



GIPSA *NEWS*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GRAIN
INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS
ADMINISTRATION

SEPTEMBER 2012

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GIPSA's Leadership Training Program: Preparing for a Great Agency Future Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

Imagine that 76 percent of your supervisors and managers disappeared tomorrow. How would GIPSA continue to operate smoothly? How could the organization function? To address this issue, GIPSA's Management and the Training Office established the 2012 Leadership Training Program.

During the week of September 17-21, 2012, leadership training participants attended the classroom portion of the program held in Kansas City, Missouri. The first half of the week was for employees and the second half was for supervisors. Participants were very enthusiastic about the training and they expressed a desire for more classroom time. Participants gave both classes an overall rating of 9 on a scale of 1 to 10. Hot topics included accountability, conflict management, and process mapping.

In a show of strong support from GIPSA's leadership, Administrator Larry Mitchell, FGIS Deputy Administrator Randall Jones and TSD Director, Mary Alonzo addressed both groups. The Administrator reiterated the value of succession planning in the context of the high number of potential retirements at GIPSA. Specifically, that 46 percent of employees will be retirement eligible in three years and 76 percent of all supervisors and managers will be retirement eligible in three years. In addition to this, the Administrator and Randall Jones emphasized the need to continue with Cultural Transformation as a leadership value and asked participants like managers to personally pursue the small acts of inclusion outlined in the cultural transformation initiative. Examples of these are to have lunch with someone different than you; honestly evaluate your commitment to inclusion; and clarify your career plan and help others with theirs. Further, they encouraged participants to actively pursue leadership growth in the topics identified by GIPSA's management from the Training Office's needs assessment. These topics were listed on both the supervisory and employee session agendas. Topics included competencies such as accountability, communication, conflict management, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. Mary Alonzo emphasized the value of the identified leadership skills and told how she was charged to manage a new team in one of her previous positions. By applying some of the leadership skills identified in the training, she was able to motivate the group to successfully complete a very important project.

Over 70 employees applied for this program so you may want to congratulate selectees. However, also express your support to those who were not selected for answering the call to participate as this year's pool was extremely

Continued, see Leadership Training on page 2.

Leadership Training, from cover page

competitive. After all, risk taking is a leadership quality. Even if you were not selected consider staff transitions and work changes in your office that may offer you opportunities to grow.

Supervisory and Team Leader Session: new supervisors and managers who will attend to meet mandatory training requirements are: William Arce (P&SP Des Moines, IA), Brian Burk (P&SP, Aurora, CO), Greg Giese (FGIS, KC, MO), Stuart Frank (P&SP, Des Moines, IA), Kraig Roesch (P&SP, Aurora, CO), and Burt Snelson (FGIS, Stuttgart, AR).



Employees—First Row: Valerie Collins (FGIS, KC, MO), Caroline Thorpe (MBS Training Office, DC), Ceneda Trufant (FGIS, NOLA), Administrator Larry Mitchell, and Deputy Administrator Randall Jones (FGIS, DC), Rose Fremin (FGIS, NOLA), Jennifer Hill (FGIS, DC), and Marc DeSimone (Training Consultant DC). **Second Row:** Adel Ibrahim (FGIS, League City, TX), Jennifer Helber (FGIS, KC, MO), Doug Neesen (P&SP, Aurora, CO), Cheryl Taylor (FGIS, League City, TX), Andy Greenfield (FGIS, DC), Wayne Basford (P&SP, Atlanta, GA). **Third Row:** Jackie Crull (P&SP, Des Moines, IA), Susan McBryde (P&SP, Shreveport, LA) Levi Perkins (P&SP, Greenville, SC), Mark Marullo (FGIS, NOLA), George Vazquez (FGIS, League City, TX), and Jason Jordan (FGIS, KC, MO). **Fourth Row** (left to right): Justin Ham (P&SP, Aurora, CO), Julie Shamblin (P&SP, Kyle, TX), Charles Guidry (FGIS, NOLA), Gregory Zieber (FGIS, Toledo, OH), Jacob Thein (FGIS, Cedar Rapids, IA), Barry Gomoll (FGIS, Toledo, OH), and Ryan Montgomery (P&SP, Aurora, CO).

“Hot topics included accountability, conflict management, and process mapping.”

“Forty six percent of employees will be retirement eligible in three years and 76 percent of all supervisors and managers will be retirement eligible in three years.”



