

National Guard Technician Handbook



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Office of Technician Personnel*

People First, Mission Always!



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FORWARD...

Welcome to the National Guard Military Technician Program!

Congress established the National Guard Military Technician Program with the passage of Public Law 90-486, which is known as "The Technician Act of 1968." The Military Technician Program is a critical component of the National Guard in all fifty states, U.S. territories and District of Columbia. The program was established to provide National Guard technicians with fair and just compensation, employment benefits, and entitlement to a retirement system that is equitable to other federal employees. The law also designates, through the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force, The Adjutants General of each state to employ and administer the Military Technician Program. This authority may be further delegated to the Human Resources Officer (HRO). It is the HRO's responsibility to review and administer human resource policies and procedures for the National Guard Military Technician Program. The HRO staff is committed to administering these policies and implementing systems that ensure fair and equitable treatment, job satisfaction, just compensation, and recognition for work well done.

Our National Guard members continue to face many new and exciting challenges. We are accepting new roles and missions and are transforming to stay abreast with the constant changes in weapon systems, technology, military doctrine, and the mobilization of soldiers and airmen. New legislation and reduced funding levels continue to challenge the National Guard Military Technician Program.

This Handbook is intended to guide and assist you in answering various questions involving working conditions and benefits. It is designed to serve as a quick reference resource but is not an "official" regulatory publication. The Handbook outlines procedures that are applicable, but detailed procedures may vary. For those of you in a labor bargaining unit, this handbook is not intended to replace the negotiated agreement. If there is a difference in language between the agreement and this handbook, the negotiated agreement language generally will take precedence.

We consider it a privilege to provide this very important Handbook to our Military Technicians. We encourage you, our customers, to contact your Human Resources Office should you have any questions regarding technician career and benefits.

ROBERT W. TETREAULT
Chief, Office of Technician Personnel



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Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

The National Guard grew out of the various State militias that have been a significant part of American defense history since the late 17th Century. With your selection as a National Guard Military Technician, you have become a federal employee covered by 32 USC 709. Because of this law, you are referred to as a Military Technician. Your primary mission as a Military Technician is to provide day-to-day continuity in the operation and training of Army and Air National Guard units. There are two categories of Military Technicians covered under 32 USC 709: Dual Status (DS) (requires military membership) and Non-Dual Status (NDS) (does not require military membership). The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1084) requires the Secretary of Defense to convert all Non-Dual Status technicians to Federal Civilian Employees under section 3101 of title 5 U.S.C. no later than October 1, 2017.

Military Technicians are employees of the Department of Army or Department of the Air Force. Dual Status Military Technicians are required to maintain military membership in the National Guard in order to retain employment. These Military Technicians are referred to as dual-status technicians. However, unlike other Federal employees, the State Adjutant General has the authority to affect employment and is the level of final appeal for most personnel actions. With few exceptions, Military Technicians enjoy the same benefits, privileges and rights as other federal employees.

The National Guard also employs Technicians who are not required to hold military membership. These employees are referred to as Non Dual Status (NDS) technicians. If you are an NDS technician, your terms and conditions of employment are very similar to those described in this Handbook, but not identical in all cases. Because the majority of our technicians are dual status Military Technicians (not NDS), this Handbook primarily addresses the dual status Military Technician workforce. For additional information on the differences between DS/NDS Technician Programs and Federal Civilian Employees, please contact the Human Resources Office.

Chapter 2

EXCEPTED SERVICE

Positions in the National Guard Military Technician Program that require military membership in the National Guard as a condition of employment are in the excepted service under the provisions of 32 USC 709. This status means you are "exempt" from the rules that govern civil service employees, i.e. in the requirements for appointments. Employment as a National Guard Military Technician does not result in "competitive" civil service status. Loss of military membership for any reason will cause termination of technician employment.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE: Veterans' preference is not applicable to appointment or retention in the National Guard Military Technician Program.

MILITARY UNIFORM: Dual status Military Technicians are required to wear the uniform while performing technician duties. Additionally, compliance with

established grooming, weight management and physical fitness requirements is essential. While in uniform, even after duty hours, proper customs and courtesies will be extended as appropriate.

COMPATIBLE MILITARY ASSIGNMENT: Dual status Military Technicians are required to be assigned to a military position and unit *compatible* with his/her Military Technician position. Failure to maintain military compatibility is grounds for termination.

