



# GIPSA News

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

October 2008

## The Gulf Weathers More Hurricanes

*Kerry Petit, New Orleans*

As so many before him, he formed quietly out of a tropical wave on the morning of August 25, 2008, about 260 miles southeast of Haiti. He strengthened rapidly into a tropical storm that afternoon, and by the next day into a hurricane. He was given a name: Gustav. On August 31, after crossing Cuba, the National Hurricane Center was predicting that Gustav would remain at a Category 3 or above on September 1, when it would make landfall along the central Louisiana coast.

There were dire predictions that the storm would grow into a monster as it passed over the warm loop current in the Gulf of Mexico; talk of record storm surge was being broadcast on every television station and the mayor of New Orleans was calling it the “mother of all storms.” Needless to say, only 3 years almost to the day after being battered by Hurricane Katrina, people in south Louisiana were on edge and waiting for the inevitable call to evacuate.

As early as Tuesday, August 26, with the storm over 1,000 miles away, forecasters seemed to be certain of Gustav’s track, they never once

waivered from their prediction that the target area was south central Louisiana. One by one, parishes in the area began calling for voluntary evacuations of low lying areas. By Saturday, the call finally came for mandatory evacuations. The Mississippi River was shut to all ship traffic between the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans on August 30, and by the afternoon of Sunday, August 31, 1.9 million people had fled southern Louisiana. It was the largest evacuation in Louisiana history.

Learning lessons from Katrina, the New Orleans Field Office had already begun preparations for the storm. We checked our equipment: satellite phones, cell phones and the field office designated voice recording to be used for post-hurricane messages to employees. The most current list of employees' phone numbers was distributed to managers, a memo with information for the emergency check in numbers was released to employees, and contact was made with customers to swap business and personal phone numbers in order to resume contact once the storm threat had passed. A staff meeting was held to



**How you can help hurricane victims who are Federal employees?**  
Go to page 8.

discuss plans for regrouping after the storm and to select alternate work sites should the field office be unusable. Goodbyes and “stay safe” were exchanged as the office staff left on Friday, and by noon on Saturday the office had, for all intents and purposes, shut down operations. Some stayed, many left, and by Sunday the employees of the New Orleans Field Office were scattered over several states.

On September 1 around 9 a.m. CDT, the eye of Hurricane Gustav came ashore 22 miles west of Grand Isle, Louisiana, with winds of 110 mph, right on the projected path.

*Continued, see **Hurricanes** on page 3.*

# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

**Tammy Chang**, financial economist, has joined the Budget and Planning Staff.

**Erik Mojica** joined the Compliance Division on September 29, 2008, as a compliance officer in the Review Branch. **Erik** comes to GIPSA from the Federal Trade Commission where he gained experience as an investigative assistant. Previous experience includes work in the Office of Apprenticeship for the Government of the District of Columbia; Bilingual Investigator for CFC, Inc.; and International Trade Associate for Global Research.

**Patricia Ogunyale** has been promoted within the GIPSA Information Technology Staff to a program support specialist. **Pat** will take on the

responsibilities of IT requisitions and inventory support. **Pat** received a Certificate of Accomplishment in Acquisition through the USDA Graduate School in May 2008. Also in 2008, **Pat** served on an APHIS detail assignment that focused on contracting. **Pat** came to GIPSA in 2004 as a secretary through the Department's "Project Achieve" program.

## CONDOLENCES

**Roy Barrett**, 55, a former FGIS employee, passed away on August 4, 2008, after a long illness.



**Roy** retired from USDA in 2006 after a 30-year career as an international trade and marketing specialist.

**Roy's** career with FGIS, and later the Foreign Agricultural Service, took him to all parts of the world as he helped to facilitate US commodity sales overseas and foreign aid programs. He was also active as a US delegate to the Codex Alimentarius Commission, an international food safety and standards organization.

**Dr. Robert Laubis**, head of FGIS' planning and evaluation staff from 1975 until his retirement in 1981, passed away. Before joining FGIS, he was an agricultural economist with USDA and then the US Agency for International Development. While with USAID, he served in Laos, Korea, and Washington, DC, guiding agricultural development projects in Central America and Africa. He is survived by his wife, Nancy.

