

Nashville District Human Resources Newsletter "News You Can Use"

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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.

Coming Events:

TSP OPEN SEASON: April 15-June 30 2004

General News:

Warning: Be on the Alert for Federal Job Scams

CONSUMER ALERT - FEDERAL JOB FRAUD

Information on job vacancies with the Federal Government and the Postal Service is provided free of charge. However, many Americans are victimized by scam artists selling information about Federal job opportunities. These scam artists place classified advertisements in newspapers, magazines and periodicals offering--for a fee--to help job seekers locate and apply for Federal jobs. Some companies go so far as to use names that imply affiliation with the Federal Government, such as the "U.S. Agency for Career Advancement," or "Postal Employment Service."

Many of these companies advertise the availability of large numbers of Federal jobs in local areas, while in reality few or none may actually exist. For example, the Postal Service has few vacancies for permanent, full-time jobs. Postal Service hiring takes place through 85 district offices at the local level. Openings are announced for a very short time. Your local post office is the best source of information concerning current or anticipated openings. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employment Information System is the official source for employment information and contains Federal job listings as well as some state, local government and private sector listings.

Remember, information about Federal job opportunities is available to the public free of charge, with the exception of local phone company charges for long distance calls. Federal agencies and the Postal Service never charge for applications, sell study guides for examinations, or guarantee that you will be hired. If an examination is required, the agency administering the examination typically offers free sample questions to applicants scheduled for the examination.

The Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management urge consumers to protect themselves against job scams. Beware of advertisements or sales pitches containing:

- An implied affiliation with the Federal Government, a guarantee of high test scores or jobs, references to "hidden" or unadvertised job vacancies, or claims that "no experience is necessary."
- Referrals to a toll-free phone number. Often in these cases, an operator encourages you to buy a "valuable" booklet containing job listings, practice test questions, and tips for entrance examinations. These materials may be inaccurate, unnecessary, or available at no charge from the hiring agency.
- Toll-free numbers that direct you to pay-per-call numbers for more information. Under Federal law, any solicitations for pay-per-call numbers must contain full disclosures about cost. The solicitation must make clear if there is or is not an affiliation with the Federal Government. You must have a chance to hang up before you incur any charges.

If you have concerns about an employment advertisement or a company offering employment services, you may contact the following:

- Federal Trade Commission, 1-877-FTC-HELP.
- Postal Crime Hotline, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, 1-800-654-8896, available 24 hours a day.
- National Fraud Information Center (a project of the National Consumers League), 1-800-876-7060, available weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, or on the internet at www.fraud.org.
- Your State Attorney General or local Better Business Bureau.

The Federal Trade Commission works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive, and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop, and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit <http://www.ftc.gov/> or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft, and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the United States and abroad. *AS OF: 12-10-02*

<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> is the official website for Federal Vacancies.

Health and Benefits:

CATCH-UP TSP CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Eligibility for catch-up contributions

Catch-up contributions are supplemental contributions available to TSP participants who are age 50 or older. A participant is eligible to make catch-up contributions as long as:

- a. He or she is in pay status. Because these contributions are made by payroll deductions, participants must be currently employed and receiving pay. They cannot be separated from service or in nonpay status: **and**
- b. He or she is contributing either the maximum TSP contribution percentage or an amount which will result in his or her reaching the elective deferral limit by the end of the relevant year **and**
- c. He or she is at least 50 years old in the year the catch-up contributions are made (even if the participant's birthday is December 31 of that year): **and**
- d. He or she is not in the 6-month non-contribution period following the receipt of a financial hardship in-service withdrawal.

2. Annual Catch-up Contribution Limits

- a. Catch-contributions are not subject to the Internal Revenue Code's elective deferral limits. However these contributions are limited as follows:

Year	Maximum Contributions
2003	\$2000
2004	\$3000
2005	\$4000
2006 and thereafter	\$5000 *

- After 2006, this amount will be subject to increases to reflect inflation
- b. As with regular employee contributions, the catch-up contribution limit applies to the year that is recorded on the pay date that is specified on the submission by the agency. This means that if a contribution with a

December 31, 2003, pay date is posted to the account on January 2, 2004, it applies against the 2003 limit. Agencies are responsible for ensuring that they do not submit catch-up contributions for their participants which exceed the yearly catch-up limit. The TSP record keeper will reject any contributions that exceed this limit (as is currently done for regular TSP contributions). For makeup and late catch-up contributions, the “as of” date, not the date the contributions is posted is used to determine the year of the catch-up contribution limit. For example if a makeup or late payment with an “ as of date of November 30, 2003 is posted to the account on January 1, 2004, it applies to the 2003 limit.

3. Tax Treatment of Catch-up Contributions

- a. Like regular employee contributions, catch-up contributions are made on a pre-tax basis, which means that they are taken from the participant’s basic pay before Federal and, in almost all cases, state income taxes are calculated.
- b. Because these contributions are taken from “before-tax” dollars, they cannot be made by check; they must be made by payroll deduction.

4. Agency Contributions

Catch-up Contributions are not eligible for matching contributions. There are no Agency Automatic (1%) contributions associated with catch-up contributions.

- **Catch-up contribution elections made in 2003 cannot be carried over into 2004; eligible participants must make new elections each calendar year. See [TSP Bulletin 03-4](#) for detailed information about catch-up contributions. REMINDER: Army employees will use the ABC-C to elect these catch-up contributions.**
- This article is an extract from TSP Bulletin 03-4 which is available at www.tsp.gov

RETIREMENT ANYONE??????

How much Federal Life insurance do I need? How much can I afford?

Deciding how much if any Federal Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) to take into retirement is one of the most important retirement decisions you will make. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has devised an excellent calculator that will compute your current life insurance as well as show cost and benefits for the remainder of your life. It is simple to use and requires little information from you. If you don’t know what FEGLI you have at present it is printed in block 27 of all of your SF 50’s, Notification of

Personnel Action. The calculator can be accessed at the following link
<http://www.opm.gov/calculator/worksheet.asp>

Food For Thought:

Signs That You might need to Join E-Mailers Anonymous

8. Your firstborn is named dotcom.
7. You turn off your modem and are suddenly filled with a feeling of emptiness, as if you just pulled the plug on a loved one.
6. You spend half of a plane trip with your laptop in your lap...and your child in the overhead compartment.
5. You decide to stay in college for an additional year or two, just for the free Internet access.
4. You find yourself typing "com" after every period.com
3. You move into a new home and decide to netscape before you landscape.
2. You start tilting your head sideways to smile. :)

AND THE NO. 1 SIGN THAT YOU KNOW IT'S TIME TO JOIN E-MAILERS ANONYMOUS:

1. Immediately after reading this list, you e-mail it to someone

