



GIPSA News

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

December 2007

Holiday Greetings

Jim Link, Administrator



Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." As the year comes to a close, I look back with pride at a year filled with challenges, successes, and, above all, your continued passion to serve. As the year draws to a close, please join me in taking a moment to reflect on your contributions to our organization, and on your proud and dedicated service to American agriculture.

We're a complex, dispersed organization, and it's sometimes hard to keep track of our accomplishments. We, separately and together, are bulldogging hundreds of issues, so the memory of each little victory may be lost as the next one comes down the chute. But be assured, while we are successfully dealing with fire drills and hot issues, we also are successfully addressing the larger areas that are essential to our future.

We are making tremendous progress in reengineering our key business processes. Both program areas have directly involved an unprecedented number of employees in

improvement processes to better serve our customers and to improve our own efficiency. This broad employee involvement helps ensure that all of us share a vision of our future. And both program areas are well down the road of implementing strategic business plans that map out our priorities and activities for the coming years.

We've seen many of our colleagues retire this year, the beginning of a wave of expected retirements that will leave us missing many of our colleagues and their expertise. But we are not sitting back watching the rising tide of attrition, we are preparing for our future workforce. We're seeing aspiring leaders step up. Nineteen employees are wrapping up the GIPSA Leadership Development Program, a rigorous year-long program that is designed to help develop our leaders of the future. In addition, we have folks taking part in an Apprentice Training Program for agricultural commodity technicians; and technical and professional training for our mission-critical agricultural com-

modity graders.

The GIPSA family is spread out across the country, from sea to shining sea, and like any family, we sometimes find it hard to keep in touch. This year we instituted some new communication tools, such as the Administrator's and Deputy Administrator's confidential mailboxes, suggestion boxes, and all-employee Open Forum meetings to help keep lines of communication open. Communication is an area that always has room for improvement, and we're going to continue to build better bridges to each other.

There isn't time or room to recap each and every accomplishment of this year – there are so very many of which we all should be proud. But I do want to let you know that I recognize our successes, and that each is built on your efforts, fortitude, and courage to continue.

I look forward to a productive and positive 2008 for GIPSA. I wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season, and a happy and healthy new year.

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Jody Boydston-Johnson will be the new resident agent supervisor in Fort Worth, Texas, effective December 9, 2007. **Jody** was a senior marketing specialist in the Western Regional Office.

Johnetta Robinson joined the Eastern Regional Office as a program assistant. **Johnetta** has 10 years of Federal service experience, most recently as a civilian payroll technician for the Department of Interior. Prior to that, she worked as a human resources assistant with the National Park Service. **Johnetta** brings well-rounded knowledge and experience in payroll, budget, training, and human resources to her new job.

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Twala Samuels joined the Eastern Regional Office as a marketing specialist. **Twala** grew up in Augusta, Georgia, and received her Bachelor in Business Administration degree from Augusta State University and then her Master of Science Degree in Marketing from Golden Gate University. Prior to joining GIPSA, **Twala** worked for the Internal Revenue Service in accounts management.

RETIREMENT

James Adams, supervisory auditor, P&SP Policy and Litigation Branch, retired on November 2, 2007, with 30 years of Federal service.

Jan Roehler, Minneapolis Field Office, retired on November 9, 2007, after 21 years of service with USDA. We wish **Jan** all the best in her future endeavors.

CONDOLENCES

Delbert Davis, former manager of the Stuttgart Field Office, passed away in November. **Delbert** had retired from Federal service in 1985.

John Erickson, agricultural commodity technician, Portland, passed away on November 26. He was born October 20, 1956, and lived in the Portland area his entire life. **John** made the transition from State employee to the Federal Grain Inspection Service in February 1978. He was with the Portland Field Office the entire time. **John** leaves behind

a wife and three children ranging in age from 9 to 14 years old.

Scott Hartman, manager of the former FGIS Fort Worth field office, passed away on November 6, 2007, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. **Scott** began working for the then-Agricultural Marketing Service Grain Division in 1959 in Houston, Texas; joined FGIS when it was established in 1976, and retired from Federal service in 1982.

AWARDS

Frieda Achtentuch, chief information officer, Information Technology Staff, received an extra effort award for superior performance in managing information technology systems, personnel, and organizational challenges.

Rose Alexander, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for contributions in developing and managing the interagency agreement between GIPSA and APHIS, leading to efficient salary payments for Operation Jump Start participants.

Eugene Bass, director, Civil Rights Staff, received an extra effort award for superior performance in managing the Agency's workplace diversity and equal employment opportunity issues.