TRAVEL: When traveling in connection with your duties, travel expenses and per diem will be authorized in accordance with Department of Defense Joint Travel Regulations. If you are required to travel, you may be issued a government credit card. This card may be used to obtain a cash advance (within per diem limits) from an ATM for travel and other travel expenses such as airfare, lodging, meals, etc.

Under no circumstance should a government travel card be used for personal use. It is your responsibility to promptly pay your credit card bill. Disciplinary action will result from abuse or improper use of your government travel card.

Upon completion of TDY travel, submit a travel voucher to the appropriate reimbursement office within five days. You are required to furnish receipts for any official miscellaneous expenses over \$75. These receipts should be attached to your travel voucher claim. If you need assistance in completing your voucher, ask your supervisor. A correctly completed voucher will assist the Comptroller Travel and Voucher Section in promptly processing your claim.

OVERTIME PAY: National Guard Military Technicians are not entitled to overtime pay. Compensatory time off for any overtime work to include travel time will be granted.

COMPENSATORY TIME: Compensatory time off for pre-approved overtime work will be granted at supervisor's discretion. The amount of time off given is equal to the time you spent outside your normal duty hours or irregularly scheduled work. In order to be compensated, you must receive your supervisor's approval before performing such work. Compensatory time must be used within 26 pay periods from the pay period in which it was earned or the time will be forfeited.

COMPENSATORY TIME FOR TRAVEL: Military Technicians may also earn compensatory time for time spent traveling to and from TDY location and for TDY duty on a non-scheduled work day. Travel must be officially authorized for work purposes and must be approved by an authorized organization official. Check with the HRO for your state's policy.

PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT: All National Guard Military Technicians who must maintain military membership as a condition of employment are appointed in the excepted service and must serve a one-year trial period. The technician may be removed during this trial period if performance and/or conduct do not meet expected standards. Upon successful completion of the trial period, the dual status Military Technician is converted to "career" status. Non-dual status Military Technicians are appointed as "career-conditional" employees and must serve a one-year probationary period. Non-dual status Military Technicians must serve three years before obtaining "career" status.

INDEFINITE EMPLOYMENT: Indefinite employment is temporary in nature and will normally last more than one year but no more than four years. Benefits are the same as a permanent technician. Indefinite technicians are in

Tenure Group 3 and are not eligible for conversion to permanent status. Indefinite technicians serve at the will of the appointing official and may be separated at any time, after a 30-day written notice memorandum is issued by the HRO.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT: Technicians may be employed for short periods of time with a not to exceed ending date, usually one year. Temporary limited employees are in Tenure Group 0. These temporary appointments do not confer the same benefits as permanent appointments and the employee may be separated at any time.

EMPLOYMENT TENURE GROUP: Tenure is the period of time you as an employee may reasonably expect to serve under your current appointment. It is granted and governed by the type of appointment under which you are currently serving. It is also used to determine release order in cases of reduction-in-force. There are four tenure groups: Tenure 0 (Temporary), Tenure 1 (Permanent), Tenure 2 (Trial or Probationary Period), and Tenure 3 (Term/Indefinite). The order of release would be technicians in Tenure Group 0 before any others, then Tenure Group 3 employees before Tenure Group 2 employees, and Tenure Group 2 before Tenure Group 1.

TENURE GROUP 0: If you were employed in a temporary, time-limited appointment (with a "Not to Exceed" date), you were placed in Tenure Group 0. As a tenure group 0 employee, you may not receive an advance written notice prior to your release from service. As a tenure Group 0 employee, you do not have any appeal rights.

TENURE GROUP 1: If you were appointed in permanent status, or have completed requirements for career tenure, you are placed in Tenure Group 1. As a permanent employee, your appointment carries no restriction or condition such as conditional, specific time limitation, or trial period.

TENURE GROUP 2: If you are serving on a trial or probationary period, you are placed in Tenure Group 2. As a Tenure 2 employee, you must serve a trial period (DS) or probationary period (NDS) in which your job performance and behavior are observed and assessed by your supervisor. Your supervisor will recommend your retention or non-retention prior to the end of the trial or probationary period. However, Military Technicians can be released anytime during the trial or probationary period if his/her performance or behavior falls below the required expectations. A probationary technician has no right to appeal separation. Tenure Group 2 will automatically convert to Tenure Group 1 upon successful completion of the trial/probationary period.

