



GIPSA News

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

December 2002

25th Anniversary of 1977 Grain Elevator Explosions

Duane Putnam, Washington, DC

In December 1977, the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) lost 13 employees in two devastating grain elevator explosions in Louisiana and Texas.

On December 22, 1977, seven FGIS employees lost their lives when the Continental Grain Company's grain elevator in Westwego, Louisiana, exploded in what was the worst accident of its kind in the Nation's history. The explosion was described as an atomic bomb-like blast that sent shock waves across the city of New Orleans. Overall 36 persons died and millions of dollars in property were destroyed.

Less than a week later, FGIS suffered another terrible loss when the Farmers Export Company grain elevator in Galveston, Texas, exploded on December 27, 1977. This blast killed 18 persons, including 6 FGIS employees.

Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland honored our fallen colleagues when he directed that the flags at the USDA national office buildings and field offices be flown at half-mast on February 13, 1978.

This month, 25 years later, GIPSA and USDA will again honor them and commemorate their passing. On December 11, 2002, GIPSA will host a ceremony on the grounds of the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building in Washington, DC, to dedicate a flowering Bradford Pear Tree in their honor. The dedication plaque will be located on 12th Street SW near the National Mall, and the inscription will read:

"During December 1977, a series of devastating grain elevator explosions resulted in the death of thirteen USDA employees working for the Federal Grain Inspection Service. On this 25th anniversary of their sacrifice, we dedicate this Bradford Pear Tree to the memory of those who lost their lives in the line of duty."

December 22, 1977 Westwego, Louisiana

Robert M. Deal
Wilma A. Hendricks
Steven L. North
Nicholas S. Owens
Gary A. Purvis
Horace C. Williams
Kenneth R. Woods

December 27, 1977 Galveston, Texas

David C. Belluomini
Nick A. Dipeso
Mark L. Earhart
Annette Figaro
Alvin W. Lueders
Eugene A. Stokke

We invite all GIPSA employees nationwide to take a moment on December 11, 2002, to reflect and honor the memory of those who have passed before.

Names in the News

Baltimore Field Office Closed

Dave Orr, Washington, DC

PERSONNEL

Dannye Cameron has been selected for the position of field office manager of the League City field office.

Dave Grady will be reassigned from his position as field office manager, Montreal, Canada, to the position of assistant field office manager, League City, Texas, effective December 29, 2002.

Jay Mitchell, agricultural economist for FMD's Market Analysis and Standards Branch, has accepted a position with APHIS' Trade Support Team (under International Services). **Jay's** last day with GIPSA will be December 13.

In response to Field Management Division's commitment to continuously improve and better serve our customers, effective November 18, 2002, the Baltimore Field Office was closed. This organizational change was necessary due to the loss of exports and a decrease in the commodity inspection program in the Baltimore Field Office circuit, making it unfeasible administratively to maintain an office due to a reduction in workload.

Concurrent with closing the Baltimore Field Office, GIPSA divided the area serviced by the Baltimore Field Office between the Toledo and New Orleans Field Offices. Toledo assumed the territory encompassing the State of West Virginia and all points from North Carolina north (Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia) to the Canadian border. New Orleans assumed the territory from the State of South Carolina south (Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina) through Florida. The Toledo or the New Orleans Field Office, as applicable, will provide oversight of the state agencies performing official inspection services.

Following is a list of affected Baltimore Field Office employees and their personnel actions:

AWARDS

Sharon Lathrop, TSD, received a spot award for her outstanding contribution to FGIS' Central Monitoring Laboratory Team. **Sharon** was instrumental in developing the initial draft of the report.

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<u>Employee</u>	<u>Personnel Action</u>
Pat LaCour	Reassigned to Field Management Division, Washington, DC
Richard Tomarelli	Reassigned to Toledo Field Office
Gregory Tomas	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office
Larry Troutman	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office (Brunswick Duty Point)
Fred Kelley, Jr.	Reassigned to Compliance Division, Washington, DC
William Digdo	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office
Roy Johnson	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office (Brunswick Duty Point)
James Wilhelm	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office (Brunswick Duty Point)
Robert Doged	Retired
Richard Uehara	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office
Lanita Hill	Reassigned to Department of Justice, Atlanta, GA
Thomas Lucas	Reduction-in-Force Action
Bernice Moreland	Reassigned to New Orleans Field Office (Brunswick Duty Point)

2002 Review Branch Contributor Award

Jan Hart and the Review Branch Staff Members

Of the 59 FGIS field-based employees who have volunteered to work on details with the Compliance Division's Review Branch, 19 assisted during onsite compliance reviews during calendar year 2002. They worked during 13 onsite compliance reviews that evaluated 2 FGIS field offices and 1 suboffice, and 18 State and private agencies.