*Continued, see Names
on page 4.*

Travel Bits & Pieces

Monica Alexander, Washington, DC

GovTrip Update. On November 7, 2007, GIPSA officially “launched” the implementation of GovTrip. The implementation of the new e-government travel system will occur in multiple phases, and is expected to be fully implemented by March 2008. The implementation phases include:

Phase	Purpose	Expected Date Location
Business Process Review	To review our current process and modify it to meet the needs of the new system.	December 4-5, 2007 Washington, DC
Profile Data Gathering	To gather information on all potential users of the new system	TBD
Training	To train travelers, arrangers, and approving officials on using the system	TBD, multiple locations and formats
User Acceptance Testing	To test the system and identify any process vulnerabilities	TBD
Financial Data Warehouse	To ensure system is fully integrated with FFIS and Accounting systems	TBD

The new travel system will include several unique features, such as, a streamlined travel approval process, split disbursement on voucher payments (to credit card and employee reimbursement), accurate travel cost estimate prior to travel, and the use of the eAuthentication user ID for login.

If you would like to learn more about the GovTrip system and tour the interface, visit http://www.govtrip.com/govtripWBT/basics/basics_index.htm to access the web-based training.



The *in*GIPSA web site has moved to a new URL:

<http://ingipsa.usda.gov/>

Please update your bookmarks!

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.

- FGIS Program Notice 08-01, “Inspection Certificate Updates”, dated November 12, 2007
- FGIS Program Directive 9180.77, “Ochratoxin Testing”, dated November 19, 2007
- Aflatoxin Handbook, Issuance Change No. 18, dated November 19, 2007
- DON (Vomitoxin) Handbook, Issuance Change No. 10, dated November 19, 2007
- Hop Inspection Handbook, Chapter 3, Issuance Change No. 3, dated December 12, 2007

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Advisory Committee Meeting, published November 6, 2007

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

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

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

Names, from page 2.

Diane Blunt, Compliance Division, received a performance award for a sustained high level of performance in carrying out her division secretarial responsibilities.

Pamela Bourque, program support clerk, Crowley, received a time-off award for helping train the clerical staff at the rice mills on the new rice certificate program.

Tess Butler, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for outstanding performance in support of GIPSA regulatory management during fiscal year 2007.

Patricia Donohue-Galvin, chief financial officer, received an extra effort award for superior performance in leading the Agency to fiscal and programmatic success.

Michael Eustrom, Dempsey Lewis, David Lowe, Daniel Murphy, Dale Phetteplace, and Mark Ruth, Technical Services Division, Board of Appeals and Review, received extra effort awards from the Field Management Division for voluntarily assisting the Wichita field office with the grading of monitoring samples throughout 2007 when the field office was severely depleted due to retirements and selection of field office graders for other positions within GIPSA.

Neil Foster, agricultural commodity grader, Crowley, received a time-off award for the dedication and effort put forth with the new crop moisture survey for the past 2 years.

Terri Henry, Management Support Staff, received an extra effort award for her contributions in managing the GIPSA issuances during FY 2007.

Garey Holmes, New Orleans, received a spot award for his consistent skillful performance, work ethic, and helpful attitude.

Constance Grows, New Orleans, received a time-off award for handling difficult situations while working as an “acting” shift supervisor.

Dinia Ray Hollis, Charles Williams, Gerald Raymond, James Woodard, Edward Duncan, Rhondalyn Edwards, and Robert Medley, New Orleans, received time-off awards for contributing greatly to the quality and efficiency of the Agency during a staffing shortage.

Sharon Lathrop and Marsha Schwartz, Technical Services Division, received merit awards for outstanding effort to resolve a number of financial issues, update records, and implement an improved system for financial accountability.

Rosemary Mayne, GIPSA training officer, received an extra effort award for developing programs to support GIPSA’s human capital management and strategic planning initiatives.

Mary McCoy, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for providing technical and administrative assistance to internal and external customers that contributed to the enhancement the GIPSA training program during FY2007

Sherri Murphy, Field Management Division, received a spot award for outstanding support of the FGIS Office of the Deputy Administrator.

Regina Pankowski, Field Management Division, received a spot award for outstanding support of the

FGIS Office of the Deputy Administrator.

Joanne Peterson, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for superior performance during fiscal year 2007 in support of efficient and effective management of the GIPSA FOIA program, audit resolutions, and accountability requirements in response to customer and stakeholder needs.

Mavis Rogers, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for superior performance in support of the GIPSA Safety and Health program and for cooperation displayed during the transition to the Management Support Staff organization.