TENURE GROUP 3: If you are employed as an "indefinite employee," or a "term employee", your appointment is normally expected to last more than one year but not more than four years. You will receive a 30-day written notice prior to your separation/release.

Chapter 3

OFFICIAL PERSONNEL RECORDS

Official Personnel Folders (OPFs) are established in the Human Resources Office and an electronic version may be accessed on line by employees

at <https://eopf1.nbc.gov/nationalguard/>. These on-line folders contain official documents pertaining to your technician employment. You are encouraged to periodically review your eOPF. The eOPF web application provides technicians access to the digital version of their Official Personnel Folder (OPF) from a .mil domain network. Access for Title 32 Technicians will begin in early 2016.

When a Military Technician leaves federal employment, the OPF is forwarded to the Federal Records Center, St. Louis, MO, not later than 60 days after separation.

Supervisors are required to maintain a technician work-folder and NGB Form 904 or its electronic equivalent. This folder may be reviewed at any time by the technician.

Technicians are furnished original copies of all Notification of Personnel Action (NPA). You are strongly encouraged to maintain these NPAs together with other personnel documents such as your job application and resume.

The Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) is a web application that allows technicians to access general and personal benefits information and conduct electronic transactions using a computer. The system contains comprehensive information and personalized benefits statements. The Army Benefit Center - Civilian (ABC-C) provides automated benefits support to both Army and Air Force Title 32 Technicians through EBIS and trained Benefits Specialists. The Specialists are knowledgeable on life and health insurance, Thrift Savings Plan, and retirement issues. You can access EBIS through the ABC-C web portal at <https://www.abc.army.mil/>.

The Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) Self Service Module is a computer supported system designed to improve the accuracy, responsiveness, and usefulness of data required for civilian personnel management. The Self Service Module called MyBiz+ gives technicians' access to their most current Notices of Personnel Actions (SF 50) and to employment verification information. Technicians can also update educational and training information. Supervisors and Managers are able to view their technician's information using the MyTeam module. You can access MyBiz+ either through the ABC-C portal or here: <https://compo.dcpds.cpms.osd.mil/>.

The myPay tool gives the technician direct access to their pay records and allows them to make certain changes such as address, direct deposit and pay allotments. Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) along with W-2 forms can be viewed and/or printed by the technician. You can access myPay either through the ABC-C portal or here: <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>.

Chapter 4

PAY ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL INFORMATION: Military Technicians are paid bi-weekly via electronic funds transfer (EFT) IAW DoD policy. Allotments may be deducted from your pay for the following purposes:

- Union dues
- Savings bonds

- Allotments to financial institutions
- Charitable contributions, such as the Combined Federal Campaign

EARNINGS STATEMENTS: A Department of Defense Civilian Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) is available to each technician every pay period. The statement shows current and year-to-date earnings and deductions, TSP contributions, and leave balances. Technicians should review each LES and assure calculations and accruals are correct. You can view your LES via MyPay website at <https://mypay.DFAS.mil>. Check with your supervisor or HRO on how to obtain access to MY PAY. After reviewing your LES, if you find an error or you have questions about the information, such as incorrect earnings, leave accumulation, taxes or other listings; you should contact your supervisor immediately for assistance.

PREMIUM PAY: Premium pay is additional pay when authorized in advance for holiday work.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFERENTIAL PAY: Federal Wage System (WG/WL/WS) technicians exposed to various degrees of hazard, physical hardship or other unusual working conditions in the performance of their duties may be authorized Environmental Differential Pay (EDP) in accordance with established regulations.

HAZARDOUS DUTY PAY: General Schedule (GS) employees may be paid hazardous duty pay (HDP) only for a duty included in official listings of irregular or intermittent hazardous duties involving physical hardship. A differential may not be paid to a technician for duty listed when the duty has been credited in the classification of the technician's position.

PAY ADJUSTMENTS: Pay increases are granted upon receipt of revised pay schedules. Pay tables are published on the Office of Personnel Management web site at www.opm.gov.

WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES: A within grade increase (WGI) is an increase in a technician's basic pay, by advancement from one step of his/her grade to the next step after meeting requirements for length of service and satisfactory performance.

