



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

22 January 2003—New Employee Orientation

General News:

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!!!!!!!!!

Special Rates Lawsuit Settlement

There is a new development in connection with the special rates court case (*NTEU v. United States*, No. 02-128 C (Fed. Cl.)), which deals with special rate adjustments in the 1982-1988 period. On December 20, 2002, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims issued a decision approving the settlement that had earlier been submitted by the parties. The court's order is scheduled to become final on February 18, 2003.

Those with an interest in this matter should be referred to the special NTEU website www.specialratessettlement.com. In particular, see the "Recent Developments" page -- <http://www.specialratessettlement.com/recent.htm>.

GREAT INFORMATION **Mypay REPLACES EMSS**

The following attachment contains important information about your pay and accessibility to make changes to deductions, print Leave and Earnings Statement (LES), change withholding etc.



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MODERNIZATION UPDATE

Army representatives along with Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS) and Lockheed Martin Systems Innovation (LMSI) are currently planning the consolidation of all Civilian Personnel Operations Center's Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) database into one centralized database. The central site will have a superdome server and is located at Rock Island Arsenal. Current plans are to begin combining the CONUS DCPDS databases in February 2003 with OCONUS regions to follow later in the year. This "centralization" is in preparation for transition to the web-based version of the ORACLE HR system - ORACLE 11i.

The Department of Defense (DoD) plans to migrate all DoD components to a web-based version in May 2003. The 11i database is currently being tested by field and HQ representatives.

The Modernization and Functional Automation Division will continue to provide updates on this new phase of the modernization effort by posting information on the CPOL-modernization web site at: <http://cpol.army.mil/modern/> under "Migration to Oracle Human Resources 11i."

TRAINING ALERT

The Civilian Personnel Operations Center Management Agency is pleased to announce a human resources course for new civilian and military supervisors of Army civilians. Two sessions of this course scheduled in the 2nd Quarter of FY 03 are now open for nominations:

- HR for New Supervisors at Aberdeen Proving Ground, February 10-14 (nominations due January 16, 2003)

- HR for New Supervisors at Aberdeen Proving Ground, March 24-28 (nominations due Feb 28, 2003)

Additional sessions of this course will be offered onsite to selected Army installations. The complete FY 03 training schedule is available at CPOCMA's Training Management Division website: <http://www.cpocma.army.mil/tmd.htm>

This course is intended for new supervisors of civilian employees appointed, assigned, or promoted to a supervisory position in the last 12 months. All necessary travel costs will be funded by CPOCMA for supervisors of appropriated fund employees. The course will focus on fundamental concepts of civilian human resources management and Army's HR tools (e.g., Modern DCPDS, Army Regional Tools, FASCLASS, and PERMISS).

FEDERAL LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM

LEAVE USAGE ON November 29th and December 31ST

Previously OPM stated that employees whose applications for long term care insurance had been approved were required to be "actively at work" (pay and duty status) for at least 50% of their schedule tour of duty on their last regular work day before the scheduled effective date of their coverage. This meant that coverage could be delayed for one month, or more, for employees with applications approved in November and December if they were on leave on November 29 or December 31, respectively.

In view of the heavy leave usage on Nov 29th and Dec 31st, and in keeping with our objectives of being employee-oriented and family friendly; we have relaxed this actively at work requirement.

For this year only, coverage will not be delayed for employees in an approved leave status Nov 29th or Dec 31st as long as they return to being actively at work during the month when their coverage becomes effective and they pay their premium within established deadlines.

Employees, as well as all applicants, still have an affirmative obligation to contact Long Term Care Partners if their health changes in a way that would affect their answers to one or more questions on their long term care insurance application on the effective date of their coverage.

We made this change in response to employee and agency concerns about holiday leave usage toward the end of the Open Season, a period in which large number of employees have expressed interest in applying. We also recognize that this is the first FLTCIP Open Season.

Annual Notification of "Weingarten" Rights to All Employees

This is to inform you that pursuant to Section 7114(1)(2) of Title 5, U.S. Code, the exclusive union must be given the opportunity to be represented at any examination of an employee in the bargaining unit by a management representative in connection with an investigation if:

- The employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action against the employee; and
- The employee requests representation.

Upon a valid request for union representation from the employee, management has three options:

- 1) grant the request and notify the union that a meeting to examine a bargaining unit employee is going to take place and that the employee has requested union representation;
- 2) continue the investigation without interviewing the employee; or
- 3) offer the employee a clear choice to either continue the interview without representation, or have no interview.

When a union representative is present during an examination, the employee should be permitted to consult the representative; however, the union representative is not entitled to answer on behalf of the employee or to bargain with management regarding the results of the investigation. This employee right does not apply to everyday work-related communications between supervisors and employees, or to discussions concerning job performance.