Gilbert Sanchez, Information Technology Staff, received a spot award for providing outstanding customer support on a very short notice.

Caroline Thorpe, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for her initiative, proactive approach, and application of expertise in adult learning principles contributing to online and instructor-led training for GIPSA employees that enhanced the Agency’s training program during FY2007.

Sharon Williams, Management Support Staff, received a performance award for superior performance, professionalism, and support in the GIPSA Management Support Staff by meeting customer’s needs during FY 2007.

Annual Federal Safety and Health Training Week

Cary Ainsworth, Eastern Regional Office

As the newly elected Safety and Health liaison for the Eastern Regional Office, I attended training from November 5-8, during Federal Safety and Health Training Week, in Arlington Heights, Illinois. This training was given to Federal employees by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. I signed up for six half-day seminars which included: ergonomics, lockout tagout, safety and health management systems, introduction to industrial hygiene, emergency response, and electrical safety. These courses just brushed the surface of each subject matter. The ergonomics and the electrical safety courses were the most relevant to office safety and health.

Ergonomics is the applied science of equipment design to maximize productivity by reducing operator fatigue and discomfort. Ensuring the ergonomics of your office work space is very beneficial for stopping certain trauma disorders. Sometimes, all it takes is having your workstation correctly adjusted to fit you ergonomically. Carpal tunnel syndrome can be mitigated by changing your keyboard position; epicondylitis or tennis elbow can be helped by adjusting your mouse position; and ulnar neuritis can be alleviated by resting your forearms on surfaces.

The electrical safety course emphasized the proper use of relocatable power taps (RPT) or, as we know them, power strips. There are several no-no's for them and I will just mention we are making some changes with the RPTs in the ERO. RPTs should be connected to a permanent receptacle, not an extension cord, nor daisy chained to another one. They are made to plug in computers, electronics, TVs, and stereos. They are not made for high-powered loads such as refrigerators, space heaters, microwaves, toaster ovens, and coffee makers.

I would recommend the Safety and Health personnel in the other GIPSA offices and sites that haven't participated in any of the OSHA training courses do so.

Hiring People with Disabilities

Eugene Bass, Washington, DC

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is highlighting and challenging Federal agencies to raise the participation rates of people with disabilities to 2 percent of their workforce by 2010. That includes USDA and GIPSA. USDA currently employs 1006 (0.98 percent) people with disabilities, while GIPSA employment of this group stands at 0.42 percent - the targeted goal is 2.16 percent.

Basically, agencies need to take greater advantage of hiring initiatives such as Schedule A hiring authority or numerous other flexibilities in the hiring process to recruit and retain people with targeted disabilities. Targeted disabilities are identified as blindness, deafness, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, missing extremities, mental illness, mental retardation, convulsive disorders, and distortion of limbs or spine. Various employment options are available to managers such as temporary appointments, term appointments, and permanent appointments to hire persons with disabilities.

We can also meet our goals by using special hiring authorities to assist the country's Veterans such as Veteran's Recruitment Appointment (VRA), 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans Appointment, and Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA). For additional information on this very important recruitment initiative, please contact your Human Resources Office, the GIPSA Civil Rights Staff, or the following websites; www.opm.gov/fedregis and www.opm.gov/disability, and State vocational rehabilitation point of contacts.

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

IT Tidbit

David Will, Washington, DC

The use of GIPSA's virtual private network, or VPN, is growing. This service securely extends the use of the GIPSA network and its resources to any place there is an Internet connection. A VPN connection starts with being able to access the Internet. If you experience a problem with your VPN connection, the first thing you should try is accessing a major website such as Google, Yahoo, or your favorite website with Internet Explorer, our default web browser. If you cannot access a major website from your local internet service provider or through some other third-party internet provider, you will not be able to establish a VPN session. The VPN client located on your laptop must be able to talk to the GIPSA VPN concentrator or hub over the Internet, in order to establish a secure connection. Should you need assistance with your VPN connection or do not know what to do if you can't access the Internet, you can phone or contact your local IT support person or the DC Helpdesk.

November Enforcement Actions

You can find these, and all P&SP enforcement actions, on the web at:

<http://www.gipsa.usda.gov/GIPSA/webapp?area=home&subject=imp&topic=ea>.

