

Military Technician Bulletin



Headquarters, United States Army Reserve
Command, Military Technician Branch,
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Keeping the MT Community Informed.

MILITARY PERSONNEL ISSUES:

UNIFORMED SERVICES CAN JOIN THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

On 30 Oct 00 President Clinton signed the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398) providing uniformed services the opportunity to join the Federal Employees Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Service members will have their first opportunity to elect to participate during a special 60-day open season beginning 9 Oct 01 with deductions beginning in Jan 02.

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Military Technicians and other DA civilians can have two separate accounts, one for civilian status and one for military status.

Active duty and Ready Reserve soldiers can invest up to 7 percent of their basic pay in TSP, plus all special, incentive, or bonus payments, up to the IRS 402(g) limitation, which is \$10,500. Combat zone contributions are subject to a different limitation; 25% of pay or \$35,000, whichever is less. The TSP allows soldiers to invest pre-tax dollars and reduces taxable income by not taxing investments and earnings until they are withdrawn.

Soldiers must contribute from basic pay in order to be eligible to elect to contribute from special, incentive or bonus payments. Soldiers who are contributing to the TSP may elect to contribute up to 100% of bonuses at any time. Participation is optional.

Forms and educational materials will be provided to soldiers during the open season so they can make an informed choice. For additional information, visit the TSP's uniformed services page at <http://www.tsp.gov>. The website has a section of Questions and Answers that answer basic questions about the TSP for members of the uniformed services.

The Army has also provided briefing slides with notes about the program, which are posted on the AR-PERSCOM website <http://www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil>. [Ms. Paulla Savage, (404) 464-9035]

REQUESTS FOR EXTENSION OF MAXIMUM YEARS OF SERVICE

We are still receiving numerous requests for extension of Maximum Years of Service (MYOS) for enlisted personnel. The Chief, Army Reserve, issued a memorandum dated 25 May 01 further suspending the removal of troop program unit (TPU) enlisted soldiers who reach MYOS until 30 Sep 02. Initially, the suspension was to remain in effect until 31 Dec 01. Soldiers can be retained past their MYOS, but only up to age 60.

Accordingly, we have suspended the processing of MYOS extension packets. We will be returning all packets that have been received and you can resubmit them 6 months prior to 30 Sep 02. In the meantime, we are pursuing getting the MYOS criteria changed. The USARC requested a change to 31 years of service to all ranks except for CSM, which would remain at 35 years of service. We also asked for military technicians to be exempted from the criteria altogether because

of the conditions of employment and the legislative restrictions on the number of non-dual status technicians we may have. We will keep you updated as things progress. If you have questions, you may contact Debbie Johnson-Taylor at 404-464-9036 or Pat Rhone at 404-464-9031. [Ms. Rhone]

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ISSUES:

LOCALITY PAY FOR GENERAL SCHEDULE EMPLOYEES IS SIMILAR IN NATURE TO PAY FOR FEDERAL WAGE SYSTEM EMPLOYEES

The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 (FEPCA) established a locality pay system for General Schedule (GS) employees, which was implemented in Jan 94. It provided for pay adjustments based on survey comparisons with non-Federal salary rates on a locality basis. Its goal was to narrow the pay gap between Federal and non-Federal salaries. Locality pay is payable within each locality determined to have a pay disparity greater than 5 percent. The intent of the legislation was to make Federal pay more responsive to local labor market conditions. Since the amount of locality pay depends on the geographic area where civilian employees work, the amount of locality pay may change if employees change duty locations. Surveys of non-Federal employers (including State and local governments) determine the pay for GS employees.

Congress established the Federal Wage System (FWS) in 1972. It was developed to make the pay of FWS-type workers comparable to prevailing private sector rates in each local wage area. *A wage area is the geographic area within which a single set of wage schedules is applied uniformly by Federal installations to covered occupations.* The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), with the cooperation of the agencies concerned, defines the boundaries of wage areas, and they may be changed only by OPM. The goal of the system was to pay employees according to local prevailing rates. All agencies in a wage area pay their hourly wage employees according to the wage schedules developed by the lead agency, which for us is the Department of the Defense. The wage system's prevailing rate determinations are made on the basis of surveys of rates paid by private employers in each local wage area for work similar to that performed by federal wage employees.

Wage surveys are conducted at approximately annual intervals in a wage area. Two kinds of wage surveys are made on an alternating cycle:

A full-scale survey, including development of a current sample of establishments and collection of wage data by visits to establishments, is made every second year in an area. So in any one-year, full-scale surveys are made in about half of the areas.

