

**Nashville District**  
**Human Resources Newsletter**  
**"News You Can Use"**  
Issue 02-01-03  
1 February 2003

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@lrm02.usace.army.mil](mailto:John.G.Restey@lrm02.usace.army.mil).

## General News:

### Effective Deferral Limit Increases For 2003

The Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) annual limit on elective deferrals is \$12,000 for tax year 2003. For purposes of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), the term "elective deferrals" means the maximum amount that employees can contribute to their thrift accounts. For more information on the TSP, go to [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) <<http://www.tsp.gov>>.

### Mileage reimbursement Decreases For Federal Workers

Effective January 1, the mileage reimbursement for federal employees who travel in their own cars on official business is now half a cent less. The new rate is 36 cents per mile. Under federal travel law, the General Services Administration was required to lower the mileage rate when the IRS lowered it for tax purposes from 36.5 cents to 36 cents. The IRS hires a contractor each year to study the costs of operating a vehicle, including gas prices, oil, tires, and general maintenance expenses. According to federal travel regulations, employees may use personal vehicles for official travel if that is authorized by their agency. If an agency authorizes travel by means other than car, such as by air or train, and employees still drive their own vehicles, reimbursement rates are limited to the cost of the authorized means of travel. Employees may also use personal motorcycles and airplanes if they receive approval to do so. The reimbursement rate for motorcycles in 2003 is 27.5 cents per mile, down from 28 cents last year. Personal airplane travel can be reimbursed at 95.5 cents per mile, down from 97.5 cents per mile in 2002. (Federal Employees News Digest, January 20, 2003).

## **Sustaining Base Leadership and Management Program, Class 03-2 Suspense Dates**

Applications are being accepted for the Sustaining Base Leadership and Management (SBLM) Course, Class 03-2. The suspense date for employees to have their completed applications in the Electronic Application Process (EAP) System is at close of business (COB) on February 14, 2003. The suspense dates for major Army commands and Functional Chief Representative ratings and rankings have been extended to COB on February 26, 2003. The Department of the Army Secretariat Selection Board will convene March 11-14, 2003 to choose primary and alternate candidates for the course that is scheduled to take place May 19, 2003 through August 8, 2003. The EAP System can be accessed through the fiscal year 2003 Army Civilian Training Education and Development System Training Catalog on the Civilian Personnel Online home page at [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil) <<http://www.cpol.army.mil/>> or through the Army Management Staff College home page at [www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil](http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil) <<http://www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil/>>. Both sites also provide a description of the course and eligibility requirements.

The SBLM course is a 12-week graduate-level program that covers the body of knowledge and experience of sustaining base leadership, management, and decision making by blending student experience with program design and development. Active participation in seminars, case studies, independent and team research, topical discussions by guest speakers, and practical exercises will meet leadership objectives and reinforce Army concepts and principles. The SBLM course is open to civilian Army employees in grades GS-12-14; however, GS-11s and GS-15s may apply with a waiver.

In order to compete successfully in the selection process, it is crucial that you prepare your application package carefully. Applications submitted by means other than the EAP System will not be accepted and will be returned without action.

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## **Federal Pay-For-Performance Proposal Set to be Unveiled on Capitol Hill**

The House Government Reform Committee is set to propose a federal pay system that will depart from the existing 15-grade General Schedule (GS) structure. The recommendation includes broader pay levels-along the lines of pay banding-to allow managers to link pay and raises to job performance for civil service employees. Managers would assign numerical performance ratings to their employees under a performance appraisal system based upon a review of best practices in both industry and government. Salary ranges for federal employees would be established based on market-

based trends. One part of the current system that would be kept is civil service protections and veterans' preferences in hiring and promotions. The Committee is expected to call for hearings on the federal pay system. **Taken from fedonline.com**

## **Employment Assistance Program (EAP) Newsletter Winter Edition**

The e-mail version for the winter 2003 edition of the EAP newsletter, **Healthy Exchange**, is now available on-line at:

[www.healthy-exchange.com/federaleap/winter](http://www.healthy-exchange.com/federaleap/winter) <<http://www.healthy-exchange.com/federaleap/winter>>

This edition's articles include:

Self-Test: Is Your Attitude Causing You Anxiety?

Understanding Anxiety And Stress

How To Recognize A Teenager In Trouble

Fast Facts

## **FASCLASS Training Survey**

DA has made the decision to turn off the training survey in FASCLASS that has become such a burden to managers and the personnel community without any real benefit. It will take several weeks for the programming changes needed to accomplish this purpose.

## **Answer**

The Army Notification System Web Enabled Response (ANSWER) has replaced ROAR and SOARS and is designed to allow applicants to obtain information on the status of their resumes. After applying for a vacancy, applicants are encouraged to go into ANSWER at <https://cpsrxtp.belvoir.army.mil/staffing/answer/online/apps/default.asp> to view resume status, referral preferences, resume and supplemental data and jobs for which they have applied.

## **Health And Benefits:**

### **TSP Catch-up Contributions**

The TSP "Catch-Up" law (PL 107-304) has been signed by President Bush. PL 107-304 allows participants age 50 and older to make "catch-up" contributions in addition to

regular TSP contributions. The law allows an extra \$2,000 in 2003, \$3,000 in 2004, \$4,000 in 2005, and \$5,000 in 2006. Catch-up contributions thereafter will be adjusted for inflation. Election to make the catch-up contributions is expected to be available during the next TSP Open Season beginning 15 April 2003. Contributions can be made only through payroll deduction.

### **Health Insurance Cards**

It takes health providers approximately 14 calendar days from the effective date of 12 January 2003 to mail new health insurance cards. Physicians and medical health providers will accept the Standard Form 2809 Election Form as proof of coverage until the new insurance card is received. Employees may request a fax-back of the most recent SF2809 from the ABC by calling 1-877-276-9287

### **Food For Thought:**

Standing in the middle of the road is dangerous. You will get knocked down by the traffic from both ways.