

Nashville District
Human Resources Newsletter
"News You Can Use"
Issue 15-09-02
15 September 2002

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep Nashville District employees informed about personnel issues, concerns, and topics. You are encouraged to review the information and disseminate to your organization. If there are particular areas of interest that you would like to see addressed in future issues, an article of general interest, or general comments, please contact John Restey at 615-736-5538 or John.G.Restey@lrn02.usace.army.mil.

Upcoming Key Dates in HR

- **1 July-31 December 2002-----Long Term Care Open Season**
- **15 October-31 December 2002----TSP Open Season**
- **1 October-30 September 2002----GS/GM-13 to GS/GM-15 Appraisals completed appraisals due NLT to HR by the 15 November 2002**
- **1 November-31 October 2002---GS/FWS/WS-1 to GS/FWS/WS-12 Appraisals completed appraisals due NLT to HR by the 16 December 2002**
- **11 November-9 December 2002---FEHB Open Season**

General News:

CAREER PROGRAMS UNDER ACCESS

The Army intends to shut down the existing career referral process (ACCESS) and use RESUMIX to produce referral lists. The last ACCESS Career Referral list will be issued

on 09-15-02. The open continuous vacancy announcement is to be opened 10-01-02, and the first RESUMIX Referral list is to be issued on 10-13-02. A meeting with the Functional Chief Representative Proponency POC's is scheduled for 09-06-02. This meeting is being used to work out all the details concerning how vacancy announcements will be issued for career program jobs and which career program unique policies will continue in effect. As soon as we receive the information from the 09-06-02 meeting it will be passed along.

Emergency Contact Database

The Department of the Army is reminding all civilian employees of the need to have current emergency contact information on file in the Emergency Contact Data Base. The database is available on the Civilian Personnel On Line website at <http://cpol.army.mil/> under the heading, "Emergency Contact Data".

On March 13, 2002, the Department of the Army implemented the Emergency Contact Database to provide an automated means for employees to input and maintain their emergency contact data in the event of an emergency or death of an employee. The decision to develop and deploy the database was borne out of some lessons learned after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Those lessons included great difficulty in our ability to notify next of kin of some of the injured and deceased because of outdated or missing information in employee personnel files.

Since implementation, over 35,000 employees have registered and entered data. The number of employees who have registered without entering the necessary emergency data is 2,660. These numbers fall far short of the approximately 220,000 Army employees covered. We strongly encourage those employees who have yet to register and enter data or who have simply registered but have not entered data, to do so as soon as possible.

If assistance is necessary, please respond via e-mail to the project e-mail account at echelp@asamra.hoffman.army.mil <<mailto:echelp@asamra.hoffman.army.mil>>.

Health And Benefits:

Change in Agency Retirement Contribution Rates

In FY 2003, agency payroll
offices must implement changes in
the agency contribution rates for

[the Civil Service Retirement System \(CSRS\) and the Federal Employees Retirement System \(FERS\).](#)

CSRS Agency Contribution Rates:

P.L. 106-346, signed into law on October 23, 2000, requires that the CSRS agency contribution rate changes two separate times during FY 2003 for all employees, except those of the U.S. Postal Service and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

- Effective with the first day of the first pay period in October 2002, the CSRS agency contribution rates must be reduced to 0.5 percent above the respective employee-withholding rate.
- Effective with the first day of the first pay period in January 2003, the CSRS agency contribution rate will be reduced again to equal the employee-withholding rate.

Thus, for the most (or "regular") CSRS employees, the agency contribution rate will be reduced from the current 8.51 percent of basic pay to 7.5 percent in October 2002 and to 7.0 percent in January 2003.

FERS Agency Contribution Rates:

The amount that agencies must contribute to the cost of the FERS coverage of their employees is based on the normal cost of FERS (which is the actual cost to the Government to provide a FERS benefit). New FERS normal costs, effective on October 1, 2002, were announced in the Federal Register. The normal cost for most (or "regular") FERS covered employees will remain at 11.5 percent of basic pay
EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS WILL REMAIN THE SAME.

