proven to slow or reverse aging, and the safety of dietary supplements isn't guaranteed because they are unregulated. Caveat emptor – buyers beware.

Detecting Diabetes. According to the latest estimates, one in three people born today will develop diabetes. Prevent it by slimming down (at least 10 pounds if you are overweight) and getting physical activity most days of the week. Every adult should have a fasting blood sugar test every three years – yearly if diabetes runs in your family -- because the earlier it is detected, the better off you are.

A Fistful a Day? Peanuts have been getting a lot of press about a being a health food. But wait. Aren't peanuts – and peanut butter high in fat? Yes, but fortunately, most of the fat is unsaturated, the type that lowers LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. Recent studies suggest that eating peanuts and nuts regularly as part of a healthy diet may lower your risk of heart attack. Other studies have shown that nuts help reduce risk of cancer and high blood pressure. And new research bears even more good news: Diets that include nuts are more satisfying, leading to less eating and greater weight control. Plus, peanuts are loaded with important vitamins, including vitamin E, niacin and folate, as well as essential minerals such as magnesium and potassium.

With so much going for them, how often should you eat nuts? As with all treats, moderation is key. Just remember that any type of fat has 9 calories per gram. So if you are counting calories, enjoy, but keep it to a handful a day or less.

Courtesy: TopHealth: The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

Designation Renewals

Jan Hart, Washington, DC

GIPSA is granting full 3-year designations to the following six official agencies to provide official grain inspection services at domestic locations: **Champaign Danville** Grain Inspection Departments, Inc.; **Detroit** Grain Inspection Service, Inc.; **Eastern Iowa** Grain Inspection and Weighing Service, Inc.; **Enid** Grain Inspection Company, Inc.; **Keokuk** Grain Inspection Service; and **Michigan** Grain Inspection Services, Inc. Champaign and Keokuk are also designated to provide official grain weighing services at domestic locations.

In fiscal year 2003, Champaign provided 61,511 official inspections and 955 Class X outbound weights; Detroit, 5,828 official inspections; Enid, 28,041; Eastern Iowa, 13,331; Keokuk, 4,976 official inspections and 29 Class X outbound weights; and Michigan, 28,420 official inspections.

Champaign. Champaign has been a private company since 1929 and was incorporated in 1985. It services the Terre Haute, IN, and Gibson City, IL, areas. Champaign is the first private (non-State) agency to provide services for GIPSA under the Agricultural Marketing Act. Champaign provides official services through the midsections of the States of Illinois and Indiana at three full-time grain inspection laboratories, eight applicant-based grain inspection laboratories, and one approved weighing location.

Detroit. The Detroit Board of Trade was formed in 1856 with grain inspection added in the 1920s. Detroit split off from the Board of Trade in 1978, because of a conflict of

interest in the Board of Trade's operations. Detroit moved to its current location in Emmett, MI, in 1980, to provide better service to the trade in its area. Detroit operates in eastern Michigan at one full-time and seven applicant-based grain inspection laboratories.

Eastern Iowa. The Davenport Board of Trade (early 1950s) and the Muscatine Board of Trade (early 1970s) were the precursor agencies of Eastern Iowa. Eastern Iowa became a private agency by incorporating in 1972, obtaining the Dubuque, Iowa, area at the same time. Eastern Iowa was later selected competitively by GIPSA to provide service to the Burlington, Iowa, and northern Illinois areas. Eastern Iowa now serves in the eastern section of Iowa and northern section of Illinois at four full-time and seven applicant-based grain inspection laboratories.

Enid. Enid started as a Board of Trade in the early 1900s shortly after the Oklahoma land run. It began operating as a private agency in 1923. Enid was selected competitively by GIPSA to provide service to part of the Alva, Oklahoma, area. Enid works throughout most of Oklahoma at two full-time grain inspection laboratories and two applicant-based grain inspection laboratories.

Keokuk. Keokuk was started in 1925. In 1946, it expanded to include barge inspections. Keokuk was selected competitively by GIPSA to provide service to the Havana, Illinois, and Quincy, Illinois, areas. Keokuk functions through the midsections of the States of Iowa and

Illinois at two full-time grain inspection laboratories, one applicant-based grain inspection laboratory, and one approved weighing location.

Michigan. The agency began as Grain Inspection Services, Inc., Battle Creek, Michigan. That agency's designation was not renewed in 1986, and the area was competitively awarded to three existing official agencies and the newly created official agency, Michigan. Michigan was later selected competitively by GIPSA to provide service to the domestic market around Saginaw, Michigan; two counties in Michigan; Michigan's Upper Peninsula; and the Lima and Fostoria, Ohio, areas. Michigan provides service throughout much of the State of Michigan and the northwestern part of the State of Ohio at 3 full-time and 17 applicant-based grain inspection laboratories.

GIPSA News is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

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by March 25, 2004

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