**Joe Meadows**, ACG, Wichita, passed away August 29, 2008. In 1960, **Joe** began work with the USDA Agricultural Research Service Plant Pest Control in Kennett, MO. In 1961, he left this position to begin work for USDA, Grain Division, later FGIS, in Kansas City, MO. He transferred from this office to Hutchinson, KS, in 1964, and to Wichita in 1968. He remained in this position until his retirement in June 1989.

**Lee Reagan**, former Field Office Supervisor, at the Stuttgart office, passed away on September 19, 2008. After serving in the military, **Lee** started his career with USDA in 1948 in the Crowley, Louisiana, office. He then transferred to the Stuttgart office in the early 1950s, where he remained until his retirement in 1978.

## AWARDS

**John Barthel**, Denver, received a spot award for his support, management, and overall direction on the PSAS project in the Western Regional Office (WRO).

**Matthew Bass**, Des Moines, received a spot award for extra effort given in mentoring the Midwestern Regional Office's (MRO) newly hired auditors while also successfully completing the Financial Unit's regular assignments in a timely and competent manner.

*Continued, see Names  
on page 4.*

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**Hurricanes**, from page 1.

Even though most of the field office's area lay east of the eye wall, normally the most destructive side of a hurricane, luck was with us. A small low pressure system located deep in the southern Gulf was feeding cool dry air into the east side of the storm, considerably weakening the thunderstorms embedded in the eastern side of the storm, holding the winds down a bit and preventing the storm from intensifying. Although Gustav did a lot of damage as he passed, reportedly more than Hurricane Katrina, the damage was spread over a much wider area of the state. Most of the area along the river from the capitol in Baton Rouge to the mouth of the Mississippi River was without power. Thousands of power poles and trees were down; structural damage in our area, however, was minimal.

On Tuesday afternoon, I made my way down from Folsom, Louisiana, about 60 miles north of the city, to check on the condition of the field office and a few of the export labs in the surrounding area. Many roads were impassable due to water, downed trees, or power lines blocking the road. Power was out, gas was

impossible to find and curfews were being strictly enforced. The field office, much to my surprise, miraculously had power. However, it also had a ear splitting fire alarm going off and no air conditioning. I was able to close my office door to shut out the sound of the alarm while I began to contact as many employees and facility managers as I could. After 2 days in that hot house, contact was finally made with the building managers and they came by to shut off the fire alarm and restore the air conditioning. By Thursday, I met a small group of managers and supervisors at the field office and we began to provide limited service to the few facilities that had power restored, thanks in great part to the help of some intermittent employees that were still in the area.

By Friday, we were providing service around the clock to a few locations and, by Tuesday, all but one facility was up and running and all employees had been accounted for. Because of the lessons we all learned by experiencing Hurricane Katrina, I believe we were all -- GIPSA, the grain industry and our employees -- in a much better position to "weather the storm."

As I write this, I am reminded of our brothers and sisters in Texas who just experienced Hurricane Ike: "their Katrina" The pictures on my desk of the damage in Texas are eerily reminiscent of the pictures we saw after Katrina's passing 3 short years ago. We wish them the best of luck as they begin their road to recovery.

## Denise Ruggles Receives 2008 Chief Financial Officer's Award

On September 16, **Denise Ruggles**, Field Management Division (FMD), received USDA's 2008 Chief Financial Officer's Signature Award for Outstanding Employee Contribution. **Denise** was one of two USDA employees selected to receive this Departmental award. The OCFO's Outstanding Employee Contribution award recognizes an employee of a USDA financial organization in a non-management position who greatly aided in enhancing the fiscal responsibility of USDA.

**Denise** is a program analyst in the FMD's Field Operations and Support Staff in Kansas City, Missouri. She was nominated for this award because of her exceptional financial oversight of FMD. She has extensive knowledge and technical skills that enable her to create and maintain tracking reports for five of FGIS' major programs. **Denise** monitors the budget allocations for FMD and all field offices to ensure overspending does not occur at the division level.

GIPSA is honored to have such a dedicated employee as **Denise** representing our agency.



*At the CFO Awards Ceremony. From L to R: Jon Holladay, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Kathleen Squires, Farm Service Agency, Charles Christopherson, USDA Chief Financial and Information Officer, Denise Ruggles, and Christopher Smith, Deputy Chief Information Officer.*

**Names**, from page 2.

**Adam Fast**, Des Moines, received a spot award for extra effort in mentoring the MRO's newly hired auditors while also successfully completing the Financial Unit's regular assignments in a timely and competent manner.