A wage change survey (in which data may be collected by telephone, mail or personal contact) is made every other year

using only the same employers, occupations, and weights of occupations used in computing the wage line used in the preceding full-scale survey.

Under the FWS, pay is based on what private industry is paying for comparable levels of work in specific wage areas. However, due to legislative mandate, the pay is capped and cannot exceed the sum of the GS across-the-board percentage adjustment and the difference between the overall average percentage locality payments for GS employees.

FWS employees are receiving locality pay and have been receiving it long before GS employees. [Ms. Collins, (404) 464-9034]

DoD Priority Placement Program

The DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP) was implemented to minimize the adverse effects on employees caused by actions such as, but not limited to, reductions-in-force, base closure, realignments, consolidations, contracting out, position classification decisions, rotation from overseas, and transfers of function. The PPP consists of several subprograms with the primary purpose of placing DoD employees who have been adversely affected through no fault of their own. The principal program within the PPP is Program A.

The Army Reserve Military Technician (MT) Program is covered in Chapter 11 under Program D (Army Reserve Military Technician Program). When Title 10, section 10218 was enacted on

5 Oct 99, it mandated that those Non-Dual Status Technicians (NDST) who, on the date of enactment, were eligible for an unreduced annuity (URA) must be separated from the technician program not later than 6 months (5 Apr 00) from the enactment date. The law then required each NDST to be separated no later than 30 days after reaching URA. At that time, this Headquarters went forth to the Secretary of the Army seeking approval to offer temporary appointment.

The USARC MT branch in conjunction with our servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) requested a change to the PPP to allow those impacted NDSTs to immediately register in the PPP. Our requested change was approved and now provides for the voluntary registration of NDSTs up to a year from the time they will meet both age and URA eligibility.

Since this is a voluntary action, the affected employee will need to contact the CPAC, Fort McCoy for registration. The CPAC is currently working on implementing a system to identify those employees who will be impacted in the out years. Employees are eligible to be registered for up to a year prior to separation and for a year after separation. If the employee elects to voluntarily retire, then their name would be removed from registration. The current registration procedures only allow employees to be registered as a Priority 2 and only for vacancies within Department of the Army. This Headquarters' has also requested another change to the PPP to allow registration as a Priority 1

and for vacancies within the entire Department of Defense. This request is being reviewed at the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs), PPP Policy Branch. [Pat Hines, (404) 464-9250]

STATUS ON THE UPGRADE OF UAs FROM GS-7 TO GS-8

In 2000, the USARC DCSPer and the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC), Fort McCoy, WI, headed a committee to change the name and position description, and upgrade Unit Administrator (UA) positions. The committee was comprised of representatives from the MT Branch, the CPAC, and UAs from the field. Regrettably, the joint effort to reclassify the UA as a Readiness Coordinator and simultaneously upgrade it from a GS-7 to a GS-8 has been turned down by the Department of Defense Field Advisory Service. In spite of our best efforts to properly articulate the changing functions of the position, to include its mobilization and public relations aspects, the decision remained that the primary portion of the job remained "clerical in nature" and it still graded out at a GS-7. If anyone has a fresh approach, we would love to hear it. [Phil Willson, (404) 464-9417]

THE ARMY BENEFITS CENTER OPENS FOR THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION

The North Central Region Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers have transferred many of their benefit services to the Army Benefits Center for Civilians (ABC-C). The center will provide

automated benefit services to all military technicians who have Internet access. The ABC-C provides automated benefits support through the Employee Benefit Information System (EBIS) and the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS), and trained counselors.

The ABC-C provides services in retirement (Civil Service and Federal Employees' Retirement Systems); Thrift Savings Plan (TSP); Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB); Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI); and survivor benefits (death and dismemberment).

The EBIS is a Web application that allows you to access general and personal benefit information. The system allows you to conduct electronic transactions from a computer. The system also contains comprehensive information and personalized benefits statements.