[ARMY BENEFITS CENTER-CIVILIAN](#)

We can assist you in obtaining up-to-date information using state-of-the-art technology in the following program areas:

- Retirement (Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees' Retirement System)
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Survivor Benefits (Death and Dismemberment)

You can find out about your basic employee benefits and keep up-to-date on legislative issues simply by using the web address of <https://www.abc.army.mil> or a touch-tone telephone to contact the Army Benefits Center-Civilian (ABC-C) at 1-877-276-9287. Access to the system requires you to enter your social security number (SSN) followed by a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Initially, your PIN will be your four-digit date of birth (mmyy). For security purposes, we recommend you immediately access the system and change your PIN to any six-digit number you choose. Do not share your PIN number. We developed this system for you. We are committed to providing quality customer service, and in addition, empowering you to have more control of your benefits and entitlements.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR HEALTH BENEFITS, LIFE INSURANCE, AND THRIFT SAVINGS PLANS SERVICES

YOU:

Access the web at <https://www.abc.army.mil> or call the toll free number, 1-877-ARMY CTR (1-877-276-9287), and access your records using your SSN and PIN.
Select the appropriate prompt for desired information.
Obtain general benefits information or personal information from your records.
Speak with a benefits counselor, if additional information is required.
Conduct benefits and entitlements changes (if eligible).
Verify your personnel action on your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES).

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR RETIREMENT PLANNING SERVICES

YOU:

Access the web at <https://www.abc.army.mil> or call the toll-free number, 1-877-ARMY CTR (1-877-276-9287), and access your records using your SSN and PIN.
Select the prompt for on-line estimates.
Receive annuity estimates.
Speak to a benefits counselor, if additional information is required.

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS FOR RETIREMENT COUNSELING & PROCESSING SERVICES

YOU:

Notify your supervisor of your intent to retire.
Call the toll-free number, 1-877-ARMY CTR (1-877-276-9287), and receive retirement information from the automated system or from a benefits counselor. You may also access the web (<https://www.abc.army.mil>) for general retirement information.
Receive a personal voice-to-voice retirement counseling session.
Complete the appropriate retirement forms from the ABC-C website, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website at <http://www.opm.gov/forms/index.htm>, or from your local Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC).

Send your retirement forms to the ABC-C for processing. The Center will then send the retirement package to your payroll office and also to OPM for final adjudication.

Our goal is to provide you with accurate and timely customer service. The ABC-C provides the operational support services you need. Today's manual benefits and entitlements processing yields to currently available web and telephone technology. This technology provides for your personal involvement by allowing access to your records and the ability to conduct transactions via electronic means. The system is designed for you. You can access the automated system 23 hours a day, 7 days a week via touch-tone telephone or the web. Benefits counselors are available Monday through Friday from 6 am to 6 pm CST.

WHY IS ABC-C A GOOD THING FOR YOU?

Easy access any time, any place. Automated services are operational seven days a week and are but a computer or telephone call away!

Freedom from completing cumbersome and confusing forms.

Increase in accuracy and timeliness. Because you make transactions, it removes the possibility of clerical error and increases data accuracy. The automated system processes most actions overnight.

Complete, current and consistent guidance. Trained benefit counselors deliver quality services.

You control your benefits and entitlements. You have all the necessary tools to make informed decisions. Easy to process transactions when and where it is convenient for you!

NAVIGATION TIPS

Homepage

To make a change to your benefits select the 'Benefit Change' option The 'Benefit Change' site requires your browser to have 128-bit encryption loaded and functional

To review material that ABC-C has posted in regards to benefits, select the 'Information' option

To search everything that is found under the 'Information' option select the 'Search' option

SICK LEAVE AND OTHER LEAVE FOR MEDICAL AND FAMILY CONCERNS

The following are policies and procedures for granting leave under a variety of programs designed to assist employees in balancing work and family as well as work and health. This includes the expanded use of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition implemented on 20 June 2000. Summaries of the programs follow:

a. Family Friendly Leave allows employees to use specified amounts of sick leave to care for family members or for purposes related to the death of a family member (see Appendix A - Sick Leave for Family Care and Bereavement).

b. 5 CFR Part 630, Sick Leave for Family Care Purposes, Final Rule effective 20 June 2000, allows employees to use up to 12 administrative workweeks of sick leave each year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Reference Appendix B - Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member with a Serious Health Condition.

c. The Family and Medical Leave Act established the entitlement for covered Federal employees to use a total of 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for specific health and family issues (see Appendix C - Family and Medical Leave).

d. Employees may use paid leave in order to serve as a bone marrow and/or organ donor as explained in Appendix D - Leave for Serving as a Bone marrow or Organ Donor. The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program allows the unused accrued annual leave of one employee to be transferred for use by another employee who needs such leave because of a medical emergency (including a family member's medical emergency). Reference Appendices F – V

If you have questions or concerns please contact your generalist.

Food for Thought

“Eighty percent of success is showing up”

Woody Allen