Supervisors—First Row: Caroline Thorpe (MBS Training Office, DC), Administrator Larry Mitchell, and Deputy Administrator Randall Jones (FGIS, DC), and Marc DeSimone (Training Consultant, DC). **Second Row:** Burt Snelson (FGIS, Stuttgart, AR), Mark Kemp (MBS, DC), Ruth Ortiz (MBS, DC), Cindy Bertoli (P&SP, Duncannon, PA), Pat Tolle (P&SP, Aurora, CO), Pam Lake (P&SP, Atlanta, GA), Ganga Murthy (FGIS, TSD, KC, MO). Not pictured: Greg Giese (FGIS, KC, MO). **Third Row:** Brian Burk (P&SP, Aurora, CO), Timothy Johnson (P&SP, Denver, CO), Amy Blechinger (P&SP, DC), Tim Hansen (P&SP, DC), Kristi Pirtle (P&SP, Des Moines, IA), Regina Ware (P&SP, DC), and Byron Reilly (FGIS, DC). **Fourth Row** (left to right): Michael Glatzel (FGIS, Toledo, OH), Ronald Hill (FGIS, NOLA), William Arce (P&SP Des Moines, IA), Terrell Bailey (FGIS, NOLA), Rangan Chinnaswamy (FGIS, KC, MO), Stuart Frank (P&SP, Des Moines, IA), Kraig Roesch (P&SP, Aurora, CO). Not pictured: Greg Giese (FGIS, KC, MO).

Names in the News

Retirements

Cecilia J. Hill, Program Assistant from the Western Regional Office will retire on October 31, 2012, with over 21 years of Federal service. Cecilia started her Federal career in administrative support services as a civilian with the Air Force. She then worked for the Department of Health, then Office of Surface Mining, and then the National Water Quality Lab at the US Geological Survey. Cecilia was selected as an Administrative Assistant of the Western Regional Office in Aurora, Colorado, in 2003. She plans to continue residing in Colorado during retirement.

USDA Secretary's Awards

Joanne Nielson, Physical Science Technician, received a Bronze Presidential Volunteer Service Award. She volunteered more than 200 hours at Children's Mercy Hospital / Guest Services in Kansas City, Missouri.

Jennifer Hill, Grain Marketing Specialist, received a Secretary's award for her participation in the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Taskforce, an interagency effort that has strengthened and coordinated USDA support for regional food systems, developed innovative outreach tools, and created new opportunities in rural America.



Left to right: Randall Jones, Jennifer Hill, and Larry Mitchell



Left to right: Larry Mitchell, Stephanie Feinberg, and Alan Christian

Stephanie Feinberg, was awarded the Silver Presidential Volunteer Service Award for serving over 250 hours of service with A Forever Home, a dog rescue group.

A Forever Home Stephanie Feinberg, Washington, DC

Many people do not know, 5 – 7 million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide every year, and approximately 60 percent are euthanized due to overcrowding, aggressiveness, illness or injuries. There are multiple ways to help lower this statistic including most importantly spaying or neutering your pet or adopting from an animal rescue group, like A Forever Home.

A Forever Home is a non-profit, 100 percent volunteer dog rescue group that operates in the Northern Virginia/ Washington Metropolitan area. The group adopts dogs out all over from Culpepper, Virginia, to Baltimore, Maryland, and is completely a foster-based program. All dogs are placed in a loving foster's house to be nurtured and cared for until we can find the dog their permanent loving home or "forever home." The major goal of the organization is to find loving new "forever homes" for dogs that have found themselves in bad situations such as kill shelters, puppy mills, hoarding situations, and other bad environments and gives these animals the homes they truly deserve. Most importantly, the rescue strives to match prospective adopters with the right animal – whether you want a couch potato, active runner, or anything in-between.

Volunteering with A Forever Home can take many forms from transporting animals from the shelters to their new foster homes to fostering the pets to interviewing potential adopters at adoption events. I have participated in the organization in numerous ways including transporting, interviewing, helping with adoption and education events as well as performing home checks and recently helping with the behind-the-scenes work that goes into processing an application. I really enjoy the opportunity to find these dogs a new home and a second chance. To end, as Bob Barker and any animal advocate would say, "Help control the pet population. Have your pet spayed or neutered."