**Timothy Johnson, Margaret Mills, Thomas Duggan, and James Morcaldi**, Denver, received a group award for their management and overall direction in completing the PSAS data entry in the WRO.

**Jason Lopez**, Manhattan, KS; **Julie Shamblin**, San Marcos, TX; **William McCune**, Stillwater, OK; and **Brian Burk, Douglas Neesen, Jared Koch, Justin Ham, Loree Dickens, Marlys Sahlin, Milton Hansen, Nancy Speer, Ryan Montgomery, Sarah Chess, Stacey Schofield, Stephen Pollock**, and **Weylin Lucius**, Denver, received a group award for their contributions during the second phase of the PSAS project in the WRO.

**Kraig Roesch**, Denver, received a spot award for his contribution during the second phase of the PSAS project in the WRO.

**Myron Simmons, Terry Baron, Pamela Rodriguez, Vanette Stewart, Carol Carter, Cecilia Hill, and Eleanor Tuilaepa**, Denver, received a group award for significant contribution during the second phase of the PSAS project in the WRO.

**Patricia Tolle**, Denver, received an extra effort award for her significant contribution for planning, coordinating and overseeing the second phase of the PSAS project in the WRO.

**Jason Vanfossan**, physical scientist, Technical Services Division, received a spot award for contributing to the mission by solving the problem of data flow in the protein reference laboratory, caused by new network configuration requirements.

**John VerLinden**, Denver, received an extra effort award for his significant contribution for planning, coordinating, and overseeing the second phase of the PSAS project in the WRO.

## Seeking Applicants for Texas Designation

FGIS is seeking persons interested in providing official services in all or part of the unassigned areas of Texas to submit an application for designation. FGIS currently is providing services in part of Texas on an interim basis.

The area being considered for assignment to the applicant or applicants selected for designation in Texas is as follows: bounded on the north by the northern Young, Jack, Montague, Cooke, Grayson, Fannin, Lamar, Red River, Morris, and Marion County lines east to the Texas State line; bounded on the east by the eastern Texas State line south to the southern Shelby County line; bounded on the south by the southern Shelby, Rusk, Smith, Henderson, Navarro, Hill, Bosque, Hamilton, and Mills County lines west to the western Mills county line; bounded on the west by the western Mills, Comanche, Eastland, Stephens, and Young County lines north to the northern Young County line.

FGIS is asking for applications by October 29, 2008.

For further information contact Virginia Roseberry at 202-720-9803 or [Virginia.V.Roseberry@usda.gov](mailto:Virginia.V.Roseberry@usda.gov).

### Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

Washington, DC personnel, call...  
1-800-222-0364

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

# 2008 Secretary's Honor Awards Recipients

## AgLearn: BOOKS24x7®

*Rosemary Mayne  
Washington, DC*

Congratulations to the Packers and Stockyards Program's **Change Agents for the Business Process Reengineering Initiative**, who have been chosen to receive a 2008 Secretary's Honor Award.

*Instant access to a goldmine of industry knowledge is at your fingertips.*

### 2008 Secretary's Honor Awards

Award Category: Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights

#### **Change Agents for the Business Process Reengineering Initiative**

William Crutchfield (group leader)

Gayle Barnett

Jackie Crull

Herple Ellis IV

James Elswick

Peter Jackson III

Pamela Lake

Kristen Pirtle

Roger Schneider

Creig Stephens

Patricia Tolle

John VerLinden

Regina Ware

Philip Warren

Over the past year, the Change Agents, a cross-functional and geographically dispersed team, worked diligently to modify PS&P's core operational and business practices as the program established national operating procedures. In addition to their regular duties, the Change Agents obtained customer feedback to identify processes that worked and those that did not as they administered the Packers and Stockyards Act. The Change Agents used this information and worked closely with their counterparts in the operational work units to modify workflows and identify opportunities to streamline processes. The Change Agents evaluated hundreds of existing forms, letters, and other correspondence and developed a national set of standardized templates for the correspondence.

Their efforts streamlined work processes and eliminated multiple layers of review, and delegated authority, resulting in significant cost savings, thus freeing up resources for program delivery. The uniform operating procedures they put in place ensure that the individuals and companies that P&SP regulates under the Packers and Stockyards Act will be treated fairly and consistently.