The Review Branch recognizes everyone individually for their contributions. We also provide special year-end recognition to the persons contributing the most to our program. As a group, we decided that **Myron Hall** and **Gary Zella** would receive the annual "Review Branch Contributor Award." Each receives a cash award and USDA Certificate of Merit.

Again, our thanks to all of the employees that participated in reviews this past year. Here's to a continuing effective program in 2003!

2002 Review Program Participants

Terrell Bailey, ACG, New Orleans
Jimmy Cadle, ACG, Jonesboro
Dave Fulks, shift supervisor, Portland
Larry Giles, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Myron Hall, ACG, New Orleans
Carl Jackson, protein coordinator, New Orleans
Donnell Keith, ACG, Portland
Vicki Kottke, office support assistant, Moscow
Sammie Lewis, ACG, Jonesboro
Angela Marine, program support clerk, New Orleans
Shane Minden, ACT, Moscow
Max Peterson, ACG, Wichita
Ted Respet, assistant manager, Duluth/Superior
Horace Robinson, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Amanda Rousell, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Lynette Scalise, ACT, Moscow
Jim Tullous, assistant manager, Grand Forks
Don Wray, ACG, Portland
Gary Zella, QAS, Stuttgart

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Paper Ticket Policy. The Department of Agriculture issued a policy effective November 1, 2002, stating that it will **not** allow for reimbursement of a paper ticket fee when an electronic ticket is available from the Travel Management Centers. However, the Department will allow reimbursement of any paper ticket fees incurred with foreign travel.

Issuance Info

Fred Kelley, Washington, DC

NEW ISSUANCES

- Hop Inspection Handbook, Chapter 3, Issuance Change 2, dated October 1, 2002. (Distribution: A,C,T)

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

New and Aspiring Leader Programs

Keep an eye out in December for information on the Aspiring Leader and New Leader Programs!

Electronic Cards Can Carry More than Just “Greetings”

Roy Coleman, ISSPM, APHIS

Many people enjoy sending and receiving electronic greeting cards via e-mail. It isn't unusual even to get them at work. However, nowadays it is more important than ever to be careful with them. Malware (malicious software, including computer viruses and worms) is increasingly sophisticated and damaging. Also, some companies now charge for the greeting card service.

One recent estimate is that 67 million “e-cards” were sent in the first 10 months of this year using popular companies like AmericanGreetings.com and Hallmark.com. With the holiday season upon us, that number is expected to skyrocket. But along with the greetings are likely to come headaches from high-tech attacks.

One common method used to spread a computer virus via e-cards is a bogus e-mail directing recipients to open a file attachment that unleashes malicious code instead of a holiday greeting. Or recipients may be sent a note directing them to pick up a personal message at a fake website that looks like the real thing, including legitimate-sounding URLs www.loveagreeting.com, which are no longer available on-line. Clicking the URL instead installs a Trojan horse program, sometimes without a user noticing. The Trojan then performs various undesirable functions, including sending copies of files to unauthorized recipients.

What should you do to protect yourself? All you need is to use precautions we've long advised:

 Be extremely cautious about how you use your APHIS (and GIPSA) e-mail privilege. Don't jeopardize agency information assets simply for the attraction of an alleged “greeting” or the offer of a “cool” screen saver (including dancing snowmen and the like).

 Don't open e-mail attachments unless YOU know the source and are expecting the attachment (.doc file, for example).

 Be careful about what websites you visit, especially those whose URLs you received in an e-mail message. Even if you don't get infected with malicious software, you could easily find yourself at a site that promotes pornography, on-line gambling, or other material not in keeping with government ethics and agency policy.

 Stay informed of current threats by frequently checking reputable antivirus websites, such as <http://vil.nai.com/vil/> McAfee's Viruscan (you can find a link from the security page on inGIPSA).

We suggest that you *not* send electronic greeting cards to others while using your GIPSA e-mail account, because large numbers of these degrade network performance. We in IT Security suggest you use your HOME, personal account for such activities.

American Indian Heritage Month Celebration

Vanette L. Stewart, African American Program Co-Manager, Denver

For American Indian Heritage Month, P&S' Aurora, CO, office celebrated with a luncheon and speaker.