WAITING PERIODS FOR WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES

FEDERAL WAGE SYSTEM (WG/WS): Temporary, term, indefinite and permanent Wage Grade technicians are eligible for a WGI the pay period following completion of the required waiting period provided performance is fully acceptable and no equivalent increase was received during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

- Step 2 - 26 calendar weeks in Step 1
- Step 3 - 78 calendar weeks in Step 2
- Step 4 - 104 calendar weeks in Step 3
- Step 5 - 104 calendar weeks in Step 4

GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS): Only indefinite and permanent General Schedule employees are eligible for a WGI. A WGI is processed in the pay period following completion of the required waiting period provided the employee has performed at an acceptable level of competence and he/she has not received an

equivalent increase during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

- Steps 2, 3 and 4 - 52 calendar weeks of creditable service
- Steps 5, 6 and 7 - 104 calendar weeks of creditable service
- Steps 8, 9 and 10 - 156 calendar weeks of creditable service

*Note: Excess time in a personal (non-military related) Leave Without Pay status may result in a delay of the WGI. Contact the HRO for additional information.

SEVERANCE PAY: Permanent technicians who have been employed for at least 12 months are eligible for severance pay *if* separated involuntarily (not for cause) *and* ineligible for an immediate annuity. Temporary, Term, and Indefinite technicians are *not* eligible for severance pay. The total amount of severance pay that can be paid to an employee is limited to 52 weeks. Check with your HRO to determine your eligibility.

Chapter 5

HOURS OF DUTY

The technician workweek varies depending on the unit of assignment and/or position requirement. In general, you are required to work 80 hours in a two-week pay period. Your supervisor will advise you of your work schedule and of your state published policies on hours of duty.

Chapter 6

ABSENCE AND LEAVE

ANNUAL LEAVE: A technician may use annual leave for vacations, rest and relaxation, and personal business or emergencies. An employee has a right to take annual leave, subject to the right of the supervisor to schedule the time at which annual leave may be taken. Technicians accrue annual leave as follows:

Accrual Rates			
Employee Type	<i>Less than 3 years of service</i>	<i>3 years but less than 15 years of service *</i>	<i>15 or more years of service *</i>
Full-time employees	½ day (4 hours) for each pay period	¾ day (6 hours) for each pay period, except 1¼ day (10 hours) in last pay period	1 day (8 hours) for each pay period
Part-time employees	1 hour for each 20 hours in a pay status	1 hour for each 13 hours in a pay status	1 hour for each 10 hours in a pay status
Uncommon tours of duty	(4 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided	(6 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided	(8 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided

	by 80 = biweekly accrual rate.	by 80 = biweekly accrual rate.**	by 80 = biweekly accrual rate.
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*Note: A temporary technician with an appointment of less than 90 days is entitled to annual leave only after being currently employed for a continuous period of 90 days under successive appointments without a break in service. After completing the 90-day period of continuous employment, the employee is entitled to be credited with the leave that would have accrued to him or her during that period.

ADVANCEMENT OF ANNUAL LEAVE: Supervisors may grant advanced annual leave consistent with the State's leave policy. The amount of annual leave that may be advanced is limited to the amount of annual leave a technician would accrue during the remainder of the leave year. Advanced leave is not an entitlement. In most cases, a technician who is indebted for advanced annual leave and separates from Federal service is required to refund the amount of advance leave for which he or she is indebted. Technicians pending separation (such as technicians on temporary appointments or those whose retirement is planned), advanced leave may not exceed the amount that can be repaid by accrual before the separation.

SICK LEAVE: Sick leave accrual is four hours per pay period and there are no limitations on how much sick leave can be accrued. Sick leave may be used for a technician's medical, dental or optical examinations or treatment, incapacitation for performance of duties by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy or childbirth. Up to 104 hours of sick leave per leave year may also be used for any activity related to adoption of a child, for bereavement purposes, or to care for an ill family member (please consult your HRO concerning using sick leave to care for a family member). It is the technician's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible regarding the necessity to use sick leave.

ADVANCEMENT OF SICK LEAVE: Up to 240 hours of sick leave may be advanced to a technician. When sick leave is advanced, it must be supported by medical documentation describing the illness or injury of the employee or family member and the anticipated duration of the disability.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA): Technicians who have completed at least 12 months as either a permanent or indefinite employee are entitled to provisions under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). This Act allows technicians to use up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12 month period for the birth and care of a child; making arrangements for adoption or foster care; the care of a spouse, son, daughter or parent with a serious health condition; or a serious health condition that makes the technician unable to perform the essential function of his or her position. Requests for leave under the FMLA must be submitted to the employee's supervisor with medical documentation not less than 30 days before leave is to begin or as soon as is practicable. Appropriate paid leave may be substituted for LWOP.