The Change Agents will receive public recognition during the annual Secretary's Honor Awards Program on Wednesday, October 22, 2008.

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# Leadership Program Participation

*Rosemary Mayne  
Washington, DC*

GIPSA currently has four employees participating in Graduate School, USDA leadership development programs. In August, **Jared Koch**, Western Regional Office, and **Carla Thomas**, Eastern Regional Office, began a 6-month New Leader Program. This program is for employees at the GS 7-11 levels who have recently entered leadership positions or have a high potential for leadership. **Mark Wooden**, FGIS Compliance Division, and **Ryan Montgomery**, Western Regional Office, embarked on the 9-month Executive Leadership Program. This program is designed for employees at the GS 11-13 grades who have demonstrated leadership potential but have minimal supervisory experience.

While in their respective programs, these four employees will be busy juggling their job responsibilities with residential sessions and activities that include book reviews, a detail assignment, interviews, a project, etc. This is a challenging time with great learning possibilities for them. We congratulate them on the selection and invite you to support them during their journeys.

# Issuances

*Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.*

- GIPSA Directive 4713.1, "Civil Rights/Equal Employment Opportunity," dated August 21, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 4771.1, "Alternative Dispute Resolution," dated August 21, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 4790.1, "Safety and Health Program," dated August 21, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 4790.2, "Workplace Violence Prevention and Response," dated August 21, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 4790.3, "Emergency Notification Policies and Procedures," dated August 21, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 4790.9, "Policies and Procedures Upon Encountering Hazardous Conditions," dated August 21, 2008
- P&SP Directive 9700-38, "Packers and Stockyards Program Agent Badge and Credential," dated August 26, 2008
- FGIS Program Notice 08-11, "National Soybean Export Assessment Sample Collection Plan for Interior Offices," dated September 1, 2008
- FGIS Program Notice 08-12, "National Soybean Export Assessment Sample Collection Plan for Export Field Offices," dated September 1, 2008
- FGIS Directive 9230.2, "Agricultural Commodity Technician Proficiency Required for Promotion to GS-6," dated September 15, 2008
- FGIS Program Directive 9180.74, "Service Fees and Billing Codes," dated October 1, 2008

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## Regulatory Info

*Tess Butler, Washington, DC*

### Federal Register Publications

- Designation for the Aberdeen, (SD), Decatur (IL), Hastings (NE), Fulton (IL), Missouri, and South Carolina Areas – Published September 2, 2008
- Opportunity for Designation in Jamestown (ND), Lincoln (NE), Memphis (TN), and Sioux City (IA) Areas, and Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas – Published September 2, 2008

# Field Support

The Wichita Field Office officially closed on October 1, 2008, and the employees have been reassigned to the Field Operations and Support Staff (FOSS). Former field office responsibilities have also been reassigned as follows:

## FIELD OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT STAFF

### Inspection and Weighing Questions/Issues

Ken Weaver	<a href="mailto:kenneth.e.weaver@usda.gov">kenneth.e.weaver@usda.gov</a>	816-823-4640
Diane Palecek	<a href="mailto:diane.k.palecek@usda.gov">diane.k.palecek@usda.gov</a>	816-823-4643

### Licensing

Susan Fall	<a href="mailto:susan.h.fall@usda.gov">susan.h.fall@usda.gov</a>	952-240-8950
Judy Johnston	<a href="mailto:judith.j.johnston@usda.gov">judith.j.johnston@usda.gov</a>	316-204-3848

### FGISonline and eAuthentication Support

Janine Goodson	<a href="mailto:janine.k.goodson@usda.gov">janine.k.goodson@usda.gov</a>	816-823-2774
Judy Johnston	<a href="mailto:judith.j.johnston@usda.gov">judith.j.johnston@usda.gov</a>	316-204-3848
Diane Palecek	<a href="mailto:diane.k.palecek@usda.gov">diane.k.palecek@usda.gov</a>	816-823-4643

### Administrative Support (e.g. reports)

John Fisher	<a href="mailto:john.h.fisher@usda.gov">john.h.fisher@usda.gov</a>	816-823-4640
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### On-Site Supervision and Proctoring

Roy Lyon	<a href="mailto:roy.s.lyon@usda.gov">roy.s.lyon@usda.gov</a>	316-204-3851
Ron Hanson	<a href="mailto:ronald.l.hanson@usda.gov">ronald.l.hanson@usda.gov</a>	612-437-8011

## TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Requests for Appeals and Board Appeals	816-891-0401
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### Equipment Checktesting, Mechanical Samplers

James McLaurin	<a href="mailto:james.h.mclaurin@usda.gov">james.h.mclaurin@usda.gov</a>	816-891-0479
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### NIRT and NMR (sunflower seed)

Mark Leppert	<a href="mailto:mark.leppert@usda.gov">mark.leppert@usda.gov</a>	816-891-0433
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### Moisture Meter Checktesting

Pat Jackson	<a href="mailto:patricia.j.jackson@usda.gov">patricia.j.jackson@usda.gov</a>	816-891-0450
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### Mycotoxin Test Kits

Lynn Polston	<a href="mailto:lynn.a.polston@usda.gov">lynn.a.polston@usda.gov</a>	816-891-0444
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### Pesticide Analyses

Joe Barney	<a href="mailto:joseph.e.barney@usda.gov">joseph.e.barney@usda.gov</a>	816-891-0406
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If you cannot immediately reach any of the above TSD contacts, please call 816-891-0401.

*From the Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls, Montana  
September 13, 2008*

## **Simms Man Helps Rebuild Afghanistan**

by **Eric Newhouse**  
Tribune Projects Editor

**John Mott**, whose folks farm near Simms, is passionate in his belief that people need to help their neighbors.

**Mott's** neighborhood is somewhat far-flung, however. He's helping neighbors in Afghanistan.

"At the end of the day, I'm in Afghanistan so the bad guys aren't in the United States," he said this week in a telephone interview from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. "And it's critical that I'm here to help stabilize this country because the United States can't afford to let it go back to what it was," **Mott** said.

The son of Ed and Diane Mott of Simms, he's a volunteer working for one of America's 12 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan. Another 14 teams work in Afghanistan for NATO allies. Each team contains some civilian volunteers but is predominantly military, including active-duty personnel and members of the Army Reserve and the National Guard.

An agricultural economist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Packers and Stockyards Program in Denver, **Mott** is serving for a year as an agricultural adviser in Khost Province.

He lets the Afghans tell him what they need, then designs a solution that can be built by local contractors. One of his recent projects has been an irrigation dam that works by storing spring floodwaters. "They normally build diversion dams here, so this reservoir dam is a prototype to determine if this will work for them," said **Mott**. "Because of the heavy snow in the winter and the severe overgrazing that has left so many hillsides bare, we're trying to capture and store the spring runoff," he added. It's a project suggested by the provincial government that has just gone out for bid locally, **Mott** said.

His PRT team has built a lot of roads and schools, and it is constructing a regional hospital and an airport, he said.

"And I'm working on a fresh fruit market and a cold storage unit that I want to develop as an agricultural shopping mall," **Mott** said. "I'm hoping that because it's hard infrastructure, the Afghan government and private investors will want to take over and develop it further," he said. "It could go a lot of directions, but they have to have a place to start."

Emphasizing economic development in Khost Province is important because it's an area that once hosted al-Qaida training camps and was suspected of being a hideout for Osama bin-Laden.

"It's still a war zone, but I'm protected, well protected," **Mott** said. "I personally feel all right with it."

A Montana State University graduate, **Mott** also has a pair of master's degrees from Portland State University and the University of Connecticut — where his wife **Galina** is a professor.

"At the end of the day, I can't really tell you why I'm here except that I'm here for a purpose and a reason," **Mott** said. "I'm here because the situation here is critical to our nation."

That's a sentiment common among PRT team members.

# Travel Bits & Pieces

*Monica Alexander, Washington, DC*

**SmartPay2 Updates.** As of September 23, 2008, the Agency received the following information about the implementation and distribution of the new government travel credit cards:

**1. Who will get a new U.S. Bank travel credit card?**

All GIPSA personnel who currently have a Bank of America (BOA) credit card will receive a U.S. Bank credit card. The agency expects over 500 travel cards to be distributed to employees.

**2. What should I do with the new card when it arrives?**

Store the card in a safe and secure place and await notice on when you may call the toll free number to activate the card.

**3. When will the new travel cards become active/available to use for travel?**

New travel cards will be active (turned on) on December 1, 2008.

**4. When should I stop using my Bank of America government travel credit card?**

Travelers will use the BOA travel card until November 30, 2008. The cards will be automatically “shut off” at the end of that day.