The IVRS is an automated self-service system you can access from a touch-tone telephone. Unlike the Web, this system allows you to transfer to a benefits counselor for additional assistance. You can access EBIS by the Web at <http://www.abc.army.mil>. To access IVRS, call the toll-free number at 1-877-ARMY CTR or 1-877-276-9287. You can use either system 21 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, the system is down 12:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m. Central Standard Time. The benefit counselors are available Monday - Friday, during and after duty hours. [Ms. Johnson-Taylor, (404) 464-9036]

LEGISLATION LIFTS RESTRICTIONS ON STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS

The Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398) amended 5 U.S.C. 5379 making wage grade employees eligible for federal student loan repayment benefits. The Office of Personnel Management issued proposed regulations in March 2001, asking for comments that were due in May 2001. OPM has now forwarded proposed regulations to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to finalize the clearing process.

The student loan repayment authority permits agencies to repay the student loans of Federal employees in order attract or keep highly qualified individuals. In order to receive student loan repayment benefits, an employee must sign a service agreement to remain in the service of the agency for a period not less than 3 years. Agencies can pay up to \$6,000 a year in student loan payments for each employee, but the total amount per employee cannot exceed \$40,000.

This authority is not an entitlement. As with any incentive, it is used at the discretion of the agency. If an agency chooses to use it, they will need to develop a plan that describes how it will be implemented within that agency.

People interested in participating in this program must contact the agency in which they work or wish to work for further details.

Agencies choosing to use this flexibility must establish a plan that

describes how this incentive will be implemented within that agency. *The term "agency" used by OPM refers to Department of Defense (DoD) level. The Army is awaiting further guidance from DoD on this program. As we receive the final guidance on the student loan repayments, it will be published in the MT Bulletin.* [Gwen Bergeson, 404-464-9029]

TRAINING:

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING RESOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS- GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (ITRR-GIS)

American Management Systems, Inc. (AMS) has developed a customized software program, ITRR-GIS for the DCSOPS of the US Army Reserve Command. The ITRR-GIS software provides the user with the ability to quickly identify reservists who require skill and/or professional development training. It allows users to identify soldiers trained in a specified Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Area of Concentration (AOC). This is the only software package that marries Total Army Personnel Database-Reserve (TAPDB-R) and the Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS) data for a more accurate representation of readiness.

The ITRR-GIS program consists of eight modules: **Mapping; Direct Reporting Command (DRC) Summary; Units; Soldiers; Training; Support; Enhanced; and Ad Hoc.**

Mapping is a feature that will geographically identify soldiers or units within a specified radius.

DRC Summary provides links to the Direct Reporting Command Summary Reports organized by Standard Requirements Code and Direct Reporting Command. There are two rollup reports displaying US Army Reserve unit strength data. There are seven reports to choose from in the **Units** module. Three of the seven reports are designed to return information on an individual unit; the remaining reports will provide information on an entire command. The **Soldier** module allows you to identify qualified and nonqualified soldiers. It will also identify soldiers that can fill a vacancy within a specified radius.

Training module is aimed at supporting the Division (Individual Training) to identify training needs of units. It helps to identify soldiers who are qualified to instruct an MOS or Professional Development course. **Support** module displays Upcoming Events, Site Visit Statistics, Help Files and ITRR-GIS Newsletters, as well as online training guides. The **Enhanced** module offers a variety of canned reports that will assist all levels of training and personnel management. **Ad Hoc** Query Module allows units to build their own queries, unique to their need; users also have the ability to save those queries.

You can access ITRR-GIS on the USARC Intranet at <https://arnetopsitr/eitr>. For upcoming ITRR-GIS training classes, information regarding on-site visits or to enroll in a scheduled class, contact Ms. Jeanette Bailey by phone at (770) 319-6100 x109 or email her at Jeanette.Bailey@usarc-emh2.army.mil. [Ms. Johnson-Taylor, (404) 464-9036]

MILITARY TECHNICIAN BRANCH MEETS YOUR TRAINING NEEDS

The Military Technician Branch is responsible for ensuring that all newly hired Military Technicians receive the appropriate initial entry training as quickly as possible after employment. To support us in our efforts, the Army Reserve Readiness Training Center (ARRTC) has increased our Fiscal Year 2002 training allocations to 30 per class for the Unit Administrator Basic Course (UABC). We will continue to manage all of the allocations for the Army Reserve Technician Entry Training (ARTET) course and are moving toward managing all of the quotas for the Unit Records Administration and Automation Course (URRAC), and the Unit Pay Administration Course (UPAC) as well.