In addition to above, should a family member incur a serious illness or injury while on active duty, you are entitled to up to 26 weeks of Family Military Leave to care for that family member. Check with your HRO to see if you are eligible for this program.

LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM: Under the Leave Transfer Program, technicians can donate annual leave to other technicians who are seriously ill or have

family members who are seriously ill. Leave recipient applicants must exhaust all accrued leave to be eligible for the leave transfer program. Technicians may not transfer sick leave. If you wish to donate leave or apply to become a leave recipient, contact your supervisor or HRO.

As an exception to the above, if you are a "Wounded Warrior," you do not have to exhaust available paid leave before receiving donated leave. A "wounded warrior" is defined as a Federal employee who sustains a combat-related disability while serving as a member of the Armed Forces and is undergoing medical treatment for that disability.

BONE MARROW OR ORGAN DONOR: Technicians are entitled to 7 workdays of paid leave each calendar year to serve as a bone marrow donor. Organ donors are authorized 30 workdays. This leave is recorded as Administrative Leave (LN).

MILITARY LEAVE (15-Day/120 hours): Military leave is authorized for permanent and indefinite technicians. Eligible technicians are authorized 120 hours of Military Leave each fiscal year for the purpose of active duty, active duty for training, or Inactive Duty Training (IDT). This military leave is not authorized for National Guard technicians performing active Guard and Reserve duty that is defined in section 101 (d) (6) of title 10 U.S.C. Military leave cannot be used on State Active Duty. Technicians may carry 120 hours of military leave from one fiscal year to the next; however the balance of their military leave cannot exceed 240 hours.

22-DAY LEAVE (176 hours): Eligible technicians are authorized up to 176 hours of leave each calendar year for the purpose of providing military aid to enforce the law or for the purpose of providing assistance to civil authorities in the protection or saving of life or property or the prevention of injury. This provision may also be used when mobilized under contingency orders. This is **NOT** a dual compensation benefit. You will receive the greater of your Civilian or Military pay. The appropriate pay section will accomplish collection of the lesser amount. Coordinate with your supervisor, timekeeper, and payroll CSR.

44-DAY LEAVE (352 hours): Technicians are authorized 352 hours of military leave in a calendar year for employees participating in operations outside the United States and its territories. Technicians are placed on active duty orders without pay and receive a retirement point for each day on active duty. The technician continues to receive his/her technician salary.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP)(Personal): Based upon your written request and at the discretion of the supervisor, you may be granted approved absence from duty without pay. Leave without pay (LWOP) may be approved for such purposes as pursuing training beneficial to the agency, recovering from illness or disability, or sustaining your technician status and benefits pending actions of disability retirement or injury compensation claims. LWOP may be granted whether or not you have annual or sick leave to your credit. LWOP in excess of 30 days must be approved by the Human Resources Office and will be granted only in special circumstances.

COURT LEAVE: Court leave is the authorized absence of a technician from work status for jury duty or for attending judicial proceedings in a non-official capacity as a witness on behalf of a state or local government. If the witness serves in a non-official capacity on behalf of a private party, the technician must be in an appropriate leave status. Check with HRO on authorized entitlements.

EXCUSED ABSENCE: An excused absence is absence from duty, administratively approved, without loss of pay and without charge to leave. This absence may be granted in limited circumstances which are directly related to the mission of the National Guard, enhance professional development, or involve activities officially sanctioned by the National Guard. Examples include voting, blood donation (NTE 4 hours), and certain conferences and conventions.

5 DAYS EXCUSED ABSENCE FOR RETURNING ACTIVATED MILITARY EMPLOYEES (Presidential Leave): If you were activated for military service in connection with Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) such as Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or any other military operation subsequently established under Executive Order 13223, are entitled to five work days of excused absence without charge to leave. The technician must spend at least 42 consecutive days at the deployment site and the deployment must be in support of GWOT. The five days of excused absence must be granted as soon as the technician reports back for Federal civilian duty or notifies the agency of his or her intent to return to civilian duty. The five days of excused absence must also be used for a continuous period immediately upon return. The days may not be "stockpiled" for use at a later date. The technician is obligated to report for work at the end of the 5-day period.