In the absence of a local collective bargaining agreement to the contrary, and unlike a Miranda warning, management is not obligated to notify unit employees on an individual basis of their right to representation at the time of questioning.

Supervisors: Please post a hard copy of this notice on all official bulletin boards.

Additional information regarding "Weingarten" rights can be obtained in PERMISS at <http://www.cpol.army.mil/permiss/4122.html>. The website also provides links to related topics.

Health And Benefits

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Drops Certain Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) hospitals From Blue Cross PPO Provider Networks

Starting Jan 2, 2003, certain Tennessee hospitals owned by Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) will no longer be included in Blue Cross PPO provider networks. An agreement could not be reached during contract negotiations. When the current contract with HCA expires at midnight on December 31, 2002, HCA hospitals will be removed from the company's PPO networks. BlueCross representations said a letter dated 26 December 2002, is being sent to each Federal BlueCross of Tennessee enrollee explaining the changes. If you are a Tennessee BlueCross enrollee, please carefully review the BC letter and make the changes necessary to meet you and your family's health needs.

Hospitals removed with the new 2003 contract:

13 HCA hospitals in Tennessee are involved:

Six are in the Nashville area:

- *Centennial Medical Center
- *Skyline Medical Center
- *Southern Hills Medical Center
- *Southern Hills Medical Center at Smyrna
- *Hendersonville Medical Center
- *Summit Medical Center

Three are in the Chattanooga area:

- *East Ridge Hospital
- *Parkridge Medical Center
- *Grandview Medical Center

The others are:

- *Centennial Medical Center in Ashland City
- *Horizon Medical Center in Dickson
- *Northcrest Medical Center in Springfield
- *River Park Hospital in McMinnville

Why are HCA hospitals leaving the BlueCross network? Blue Cross stated that HCA demanded a contract increase that is significantly higher than BlueCross is paying similar hospitals in Tennessee. BlueCross is notifying each head of a household covered by a BlueCross plan by letter that HCA hospitals will no longer participate in BC networks. Any covered services you receive at an HCA hospital, up through Dec 31, will be paid at the in-network benefit level. After that, these hospitals will not be participating in your network. Any covered services you receive at one of these HCA hospitals will be paid at the out-of-network benefit level. This means that if you continue to use one of these HCA hospitals after January 1, 2003, your benefits will be substantially reduced and you may be required to pay more out-of-your-pocket for the hospital care you receive there. For members with health services scheduled at an HCA facility in Tennessee after Dec 31, 2002, a special toll free BlueCross hotline, 1-877-284-6022 has been set to help members. The hotline will be answered by Blue Cross nurses, who will work with members on plans to continue their care.

How do you find another network hospital? The complete listing of network providers is easy to access on the company's website at www.bcbst.com. Click on "find a doctor" and select the specific network that matches the information on your ID card. You can print a customized listing of hospitals near you. Remember HCA hospitals will remain on the online network directory until 31 December 2002. You also may call the BlueCross of Tennessee toll free number with questions, the number is 1-800-572-

LAWMAKERS SEEKING INCREASED FEDERAL CIVILIAN PAY LEVELS

In a letter to President Bush, more than 80 members of Congress have asked that federal employees receive the full pay raise for next year instead of the partial 3.1 % raise proposed by the administration. The President announced Nov. 29 that civilian employees would receive a 3.1% pay raise-a figure that does not include locality pay increases. Employees were expecting about a 4.1 % increase. **TAKEN FROM FEDEXEC.COM**

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH BENEFITS (FEHB) **2002 OPEN SEASON**

The FEHB Open Season ended December 9, 2002. Both the web based Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) and telephonic Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) were fully operational with virtually no down time throughout the open season.

The transaction count for the FEHB 2002 Open Season wrapped up at:

11,308 via the web based EBIS (Employee Benefits Information System)
551 through the IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System)
1,221 transactions completed utilizing counselor assistance
13,080 Total elections for FEHB open season 2002

All open season elections flow through automated systems to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and on to the health plan carriers. Army civilian employees receive new health carrier cards much quicker than in the past because of these automated processes. Employees who made elections during the later part of the open season should expect a longer wait to receive their individual health carrier cards.

TSP CATCH-UP BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

President Bush has signed into law legislation (PL 107-304) allowing TSP participants age 50 and older make "catch-up" contributions--on top of the regular TSP investments allowed--to the retirement savings program of an additional \$2,000 in 2003, with the allowable amount rising by \$1,000 a year until reaching \$5,000 a year in 2006 and adjusted for inflation afterward. The contributions, which will have to be made through payroll withholding, are expected to be available starting April 15, if not sooner--the timing will depend on what agency payroll systems can handle. Bush's signature caps an effort to put federal employee investors on equal footing with participants of similar private sector plans, which were given authority under a 2001 tax law to allow such contributions effective this year. TAKEN FROM GOVEXEC.COM

Food For Thought:

"If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging."

Will Rogers