Personnel

William Arce was selected as Resident Agent Supervisor in P&SP Midwestern Regional Office. He began his USDA career in 1996 in Washington, DC, as a student trainee with CSREES/NRE. He then joined P&SP in 1998 at the Midwest Regional Office in Des Moines, Iowa, as a Marketing Specialist, and continued in that position until being selected as Resident Agent Supervisor. William is a native of Puerto Rico and holds a B.S. and Master's degrees in Agricultural Business from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez and Kansas State University respectively.

Kristen Pirtle was selected as Administrative Officer in the P&SP Midwestern Regional Office. She began her USDA career with P&SP in 1999 at the Midwestern Regional Office in Des Moines, Iowa. Her career path has included holding the positions of Administrative Assistant, Legal Instruments Examiner, and Assistant Administrative Officer before being selected as Administrative Officer. Kristi is from Iowa and has a B.S. degree in Agricultural Business from Northeast Missouri State University.

Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- ◆ Issuance Change No. 1 to the Moisture Handbook, dated September 1, 2012
- ◆ FGIS Program Notice 12-09, "National Wheat Sample Collection Plan for the Pesticide Residue Program" dated September 6, 2012
- ◆ FGIS Directive 9180.61, Official Moisture Meter Calibrations, dated September 10, 2012
- ◆ FGIS Program Directive 9180.74, "Service Fees and Billing Codes" dated October 1, 2012

Change Control Working Group: A Unique Opportunity!

Kari McPherson, Pierre, SD, and Marilyn Gallagher, Longview, TX

The Change Control Working Group (CCWG) represents the interests of GIPSA by administering a structured process to evaluate your Change Requests (CRs) and facilitate implementation of those changes which enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. The CCWG is a change control board. While this concept is not unique, the Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) CCWG has a broader scope than most change control boards, which typically focus on enterprise architecture and other information technology projects. In this sense the P&SP CCWG was one of the first teams of its kind within the USDA. The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) has since created their own CCWG for CRs specific to FGIS. Its scope also reaches further than the typical change control board. Both of GIPSA's CCWG teams stand ready to receive your ideas.

The existence of these CCWG teams provides you with an opportunity to influence your employer, GIPSA! The CCWGs give you a say in what happens in P&SP and FGIS. Employees can improve morale and the environment in which they work by proposing changes to work instructions, standard operating procedures, electronic databases, and many other areas. This is a unique opportunity that many employees in other agencies and businesses do not have.

Have you ever thought of a way we could do more with less? Do you know of a better way to accomplish our mission? What practices can we change that would improve your morale and that of your colleagues? You can make a difference . . . through submitting a change request to the CCWG.

GIPSA is your agency. GIPSA's future, good or bad, depends on you. Submit your change request today, and let's work together to make GIPSA the best agency in USDA!

**CHANGE
WANTED!**

Submit your change request form available
at *inGIPSA* and email it to:
FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov

FGIS Matters....!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

We take a tremendous amount of pride in the quality of work that we do and we are recognized around the world as the “gold standard” for grain inspection and weighing activities. The delivery of consistent quality services depends on each and every team member performing daily at a high level. How we manage performance determines to a large extent the success or failure of our organization. A primary tool that we use to manage performance is the annual performance evaluation. GIPSA places a high priority on the annual performance evaluation and requires that an evaluation for each GIPSA team member be conducted no later than October 31. You may wonder what exactly do we hope to gain by conducting this annual evaluation?

A performance evaluation is a systematic and periodic process that assesses an individual’s job performance and productivity in relation to certain pre-established criteria and organizational objectives. Other aspects are considered as well, such as [organizational citizenship behavior](#), accomplishments, potential for future improvement, strengths and weaknesses. Each performance evaluation should include a meeting between the employee and the immediate supervisor. This meeting and discussion around predefined goals and performance expectations are excellent tools to encourage and promote effective communication which is critical. Open and honest assessment of performance and an opportunity for dialogue are key to developing and promoting trust within our organization.

I want to encourage each of you to use the discussion during the performance evaluation as an opportunity to showcase your accomplishments for this past year and to highlight your contributions to the Program. I have found it to be most helpful for employees to submit accomplishments in writing in advance of the performance evaluation so that they can be used as the basis of the performance discussion.