ADVERSE WEATHER DISMISSALS: When The Adjutant General or delegated representative authorizes the shutdown or closure of a facility because of weather conditions or emergency situations, your supervisor will advise you if you will be required to report to work, and or if you will be authorized to depart your duty location. Key personnel may be required to report for duty or remain on station.

ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE (AWOL): If you are absent from work without authorized leave approved by your supervisor, you are Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and in a non-pay status. An AWOL charge may result in disciplinary action to include termination.

ENFORCED LEAVE: All employees are subject to the provisions of enforced leave. Management has the right to require a technician to leave the worksite when:

- a. The technician is not ready, willing, or able to perform assigned duties.
- b. The technician's continued presence is highly undesirable because the employee presents an immediate threat to himself, others, or government property.
- c. The technician must never be instructed to leave the worksite if their ability to drive is questionable. In such cases, the supervisor must arrange for a family member or a co-worker to provide transportation for the technician.

Enforced leave must be terminated as soon as management determines the technician is ready, willing, and able to perform assigned duties, or the immediate emergency is resolved.

Chapter 7

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROGRAM

GENERAL INFORMATION: The Performance Appraisal Program is governed by National Guard Technician Personnel Regulation (TPR) 430. The Performance Appraisal Program utilizes a 5-tier summary rating pattern. Every eligible technician shall be issued a performance plan containing the technician's

critical elements and performance standards. Each eligible technician shall have their work assignments or responsibilities described in their performance plan as a critical element. Technicians are generally assigned three to five critical elements, up to a maximum of ten critical elements. Performance expectations will normally be communicated to the technician in writing within 30 days from the start of the rating cycle, entrance on duty of a new technician, or technician job change; but no later than 120 days prior to the end of the appraisal period.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS: The appraisal period will be on an annual basis with the appraisal year; normally October 1 through September 30 each year. An integral part of the performance management process is the supervisory assessment of performance relative to critical elements and performance standards. This written statement captures the technician's accomplishments or lack thereof, if applicable, during the appraisal period and determines the rating. Assessing performance involves evaluating technician performance relative to communicated performance expectations, including critical elements and performance standards for the appraisal period. A supervisor shall prepare a closeout assessment for a technician when it is known the technician will change positions resulting in a new supervisor. Additionally, a supervisor shall prepare a closeout assessment, as required, for technicians on details or other previously occupied positions, as input for a technician's rating of record. A closeout assessment is only required if a technician has been assigned to a specific supervisor and has been on an approved performance plan for more than 120 calendar days.

UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE: If at any time during the appraisal cycle a technician's performance is determined to be unacceptable in one or more critical elements, then the technician will be notified of which element(s) are not being performed at an acceptable level and the level of performance of performance that must be attained to demonstrate acceptable performance. The technician will be given a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and a reasonable period of time (typically 30 to 120 calendar days) to show acceptable performance. Once the technician has been afforded a reasonable opportunity to improve their performance, but their performance is still unacceptable, the agency may propose a reduction in grade, reassignment, or removal action.

APPEALS: Technicians may file an appeal if they are dissatisfied with their performance appraisal. The appeals process is defined in TPR 430, the negotiated union contract or as prescribed in local administrative grievance procedures.

Chapter 8

INCENTIVE AWARDS

The Incentive Awards Program is designed to improve operations and services. Its purpose is to motivate increased productivity and creativity by recognizing employees whose job performance and/or adopted ideas benefit the agency and are substantially above normal job requirements and performance standards. You may earn an award for your high level performance, a suggestion, an invention, or a special act or service, as long as it benefits the government and is outside your normal job responsibilities; or, if within your job responsibilities, it is of such high quality that an award is warranted. These awards may be made to an individual technician or shared by a group. Each state's award system is determined by its existing regulation and policy.

CASH AWARD: Sustained Superior Performance (SSP), “on-the-spot”, or a onetime special act or service may be recognized with a cash award. This is a single payment that does not change your rate of pay.

QUALITY STEP INCREASE: A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is a one-step increase in a General Schedule rate of basic pay. A QSI is based on a sustained high-quality performance, and can be awarded to employees that have received a Level 5 performance rating. Only one QSI can be awarded per 52 weeks.