**5. If I am a new employee and need a card, how do I apply?**

New employees who will travel between October 1, 2008, and November 30, 2008, should contact their administrative point of contact to apply for a BOA card. New employees traveling after December 1, 2008, should request an application for the new U.S. Bank credit card on or after November 15, 2008.

**6. How will the training be administered?**

Currently, there is a 30-minute web-based training program on U.S. Bank’s website. Alternative methods, such as classroom and manual training, are under consideration.

**7. What if I do not receive my card by November 30, 2008?**

Travelers who do not receive their new U.S. Bank credit cards by November 30, 2008, should notify their administrative points to contact for reporting to the Agency’s Travel Card Coordinator.

**8. What if my address changed during the launch?**

Travelers should notify their administrative point of contact of any address changes during the distribution dates and their records will be updated.

**9. What if an employee leaves the Agency during the distribution and receives a card?**

Employees who leave the Agency during the distribution should return their BOA credit card as normal. The administrative point of contact will provide this information to the Agency’s Travel Card Coordinator, who will update the U.S. Bank database.

**10. How will split disbursement work during the transition from Bank of America and U.S. Bank?**

Split disbursement, payments to the credit card company and employee, will be inactive during the transition. From November 25, 2008, through January 1, 2008, employees receiving reimbursements for travel will have to pay their BOA and/or U.S. Bank bills manually. Beginning January 2, 2008, the split disbursement function will return to GovTrip and payments will be made both to the U.S. Bank account and the employee.

**11. Will I have to sign another credit card acknowledgement statement?**

Not at this time. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has not required the agencies to require the acknowledgement statement per the Departmental Travel Card Regulation, but the Agency may require the acknowledgement to address accountability concerns.

**12. What if I am traveling during the transition (November 30 and December 1)?**

Employees in travel status during the transition will need to travel with both the BOA and U.S. Bank cards and use them according to the “shut off” and “activation” dates previously mentioned.

### Key Implementation Dates

DATE	ACTIVITY
October 1-November 30, 2008	Travel Credit Cards will be sent to current travel card holders
November 25-29	GovTrip will be unavailable, due to credit card “upload” in system. Travelers will need to call the TMC directly for all travel arrangements and prepare a post trip authorization after 11/29/2008.
November 30 (12:01 a.m.)	GovTrip will be back on line
November 30, 2008	Bank of America Cards will be <b>turned off</b>
December 1, 2008	U.S. Bank credit cards will be <b>turned on</b>
November 25, 2008-January 2, 2009	Split disbursement will be turned off in GovTrip

# Protecting PII in GIPSA

*Joanne Peterson, Washington, DC*

Safeguarding personally identifiable information (PII) in the possession of the government and preventing its unauthorized use are essential to ensuring that the government retains the trust of the American public. PII is information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as an individual's name, social security number, biometric records, etc., alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information that can be linked or is linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, etc. All Federal employees share the responsibility to protect this information. This also is a function of applicable laws, such as the Privacy Act, the E-Government Act of 2002, and the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002.

The social security number (SSN) is a key piece of PII that has come to be used for numerous purposes unrelated to the Federal programs established in 1935 under the Social Security Act, or other legally required purposes. The widespread use of SSNs (as a unique identifier) beyond their intended purpose raises privacy concerns and enables the growing problem of identity theft. Department policy requires that USDA programs use, collect, maintain, and disseminate SSNs and tax identification numbers (TINs) **only when required by statute**. Consequently, agencies must protect this information by either eliminating their use or by preventing unauthorized use.

GIPSA's Management Support Staff (MSS) surveyed 32 program/staff managers in January 2008 asking questions about how they collect SSNs and/or TINs; whether the collection is required by statute; the kind of PII they collect; and how it is collected, used, maintained, and disseminated. The survey results indicate that:

No applicable statutes require that GIPSA programs collect SSNs or TINs.