To effectively manage the increase in the number of allocations, we have divided the Major Support Commands (MSCs) into two categories. Ms. Carla Russell (404-464-9072) and Ms. Pat Rhone (404-464-9031) will be supporting all of the new hires in what we have categorized as the East region and Ms. Paulla Savage (404-464-9035) and Mrs. Debbie Johnson-Taylor (404-464-9036) will take care of the new hires in the West region. Effective immediately, we request that you contact the appropriate points of contact based upon your category assignment by email or by phone. Please refer to the global for email addresses. The MSC category assignments are:

EAST REG

65th RSC
77th RSC
81st RSC
94th RSC
99th RSC
7th ARCOM
8th Army (Korea)
9th RSC
78th TSD
98th DIV (IT)
87th TSD
100th DIV (IT)
108th DIV (IT)
143d TRANSCOM
412th ENCOM
335th SIG Cmd
3d MEDCOM
80th DIV (IT)
311th SIG Cmd
9th TSC
USACAPOC
[Ms. Russell, (404) 464-9072]

WEST REG

63d RSC
70th RSC
88th RSC
89th RSC
90th RSC
96th RSC
91st TSD
311th COSCOM
104th DIV (IT)
85th TSD
84th DIV (IT)
416th ENCOM
244th AVN Bde
19th TSC
75th TSD
95th DIV (IT)
377th TSC

Leadership Development Training for Civilians

Mr. Ed Shanahan, who is the Employee Development Specialist for Headquarters, US Army Reserve Command (USARC), has created a one-stop web page for leadership development for civilian employees of all grades. To visit his page, go to the USARC Intranet site <https://usarcintra/>, click on "ok" then "yes;" this will take you to the site's home page. You will need to go to the directorates, go to DCSPER home page and click on employee development.

If you aspire to progress within the federal system, this web page will definitely put you on the right path. You will also find links to career program specific enhancement tools such as Army Civilian Training Education and Development System (ACTED) and United States Department of Agriculture, Graduate School (USDA). Many of the courses on this web page are

designed to enhance your ability to be a leader in both your civilian and your military capacity. Provided for you below is a brief description of many of the leadership courses that you will find on the web page.

Action Officer Development Course

– is a correspondence course that is mandatory for interns and is strongly recommended for civilian employees at the GS05-09 level. This course is designed to impact basic staff skills to members of Army organizations at all levels.

Supervisory Development Course

– is a correspondence course mainly for newly appointed supervisors, usually at the GS11 level and higher. This course is mandatory and should be completed within the first 6 months of appointment to a supervisory position. The purpose of this course is to provide basic human resource skills and basic supervisory skills in managing work and leading people. In order to meet minimum qualification as a supervisor, you must complete the Supervisory Development course first and then the Leadership Education and Development course.

Leadership Education and Development Course (LEAD)

– is the follow-on training for the Supervisory Development Course. This course is an interactive 40-hour class conducted in a classroom environment and should be completed within the first year of appointment in a supervisory position. The purpose of this course is to produce confident leadership, competent supervisors who inspire and motivate employees and create high performing teams. During fiscal year 2002, Mr. Shanahan

plans to conduct two classes per quarter here at Headquarters USARC. There will be 5 allocations reserved per class for other Major Support Command (MSC) employees to attend. There is no cost for the course; however, the MSCs will be responsible for paying travel and per diem for their employees.

Manager Development Course – is a correspondence course primarily for managers. Managers are civilians at the GS12 level and higher who supervise supervisors. The purpose of this course is to provide newly appointed DA Civilian managers knowledge and skills to perform managerial duties at a higher lever in a diverse organization.

Organizational Leadership for Executives Course (OLE) – is conducted in a classroom environment. Although there is no grade restriction for this course, the target audience is managers at the GS12 level and higher. The purpose of the OLE course is to train leaders with increased self-awareness able to visualize, communicate and forge the organization's future. This course will explain and demonstrate the leadership skills and competencies required to perform at the managerial level.

Other courses that you will find on the web page are the Personnel Management for Executive I and II, Sustaining Base Leadership Management course, and the Defense Leadership and Management Program. These courses are designed for managers at the GS13 level and above. If you

would like more information on any of the courses mentioned in this article, please contact Mr. Ed Shanahan at (404) 464-9247 or 1-800-359-8483 extension 9247. In order to better support your local training needs, we will provide LEAD facilitators to any Major Subordinate Command that desires to run a local training session. Since this is not budgeted, local commands will have to fund. However, the bottom-line cost for your command should be far less than sending all your students to Atlanta to train. [Ms. Russell, (404) 464-9072]

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FOR THE COMMANDER:



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This information expires 2 years from the date of this publication.