TIME-OFF AWARD: This award grants an excused absence to a technician without charge to leave or loss of pay. Time-off awards are intended to increase productivity and creativity by rewarding contributions to the quality, efficiency, or economy of government operations. Technicians may be awarded up to a total of 80 hours of time off during a leave year. The amount of time off that may be awarded to part-time or intermittent technicians is based on the average number of hours worked.

SUGGESTION AWARD: These awards are given to technicians who provide suggestions to improve the economy, efficiency, or effectiveness of Federal Government operations, which have been adopted by the agency. Suggestion awards may be monetary or non-monetary. Please contact your HRO for suggestion award availability.

HONORARY AWARD: These awards do not involve cash payment or time-off. The award is of an honorific value, such as a letter, certificate, medal, plaque, or item of nominal value.

LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD: Technicians are awarded certificates and pins as they reach milestones in Federal Service (5-year increments after 10 years creditable service).

Chapter 9

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (FEGLI)

ELIGIBILITY: All permanent and indefinite technicians with regularly scheduled tours of duty are eligible to enroll in the FEGLI. The government pays one-third of the cost of your basic life insurance, and you are automatically covered for basic life unless you waive this coverage. If you are eligible for basic coverage, you may select additional options by submitting Standard Form 2817 within 60 days of the date of your appointment or qualifying life event (QLE). Some examples of a QLE are marriage, divorce or the birth/acquisition of a child. Temporary NTE technicians are ineligible for FEGLI coverage unless they convert from a covered position to a non-covered position without a break in service under the Continuity Rule.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY STATUS: Technicians on Leave Without Pay (LWOP) will continue to be covered for a period not to exceed one year at no cost to the employee. Coverage may be extended an additional 12 months if on Absent-US as outlined in chapter 12 of this guide.

RETIREMENT: You may continue your FEGLI coverage into retirement if you have been covered for the 5 years immediately preceding your retirement or from your first opportunity to enroll. Your FEGLI Handbook will explain your coverage options in detail. A copy of the Handbook can be found at:

Chapter 10

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM (FEHB)

ENROLLMENT: In order to enroll for health insurance benefits, you must submit Standard Form 2809, Health Benefits Registration, within 60 days of your entry-on-duty date, or the date you first become eligible to enroll. Health plans provide varying benefits at various costs. If you fail to enroll in a health insurance plan within 60 days of becoming eligible, you must wait until the next Open Season period or QLE to enroll.

ELIGIBILITY: Your eligibility is based on your type of appointment and work schedule. Generally speaking, all permanent and indefinite technicians with regularly scheduled tours of duty are eligible for the FEHB program. Technicians on temporary appointments, technicians on seasonal schedules who will be working a schedule of less than six months per year, and intermittent technicians who are expected to work 130 hours per month or more for at least 90 days are eligible to enroll in an FEHB plan. You are covered from the effective date of enrollment without a medical examination or restrictions based on your age or preexisting condition. The program offers virtually immediate coverage by taking effect on the first day of the pay period that begins after the HRO receives your completed application.

WHO IS COVERED: Self-only enrollment provides benefits just for you. Self and Family enrollment provides benefits for you, your spouse, and your dependent unmarried children under 22 years of age (unless the child is determined to be disabled prior to their 26th birthday).

COSTS: FEHB premiums are paid through payroll deductions. The government shares the cost of health coverage for technicians who have permanent or indefinite technicians. The government will pay 72% of the overall weighted average or 75% of the total premium for the plan selected, whichever is less. The employee is responsible for 28% or 25% respectively. Technicians working on seasonal schedules for less than six months in a year and those working intermittent schedules who are expected to work 130 hours per month or more will receive the same government contribution as full-time permanent technicians.

CHANGING PLANS: You can change plans and/or options during the annual Open Season. Notices pertaining to the Open Season will be published by the HRO. Various circumstances such as marriage, divorce, or the birth of a child, etc., will also allow you to change your enrollment at times other than Open Season. Contact HRO for complete information. Be sure you carefully review all available health insurance plans and decide which plan is best for you and your family.

CHOICE OF PLANS AND OPTIONS:

Fee-For-Service Plans: These plans reimburse you or the health care provider for covered services. If you enroll in one of these plans, you may choose your own physician, hospital, and other health care providers.