- ◆ GIPSA offices maintain files that contain SSNs and TINs in traditional paper records relating to personnel, time and attendance, budget and accounting, training, and travel files; but, the files are secured from unauthorized use.
- ◆ Authorized personnel can view SSNs and TINs in Federal/Department databases on their monitor screens.
- ◆ Because GIPSA is not the system owner, we are not responsible for eliminating SSNs or TINs from these systems. GIPSA personnel, however, are responsible for protecting this information while working in the databases.
- ◆ Several GIPSA forms contain and several databases store SSNs. These forms have been revised to eliminate the SSN fields.
- ◆ SSNs in GIPSA databases can be viewed on monitor screens and printed on certain reports. A contractor hired by GIPSA has worked with our offices to suppress SSNs from screen views and printed reports.
- ◆ Because there was no explicit language in the contractor's agreement to protect GIPSA information containing PII, a "Security of Information" clause has been included in the offices' Facility Maintenance Service Agreements.

MSS appreciates the help it received from GIPSA management and staffs in assessing and resolving our PII issues. Please feel free to call me at 202-720-8087 or Dexter Thomas at 202-720-6529 if you have any questions or concerns regarding PII.

**PRIVACY PROTECTION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

# Non-Partisan Volunteer Poll Workers for the 2008 Elections

A Message from the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture

We want to continue to facilitate employees who choose to participate as volunteers in their communities by engaging in public services.

There are many opportunities within your local communities to volunteer as non-partisan poll workers at the state and local levels. If you are interested in these opportunities, please visit <http://www.nased.org/membership.htm> to click on your state and find out about upcoming elections.

*As done in the past and at the discretion of and with prior approval from your immediate supervisor*, you may be granted administrative leave for your time spent as a volunteer participating on any pre-election training and Election Day responsibilities.

Please familiarize yourself with the guidance below.

1. To be granted administrative leave, you must obtain your supervisor's approval prior to committing your participation to your local office to volunteer as a non-partisan poll worker. [Administrative leave cannot be granted for Get-Out-the-Vote Drives, Partisan Poll Watching (or other partisan political activities), and any other similar non-governmental, election-related activities.]
2. While volunteering for public service on administrative leave, you should **not** accept compensation from the local election office for your time spent as a volunteer. However, it is acceptable if the election office pays or reimburses you for expenses such as parking fees and meal expenses.
3. At the end of your volunteer assignment, you should obtain a written acknowledgement from a local election official of the total time you spent as a volunteer to submit to your supervisor and timekeeper upon your return to your office.

**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 EEO Advisory Committee at...

**1-800-639-5167**

Civil Rights Hotline

# Seeking Advisory Committee Members

FGIS is seeking nominations for individuals to serve on the USDA Grain Inspection Advisory Committee. Nominations are being sought for six members and three alternates, all of whom will begin serving a 3-year term beginning in April 2009.

The Advisory Committee meets twice annually to advise GIPSA on the programs and services it delivers under the U.S. Grain Standards Act. Recommendations by the Advisory Committee help GIPSA better meet the needs of its customers who operate in a dynamic and changing marketplace. The Committee is comprised of 15 members and 15 alternate members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture who represent all facets of the U.S. grain industry.

Nominations are due by November 26, 2008.

For more information, contact Terri Henry at 202-205-8281 or via email at [Terri.L.Henry@usda.gov](mailto:Terri.L.Henry@usda.gov).

A notice to solicit nominees was published in the September 26, 2008, *Federal Register*.

# Get Help – Give Help

# IT Tidbit

*Mark Dickson  
Washington, DC*



The Federal Employee Education & Assistance Fund (FEEA) is the only non-profit organization devoted solely to helping civilian Federal and postal employees. FEEA helps Federal employees with emergency assistance and academic scholarships.

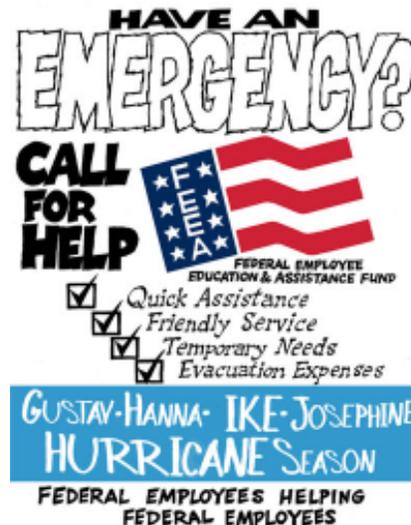
FEEA's Emergency Assistance Program provides confidential grants and no-interest loans to Federal employees facing unexpected financial hardships - no matter the reason. Grants are given when natural disasters affect feds and are intended to provide temporary assistance while insurance claims and other assistance requests are being processed. Loans are given to help pay for basic living expenses, such as shelter or utilities. Payments are made directly to creditors, and employees pay FEEA back through payroll allotment, a little at a time, with no interest added.