- Michael V. Bott and Tony Bott are Assessed a Civil Penalty (11/29/07)
- Ewald Friedrich, Jr. is Assessed a Civil Penalty in the Amount of \$2,500 (11/29/07)
- Lewis is Ordered to Cease and Desist (11/28/07)
- Jim L. Leslie is Suspended as a Registrant (11/28/07)
- GIPSA Alleges Danny L. Johnson Failed to Pay Sellers for the Sale of Their Livestock (11/15/07)
- GIPSA Alleges Timothy R. Baumert Failed to Pay Sellers for the Sale of Their Livestock (11/15/07)
- GIPSA Alleges E.N.A. Meat Packing, Inc. Failed to Maintain an Adequate Bond as Required by the Packers and Stockyards Act (11/15/07)
- GIPSA Alleges Mark Wright Violated the Packers and Stockyards Act (11/15/07)
- Dane Fine, d/b/a Dane Fine Meat Packing is Assessed a Civil Penalty (11/14/07)
- GIPSA Charges Landon Livestock, L.L.C. and Richard A. Landon with Violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act (11/14/07)

Free Training

Rosemary Mayne,
Washington, DC

Looking for free training? There are many SkillSoft courses available at no fee to you through AgLearn (www.aglearn.usda.gov). The catalog is filled with courses that your fellow employees have taken and felt of value. I asked some employees for their recommendations, as you might find them of interest as well. A few are listed below. If you'd like to share some of your favorites with others, please let me know.

-  Handling Conflict with Others
-  Introduction to External Auditing
-  Introduction to Auditing
-  Working with Negative People and Procrastinators
-  Introduction to Six Sigma
-  Working with Aggressive People
-  Creating and Managing Personal Sites and Searches in Sharepoint 2007
-  Working with Arrogant and Duplicious People
-  Pre-Retirement Planning for FERS
-  Federal Budget Process

I encourage you to go into the AgLearn catalog and check these courses, and look for others you might wish to take. They are available to you from any computer with internet access. If you have trouble navigating the catalog, call the MSS Training staff for assistance.

Reminders of the due dates for the mandated courses: Ethics (3 courses) - December 31, 2007; Cyber Security and Privacy (2 courses) - March 31, 2008.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industrial accidents. In the United States, they cause 15 percent of all accidental, job-related deaths, second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Both slips and trips result from some kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface.

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are: wet or oily surfaces, spills, weather hazards, loose or unanchored rugs and mats, and walking surfaces that do not have some degree of traction in all areas.

Trips happen when your foot collides with an object causing you to lose your balance. Common causes of tripping are: obstructed view, poor lighting, clutter in your way, wrinkled carpeting, uncovered cables, bottom drawers not being closed, or uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces.

Falls may be the end result of slipping or tripping. Falling is the most common action that actually injures the body due to striking some surrounding surface. Fall injuries can be extremely serious, or even fatal -- ranging from bumps and bruises to breaks or sprains to a fractured skull.

How can we remain safe at work? Some of the most frequently overlooked general safety precautions involve office housekeeping. Here are some suggestions from OSHA and the National Safety Council (NSC) for "Good Office Housekeeping." To maintain safe floor surfaces and walkways throughout the workplace:

- Keep all corridors, passageways, storerooms, and service areas clear of debris, boxes, and storage. Never block these areas, even temporarily. Emergencies don't usually come with advanced warning and are not likely to give you time to clear cluttered escape paths.
- Keep stairwells clear at all times. Do not store boxes, files, or other debris in the stairwell or landings.
- Pick up dropped pencils, paper clips, and rubber bands that can cause you or a co-worker to skid.
- Contact building management if you see areas that are cluttered with rubbish.
- Wipe up spills immediately. If a spill is too large to clean up quickly, contact building management.

To keep filing areas safe, the National Safety Council suggests these procedures.

- Store the heaviest materials in the bottom of the drawer.
- Never leave the upper drawers of a file cabinet open.
- Open only one drawer at a time.
- Never open a drawer if someone is crouched below it.
- Shut a file drawer immediately after removing files.
- Use the handle when closing a drawer to help reduce pinch-point injuries.

You can reduce your risk of office injuries from slips, trips, and falls with a little vigilance over common things many of us take for granted, such as the way we sit in a chair, walk up the stairs, or carry writing implements in our pockets.

- Never tilt backward in a chair, especially on a tile floor. The chair can give out under your weight if it is not used properly and you could land on your back.
- Take care when going from well-lit to dark areas. The better you can see, the less likely you are to trip over objects on the floor, or to slip on wet surfaces. So give your eyes time to adjust if you cannot see at first.
- Always carry pens and pencils in a pocket, with points facing down, and not in your hand. This is especially important on stairs, where you should always have one hand free to hold onto the railing for balance.
- Look where you are going.
- Walk, don't run.

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

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by December 25, 2007!

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.

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