I would encourage you to take this opportunity to set goals and discuss them with your supervisor. I have found that when we, either individually or collectively as a Program, set goals and work toward those goals that we are more focused throughout the year and tend to be much more productive. So, make sure you set your personal goals so that when performance evaluations are conducted next year at this time you will have specific examples of your accomplishments and contributions to the Program.

I am sure that we can all agree that training and development are crucial components in helping our organization achieve strategic initiatives. Each GIPSA team member is required to have an Individual Development Plan which is the roadmap for your training needs and development needs. Take advantage of the performance evaluation meeting to discuss with your supervisor areas in which you would like to improve and the training that will assist you in gaining additional skills.

Supervisors should use this interaction to provide feedback to staff and discuss employee’s accomplishments and share their own goals for the team. It is important that we all think about the upcoming year and looking for opportunities to grow as an individual and a team so that we can make our Program successful and strong.

Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!



“I want to encourage each of you to use the discussion during the performance evaluation as an opportunity to showcase your accomplishments for this past year and to highlight your contributions to the Program.”

**Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions?
Need help?**

Then let your voice be heard. Call the Civil Rights Staff at 202-720-0216

A Shout-Out Goes to...

- ◆ A special shout-out goes to all GIPSA employees that participated in the **Run@Work Day** on September 21. See pictures below of participants from **Washington, DC**, and the **New Orleans Field Office**. Great job!
- ◆ A sweet shout-out goes to all attendants of the **CFC Ice Cream Social Kick-Off event** in Washington, DC, on September 27. The event was a success thanks to your participation!



New Orleans

Standing (left to right): Abraham Washington, James Magee, Melba Garza, Phyliss Zeno, Wally Alves, Troy Kramer, Terry Lebouef, Ben Cotton Sr, and Kristen Preucil. **Kneeling** (left to right): Robbie Julian, and Gerald Raymond, Sr. **Not pictured:** Glenda Lasseigne and Dana Mitchell



Washington, DC

First row (left to right) – Sylvia Midgett, GIPSA; Jinbo Sun, GIPSA; Angela Emrich, GIPSA; Jacqueline Rosier, RD; **Second row** – Wenda Bold, USDA Health Unit; Jennifer Hill, GIPSA; Jeana Harbison, GIPSA; **Third row** – Ed Murtagh, DM/OO; Morris Johnson, GIPSA; Steve Rigden, GIPSA; and Edward Chi, GIPSA



Angela Emrich and Morgan Arvaneh, CFC Keyworkers, serving ice cream during the CFC Ice Cream Social.



GIPSA CFC CHILI AND CORNBREAD COOK OFF

****Featuring chili and cornbread prepared by our Administrator Mr. Mitchell****

****Contact Ronald West if you would like to compete for the title of "Best Chili Maker of GIPSA"****

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2012
GIPSA CONFERENCE ROOM
2046/2052
11:00AM- 1:30PM

A suggested donation of :
\$3 for a bowl of your choice and cornbread
\$2 for a heaping sample of each.



Irish Smiles at the National Grain Center

Patrick McCluskey, Kansas City, MO

The National Grain Center (NGC) was honored to host two Irish dignitaries visiting the Kansas City area just before the Labor Day holiday. Mr. Shane McEntee, Minister of State in Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (and a member of the lower house of the Irish Parliament) and Mr. John V. Farrelly, Meath County (Ireland) Councilor (and a former member of both the lower and upper houses of the Irish Parliament) spent the afternoon of August 30 at the NGC. Accompanying the Irish diplomats were Ms. Roisin Nevin of Kells, County Meath, Ireland, Mr. Scott Burnett, Jackson County (Missouri) Legislator, Ms. Mary Pat Kelly of New York, Ms. Rosemary Stipe, Plattsburg, Missouri, and Mr. Dan O'Boyle, Kansas City Irish Fest Board member.

Minister McEntee and Mr. Farrelly were in Kansas City as invited guests of honor at the 10th Annual Kansas City Irish Festival. A member of the Kansas City Irish Festival Board of Directors, who coincidentally is my brother, asked me if the NGC could host the group and explain GIPSA's role in American agriculture. TSD Director **Mary Alonzo** was instrumental in making the event happen. By good fortune the visitors arrived at the NGC just as the FGIS managers meeting was concluding. Administrator **Larry Mitchell**, Deputy Administrator **Randall Jones**, and Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs Director, **John Pitchford**, were all able to participate, along with other FGIS employees from outside the Kansas City area. The fact that high ranking officials from Washington DC, participated was not lost on the Irish dignitaries.