**Feds experiencing major losses due to a declared natural disaster may apply for a grant by downloading a disaster relief application from our web site. Grant limits are set on a case-by-case basis.**

FEEA also sponsors the only merit-based scholarship competition program open exclusively to Federal employees, their spouses, and their children.

Visit [www.feea.org](http://www.feea.org) for more information on FEEA programs and application forms.

If you would like to donate to FEEA to help fellow Federal employees and their families, you can do so through one-time donations via the FEEA web site, or by designating 11185 in the upcoming Combined Federal Campaign.



Another release of Microsoft Office (2007) brings a new look and feel to get used to. In Office Access 2007, you will notice a new left-hand-side Navigation Pane (Pain). It's an annoying switch from the traditional database window that was hidden unless needed in Access 2003.

The Access Navigation Pane provides access to the different database objects like tables, queries, forms, and reports. It is open by default and can be minimized to the left. It will stay as you leave it when exiting and entering Access. The Navigation Pane can't be moved and won't go away unless it is turned off all together. To turn it off, go to the Office Button on the top left of the screen, then to Access Options, Current Database, and uncheck "Display Navigation Pane." You must then exit Access and reopen the database to make it go away. The Navigation Pane will stay hidden for that one database until it is turned on again. That will keep the user interface clean and display only the form or layout intended.

To keep the Navigation Pane minimized to the left when opening a Access database, you can place code (SendKeys "{F11}") in your default form open options.

To be fair, the new Access 2007 Navigation Pane does offer more flexibility and customization options. For more complete and detailed information see <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/access/HA012138791033.aspx>.

# For Your Health

*Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC*

October 5 – 11, 2008 is Fire Prevention Week. The theme for the week is Preventing Home Fires. Here are some fire safety tips to help keep your home safe.

## **Cooking with Care**

- ✓ Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- ✓ Keep anything that can catch fire – potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags – away from your stovetop.
- ✓ Wear short, close fitting, or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire.
- ✓ Always keep an oven mitt and lid handy. If a small fire starts in a pan on the stove, put on the oven mitt and smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not remove the lid until it is completely cool.

## **Everyday Electricity Safety**

- ✓ Keep lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs away from anything that can burn such as lamp shades, bedding, curtains, and clothing.
- ✓ Replace cracked and damaged electrical cords.
- ✓ Use extension cords for temporary wiring only. Consider having additional circuits or receptacles added by a qualified electrician.
- ✓ Homes with young children should have tamper-resistant electrical receptacles.
- ✓ Call a qualified electrician or landlord if you have recurring problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers, discolored or warm wall outlets, flickering lights, or a burning or rubbery smell coming from an appliance.

## **Healthy Heating**

- ✓ Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- ✓ Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- ✓ Keep all things that can burn such as paper, bedding, or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- ✓ Turn portable space heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- ✓ Do not use an oven to heat a home.

## **Strike Out Smoking Materials Fires**

- ✓ If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes if they are available in your area.
- ✓ If you smoke, smoke outside.
- ✓ Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays.
- ✓ Never smoke in a home where oxygen is used.
- ✓ Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet out of the reach of children.

*Continued, see **Your Health** on page 14.*

## Your Health, from page 13.

### Candle with Caution

- ✓ Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn.
- ✓ Use sturdy, safe candleholders.
- ✓ Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- ✓ Blow out candles when you leave a room.
- ✓ Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- ✓ Use flashlights for emergency lighting.

### Safety 101

- ✓ Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home. For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- ✓ Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- ✓ Replace smoke alarms every 10 years.
- ✓ Make sure everyone can hear the sound of the smoke alarms.
- ✓ Have a home fire escape plan. Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible, and a meeting place outside. Practice your escape plan twice a year.
- ✓ When the smoke alarm sounds, get out and stay out.
- ✓ If you are building or remodeling your home, consider installing a residential fire sprinkler system.

*Courtesy of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).*



**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:

**Dana Stewart**

USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3614  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-3614  
Phone (202) 720-5091  
FAX (202) 690-2333  
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

**by October 25, 2008!**

**Retiring?** To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to [dana.b.stewart@usda.gov](mailto:dana.b.stewart@usda.gov).

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR  
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS  
AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION  
STOP 3601  
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3601

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