Our speaker was **Joseph Garcia** of Valero Energy, who is often referred to as Many Deer during traditional Lakota ceremonies. **Mr. Garcia** is a Sundancer and member of the Wiconi Waste Sweat Lodge. His roots are from the Mescalero Apache area, the Mora, Taos area of New Mexico. He is extremely knowledgeable about the history in Colorado.

Mr. Garcia shared a great deal of information about the American Indian Heritage. He discussed the various dances, songs and their meanings, and raised our awareness about some misconceptions about American Indian people. He also discussed issues presently affecting the American Indian culture through an open question and answering session.

This celebration informed and educated local employees and managers about the importance of diversity and understanding how it affects the workplace, educated us about the American Indian Heritage, and raised our awareness of the various needs and struggles affecting the American Indian communities.

It is our goal to diversify the workplace and increase awareness of various cultures and groups as we make our transitions.

BIG in Atlanta

Dennis S. Murray, Sr.,
Washington, DC

Atlanta, GA, hosted the Blacks In Government 24th Annual National Training Conference 2002. A standing room only crowd listened to Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, and powerful words of inspiration from Lithonia, GA, Mayor Marcia Glenn. After the opening session, the training began. Sessions addressed homeland security, the new Homeland Security Department, and planning against terrorist threats.

Homeland security wasn't the hottest topic though — communication was. Sheryl Harrington-Watson, USDA Civil Rights Office, headed a session on establishing better communication among agencies. Panelists included Lou Gallegos, USDA's Deputy Assistant for Administration; David Winingham, Director, Office of Civil Rights Policy; and Clifton Taylor, Director, Office of Human Resources. Panelists shared their respective insights on policy and outreach. After the session was over, many greeted the speakers and discussed their thoughts at length. Mr. Gallegos was delightful and outspoken in his quest to reform thinking regarding USDA's minority employees.

Many other exciting training sessions filled fast. One that received an "A" grade was "The Future of Black America," taught by Anthony Browder. Mr. Browder discussed African Americans' history and present. He advocated redefining yourself and learning who you are to fulfill your mission in life. The power and exhilaration that he inspired in the audience penetrated our minds and

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Holiday Safety. The holiday season can make your home a hectic place and fill your life with errands to run, presents to buy, and people to visit. Just as there are safety rules and precautions to help you at work, there are also safety guidelines to help you through the holidays. Of course, you wouldn't hang a danger sign beside your tree or wear personal protective equipment when you build your fire. But, as you are making your holiday list, you can put safety at the top.

The holidays bring to mind images of relaxing in front of a cozy fire. But, before you get too comfortable, review these safety rules for using fireplaces:

- Don't use your fireplace to burn wrapping materials—which can create toxic fumes and even a flash fire.
- Use kindling and wooden matches to light fires—not flammable liquids.
- Always use a fire screen.
- Don't wear loose or flowing clothes when tending fires.
- Keep flammable decorations away from the fireplace.
- Don't close the chimney flue until you are sure the fire is completely out.
- Make sure the fire is out before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Dispose of ashes in a metal container. Never store them in or near your house.

Here are some other fire safety tips:

- Place candles in holders that will not tip.
- If you put a Hanukkah Menorah in the window, make sure it is clear of curtains and draperies.
- If you celebrate Kwanzaa and light the candles of the Kinara, be sure to keep clothes and other flammables away from the flame.
- Extinguish all candles before leaving your home or going to sleep.
- Never place lit candles on your tree.
- Keep matches out of children's reach. Warn children about the dangers of matches, candles and other flames.

Courtesy: Coastal Training Special Holiday Gift To You.

P.S. May your days be merry and bright. And may all your Christmases be white.

souls. The future depends on us educating ourselves and moving toward independence in business, technology, and training.

During the conference, I had the privilege to talk with National BIG President Gerald Reed about his plan to establish a European office to offer

military and civilian employees stationed in Europe the opportunities that BIG offers.

"Strength in numbers" was the motto many attendees discussed at the BIG conference. As ever, BIG held a most worthwhile, exciting conference.

Gas Pump Safety

The Petroleum Equipment Institute is raising awareness about fires resulting from static electricity at gas pumps. Their research on 150 cases of these fires yielded surprising results.