Mr. McEntee has food safety in his Ministerial portfolio, and is well versed in the production of beef and dairy cattle. Additionally he has a strong interest in establishing agricultural tourism between Ireland and America. The Irish contingent was welcomed by **Mr. Mitchell**, followed by presentations from **Mr. Jones, Mr. Pitchford, Ms. Alonzo, Dr. Tandace Bell, and Dr. Tim Norden**. We were fortunate to have Mr. McEntee speak to us on a variety of topics. He informed us that Ireland was the 4th largest exporter of beef cattle in the world. He also mentioned that he saw the perfect dairy cow during a farm tour in Missouri (but he did not see one beef cattle he would take back, preferring the Irish breeds). Mr. McEntee feels strongly that countries like the United States and Ireland have a moral obligation to produce food to help feed hungry nations and consequently won't pay Irish farmers to idle productive land. Likewise, he is not a fan of diverting corn to ethanol, nor of transgenic grain. He said he was very moved by the sentiments that Americans of Irish heritage feel for their ancestral homeland, which links to his desire to promote agritourism between our countries.

After a great discussion and tour of the NGC rounded out their visit with GIPSA, the gentlemen departed to meet with the IrishFest Board of Directors. My brother informed me that the Minister spoke of the fine visit he had just finished at USDA, and that he was impressed that top officials came from Washington DC (this was echoed during a television interview he later gave). He told the Board that while there were but two from Ireland this year, next year there would be one hundred and two. (Caution: the Irish do have a gift for blarney.) What started as a simple visit turned into a summit, and GIPSA may have done more for agricultural relations between the US and Ireland than anyone could have imagined.

First Row (left to right): John V. Farrelly, Meath County Council, Kells, Ireland; Larry Mitchell, GIPSA Administrator; Shane McEntee, T.D., Minister of State, Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine, Castletown, County Meath, Ireland; Randall Jones, FGIS Deputy Administrator. **Second Row** (left to right): Dan O'Boyle, Board of Directors, Kansas City Irish Festival; Scott Burnell, Jackson County Legislator for the 1st District, Kansas City, Missouri; John Pitchford, Director Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs; Mary Alonzo, Director Technology and Science Division. **Third Row** (left to right): Eric Jabs, Chief, Quality Assurance and Designation Branch; Patrick McCluskey, Chief, Policies, Procedures and Market Analysis Branch; Tim Norden, Chief, Analytical Chemistry Branch; Tandace Bell, Chief, Biotechnology and Analytical Services Branch.





Writing Your Way to Success

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

During the development of the Leadership Training Program, GIPSA's management identified skills and competency areas that are associated with career success and upward mobility. One of these areas was written communication skills. Communication continues to be one of the top areas that enhances effectiveness and performance not to mention your own presentation in the organization.

In the next month, **Dexter Thomas**, GIPSA's Acting Chief of Staff, who continues to be a major writing resource, will offer a webinar on writing skills in GIPSA. This one hour class, will cover: assessing the audience, common errors, Federal Government format, and other topics that can help you get "write" to the point and be better understood.

In preparation for this presentation there are a number of resources for you to prepare for this. First from the Lending Library, there are hardcopy books the Training Office can UPS to you.

- ◆ The Business Writer's Handbook Alred, Gerald J., Charles T. Brusaw & Walter E Communication
- ◆ Principles of Technical Writing Hays, Robert
- ◆ The Golden Book on Writing Lambuth, David
- ◆ Revising Business Prose Lanham, Richard A. (Checked Out)
- ◆ 100 Ways to Improve Your Writing Provost, Gary
- ◆ Elements of Style, by Strunk, White, and Angell

There are also many courses in AgLearn. Just click on these and upload them into your AgLearn account. However, if this does not work, go to your AgLearn account. Enter the course name in your search box in the upper-right corner and click the Browse button underneath the box. Launch the course and add it to your "To Do List" or launch the content. There is a wide range of courses available whether your focus is grammar basics or using words to persuade or technical writing. There are even courses for writing e-mails. It is always good to identify on your most immediate training need e.g. grammar or technical writing or run on sentences, first before looking at a whole list of courses. That way you can focus on what is most important to you.

- ◆ Business Grammar: Parts of Speech
- ◆ Introduction to Plain Language

- ◆ 7 Steps to Better Written Policies
- ◆ Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing
- ◆ Business Grammar: Working with Words
- ◆ Business Writing: Editing and Proofreading
- ◆ Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely
- ◆ Business Writing: Know Your Readers and Your Purpose
- ◆ Effective Business & Nonfiction Writing Second Edition
- ◆ Introduction to Plain Language
- ◆ Making your point in writing
- ◆ Preparing a Business Case
- ◆ Professional Writing Skills A Self-Paced Training Program
- ◆ Should this be put in writing?
- ◆ When writing for the web
- ◆ Where Good Ideas Come From
- ◆ Writing a performance review
- ◆ Writing at work: How to Write Clearly, Effectively and Professionally
- ◆ Writing for Technical Professionals: Effective Writing Techniques
- ◆ Writing for Technical Professionals: Preparation and Planning
- ◆ Writing important e-mail messages
- ◆ Writing to customers
- ◆ Writing under Pressure: Preparing for Success
- ◆ Writing under Pressure: The Writing Process
- ◆ Writing under Pressure: The Writing Process

Also go to Books 24 X 7 in AgLearn and see if there any books or videos on writing.

Happy Writing!

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day/7 days a week**

Ten Tips to Improve Posture and Ergonomics

Amber McDonald-Lake, Washington, DC

Over time, poor posture may be caused by habits from everyday activities such as sitting in [office chairs](#), looking at the computer, driving, standing for long periods of time, or even sleeping. Poor posture can easily become second nature, causing or aggravating episodes of back pain and damaging spinal structures. Fortunately, the main factors affecting posture and ergonomics are completely within one's ability to control and are not difficult to change.

The following guidelines suggest several ways to improve posture and ergonomics, especially for people who work sitting in an office chair for most of the day.