Almost all of the 150 cases involved women. Most had on rubber-soled shoes. Almost all cases involved a person getting back in their vehicle while the nozzle was still pumping gas. When finished, they went back to pull the nozzle out. The fire started then as a result of static discharge. Because men tend not to get back in their vehicle until completely finished pumping, they are seldom involved in these types of fires.

Don't ever use cell phones when pumping gas. The radio frequency energy from a cell phone can cause sparking on bare metal, much like aluminum foil in a microwave oven. The gas vapors cause the fire when connected with static discharges.

In 29 fires, the vehicle had been reentered and the nozzle was touched during refueling. This occurred in a variety of makes and models. Some resulting in extensive damage to the vehicle, to the station, and to the customer. Seventeen fires occurred before, during or immediately after the gas cap was removed and before fueling began.

NEVER get back into your vehicle while filling it with gas. If you absolutely HAVE to get in while the gas is pumping, make sure you get out, close the door TOUCHING THE METAL, before you touch the nozzle. This discharges static from your body before you remove the nozzle.

For more information, go to www.pei.org and follow the "Stop Static" link.

Grain Grader Provides Top Service

Deborah Shipman, Washington, DC



Mark Wooden

Mark Wooden works for FGIS's Inspection Systems Engineering Branch, Technical Services Division, as a Grain Grader. He enjoys helping to develop and test grain inspection equipment in the Physical Properties Lab. **Mark** acquired his expertise in agriculture on a family farm in Lexington, MO, and later obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in agribusiness.

In his early years, **Mark** operated, maintained, and repaired

machines similar to the Carter Day Dockage Tester (CDDT) machine, which mechanically separates the various components of a grain or rice sample according to particle size and weight. He hopes to help the Physical Properties Lab improve the CDDT machine's procedure to enhance the speed and accuracy of a foreign material handpick method, or an automated system. **Mark** explained that currently foreign material is picked from the grain by hand with picks (tweezers). The improvements will enable inspectors to provide information faster.

Mark is very knowledgeable about grain inspection. He has also worked in grain production and handling, where he acquired his mechanical background that today helps him develop ideas and provide engineering support.

Mark notes that "FGIS benefits the public in the form of grade and factor analysis including mycotoxin analysis. FGIS is the national organization best capable of providing unbiased information on value, at the point of sale, of a crop."

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

GIPSA Working Together for CFC

Deborah Shipman, Washington, DC

On October 8, 2002, GIPSA's Headquarters (HQ) in Washington, DC, kicked off the 2002 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) with a hot dog lunch and raffle ticket drawing. It was a lively event at which \$524 in donations was collected. Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs James Butler, GIPSA Administrator Donna Reifschneider, and approximately 75 employees attended. Ms. Reifschneider encouraged employees to actively support GIPSA's CFC efforts by giving to worthy charities and organizations. At the close of our campaign, GIPSA HQ raised \$24,622.62, 97.7% of our \$25,200 goal.

Several events were scheduled during October and November including: a hot dog lunch, bake sale, breakfast and snack sale, Halloween party, silent auction, and books and video tapes sale. The bake sale and raffle drawing donations totaled \$327.20; the silent auction generated \$409.52; and, \$372 worth of books and tapes were also sold during the campaign.

Thanks to all participants for helping to make this year's headquarters Combined Federal Campaign a huge success.

Employee Assistance Program

For confidential assistance,

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

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

Best wishes to you
and yours for a
joyous, peaceful
holiday season
and New Year.

Happy Holidays!

-Editor

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, Editor
USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3601
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3601
Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 205-9237
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

by December 25, 2002!

Official Designation Activities

On November 22, 2002, GIPSA announced the following action on designations to officially inspect and weigh grain in specified areas in Alabama, California, Kansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Oregon, North Dakota, and Washington.

GIPSA is asking for applicants to provide official services in the Topeka, Kansas; Minot, North Dakota; and Cincinnati, Ohio areas. GIPSA is asking for applications and comments about the current service providers by January 2, 2003.

GIPSA is asking for comments on the need for service and applicants for the Pendleton, Oregon, area. The Oregon Department of Agriculture is ceasing their grain inspection operations on November 27, 2002.

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, California Department of Food and Agriculture, Kankakee Grain Inspection, Inc., Springfield Grain Inspection, Inc., and Washington Department of Agriculture are designated to inspect and weigh grain effective January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2005. For official grain inspection and weighing services, contact Alabama at 251-415-2531, California at 916-654-0743, Kankakee at 815-365-2268, Springfield at 217-522-5233, and Washington at 360-902-1921.

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