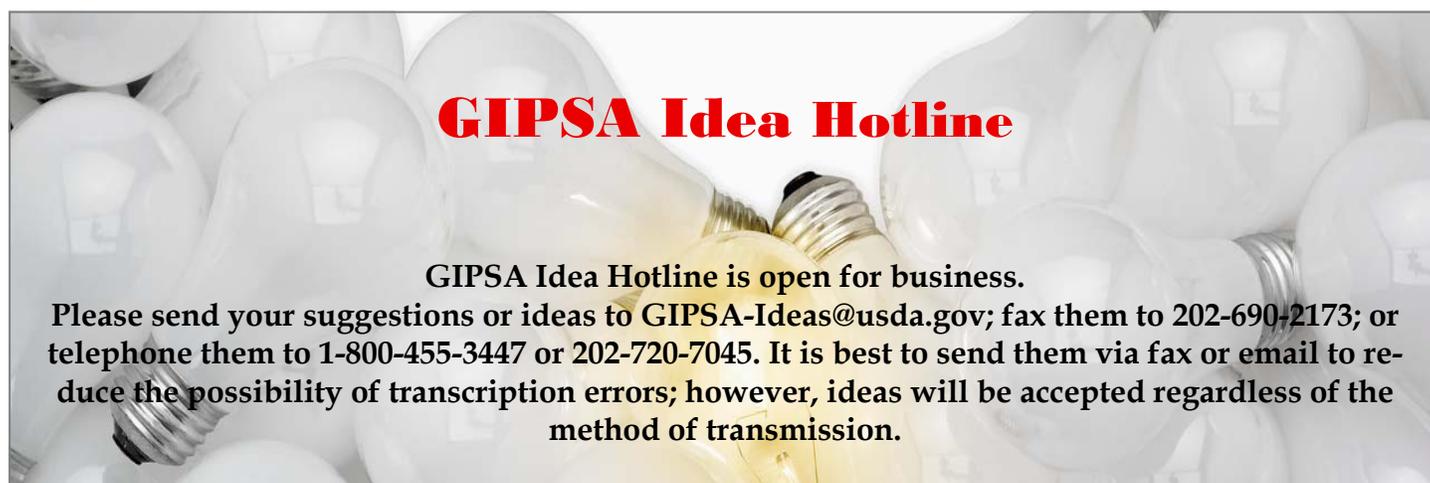
- 1. Know the warning signs of back pain caused by poor ergonomics and posture.** Back pain may be the result of poor ergonomics and posture if the back pain is worse at certain times of day or week (such as after a long day of sitting in an office chair in front of a computer, but not during the weekends); pain that starts in the neck and moves downwards into the upper back, lower back and extremities; pain that goes away after switching positions while sitting or standing; sudden back pain that is experienced with a new job, a new office chair, or a new car; and/or back pain that comes and goes for months.
- 2. Get up and move.** As muscles tire, slouching, slumping, and other poor postures become more likely; this in turn puts extra pressure on the neck and back. In order to maintain a relaxed yet supported posture, change positions frequently. One way is to take a break from sitting in an office chair every half hour for two minutes in order to stretch, stand, or walk.
- 3. Keep the body in alignment while sitting in an office chair and while standing.** Distribute body weight evenly to the front, back, and sides of the feet while standing. While sitting in an office chair, take advantage of the chair's features. Sit up straight and align the ears, shoulders, and hips in one vertical line. Any single position, even a good one, will be tiring. Leaning forward with a straight back can alternate with sitting back, using the back support of the office chair to ease the work of back muscles. Also be aware of and avoid unbalanced postures such as crossing legs unevenly while sitting, leaning to one side, hunching the shoulders forward or tilting the head.
- 4. Use posture-friendly props and ergonomic office chairs when sitting.** Supportive ergonomic "props" can help to take the strain and load off of the spine. [Ergonomic office chairs](#) or chairs with an adjustable back support can be used at work. Footrests, portable lumbar back supports, or even a towel or small pillow can be used while sitting in an office chair and while driving. Using purses, bags, and backpacks that are designed to minimize back strain can also influence good posture. Proper corrective eyewear, positioning computer screens to your natural, resting eye position can also help to avoid leaning or straining the neck with the head tilted forward.
- 5. Increase awareness of posture and ergonomics in everyday settings.** Being aware of posture and ergonomics at work, at home, and at play is a vital step towards instilling good posture and ergonomic techniques. This includes making conscious connections between episodes of back pain and specific situations where poor posture or ergonomics may be the root cause of the pain.
- 6. Use exercise to help prevent injury and promote good posture.** Regular exercise such as walking, swimming, or bicycling will help the body stay aerobically conditioned, while specific strengthening exercises will help the muscles surrounding the back to stay strong. These benefits of exercise promote good posture, which will, in turn, further help to condition muscles and prevent injury. There are also specific exercises that will help maintain good posture. In particular, a balance of trunk strength with back muscles about 30 percent stronger than abdominal muscles is essential to help support the upper body and maintain good posture.
- 7. Wear supportive footwear when standing.** Avoid regularly wearing high-heeled shoes, which can affect the body's center of gravity and change the alignment of the entire body, negatively affecting back support and posture. When standing for long periods of time, placing a rubber mat on the floor can improve comfort.
- 8. Remember good posture and ergonomics when in motion.** Walking, lifting heavy materials, holding a telephone, and typing are all moving activities that require attention to ergonomics and posture. It is important to maintain good posture even while moving to avoid injury. Back injuries are especially common while twisting and/or lifting

Continued, see Posture on page 9.

Posture, from page 9

- and often occur because of awkward movement and control of the upper body weight alone.
9. **Create ergonomic physical environments and workspaces, such as for sitting in an office chair at a computer.** It does require a small investment of time to personalize the workspace, home, and car, but the payoff will be well worth it. Undue strain will be placed on the structures of the spine unless the office chair, desk, keyboard, and computer screen, etc. are correctly positioned.
 10. **Avoid overprotecting posture.** Remember that it is important to maintain an overall relaxed posture to avoid restricting movements by clenching muscles and adopting an unnatural, stiff posture. For individuals who already have some back pain, it is a natural tendency to try to limit movements to avoid the potential pain associated with movement. However, unless there is a fracture or other serious problem, the structures in the spine are designed for movement and any limitation in motion over a long period of time creates more pain and a downward cycle of less motion and more pain, etc.

Source: *Spine-Health.com*



GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business.
Please send your suggestions or ideas to GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045. It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method of transmission.

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:

Idelisse Rodríguez
USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3649
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3649
Phone (202) 720-5688
FAX (202) 690-2173
Idelisse.Rodriguez@usda.gov



by October 25, 2012

Retiring? To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to Idelisse.Rodriguez@usda.gov.

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