Pre-paid plans: These are Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) that provide or arrange for health care by designated plan physicians, hospitals, and other providers in particular locations.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP) STATUS: A technician in Leave Without Pay status may continue FEHB coverage for a limited period. If the period of LWOP status is more than 30 days, you must contact the HRO prior to commencement for specific costs and length of coverage. Employees in LWOP for military duty contingency operations may be eligible for 24 months of free FEHB, see chapter 12 for more information.

TEMPORARY CONTINUATION OF COVERAGE (TCC): You should be aware that if you leave Federal employment, you are eligible for TCC (unless you are separated for gross misconduct). TCC can continue your FEHB enrollment for up to 18 months. TCC is also available for up to 36 months for dependents who lose eligibility as family members under your enrollment. This includes spouses who lose coverage because of divorce and children who lose coverage because they marry or reach age 26. TCC enrollees must pay the total plan premium (without a government contribution) plus a 2% charge for administrative expenses. There are specific time periods in which you or your dependent must enroll for TCC. Contact your HRO for additional information.

RETIREMENT: You may continue your FEHB coverage into retirement if you have been covered for the 5 years immediately preceding your retirement or from your first opportunity to enroll.

Chapter 11

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PROGRAMS

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS (FSA): This is a tax-favored program to set aside pre-tax money to pay a variety of health-care or dependent-care related expenses (dental, medical, vision). Enroll 60 days from your date of appointment or an open season each year (mid-November through mid-December). Permissible changes are based on qualified status changes (marriage, children, employment, residence, dependents eligibility, etc). You must re-enroll each year to be eligible for FSA's new unspent funds carryover. This allows participants to carry up to \$500 of unspent funds to be carried over from the previous year into the next year. The FSA is administered through a third party contractor and enrollment is solely accomplished using the www.fsafeds.com website.

FEDERAL LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM (FLTCIP): The FLTCIP is insurance to cover care needed to perform daily activities if the employee is suffering an on-going illness or disability. It is not for acute care or the type of care received in a hospital. This is the only government-endorsed long term care insurance program for current and retired employees. Its purpose is to pay for long-term home-care, nursing home or assisted living services. Technicians are initially eligible within 60 days of appointment or can apply via the full underwriting application directly with the LTC Partners, LLC. For more information visit www.ltcfeds.com.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES DENTAL AND VISION INSURANCE PROGRAM (FEDVIP): The FEDVIP provides comprehensive dental insurance and vision insurance. You can choose from seven dental plans and three vision plans. FEDVIP features nationwide, regional, and international plans. You pay the entire premium. Enrollment in FEDVIP is accomplished through www.benefeds.com website.

Chapter 12

UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT (USERRA)

GENERAL INFORMATION: Restoration rights are provided for National Guard technicians who leave technician employment to serve on active duty or on active duty for training in the Armed Forces. The Human Resources Office must be contacted prior to your entrance on active duty to schedule an out-processing briefing. Civilian Federal employees who are members of the Uniformed Services and are called to active duty (or volunteer for active duty or full-time National Guard duty) are entitled to the following rights and benefits:

PAY: While you are performing active military duty, you will receive compensation from the Armed Forces in accordance with the terms and conditions of your military enlistment or commission. You will not receive any compensation from your civilian-employing agency unless you elect to use military leave and/or annual leave as described in the next two paragraphs below.

MILITARY LEAVE: If you perform active military duty, you are authorized military leave. Eligible technicians are authorized 120 hours of military leave each fiscal year for the purpose of active duty, active duty for training, or Inactive Duty Training (IDT). This military leave is not authorized for National Guard technicians performing active Guard and Reserve duty that is defined in section 101 (d) (6) of title 10 U.S.C. Military leave cannot be used on State Active Duty. Technicians may carry 120 hours of military leave from one fiscal year to the next; however the balance of their military leave cannot exceed 240 hours. You can find a fact sheet on military leave at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/military.HTM> and at <https://www.opm.gov/faqs/topic/payleave/index.aspx?cid=f24794b1-dc27-41d8-b4e0-255cefc2c817>, you can find Frequently Asked Questions on Military Leave.

ANNUAL LEAVE: While on active military duty, you may request the use of accrued and accumulated annual leave to your credit (under 5 U.S.C. 6303 and 6304), and such requests must be granted by the agency. In addition, requests for advanced annual leave may be granted at the agency's discretion. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/ANNUAL.HTM> for additional information on annual leave.

If you use annual leave, you will receive compensation from your civilian position for all hours charged to annual leave in addition to your military pay for the same period. When you enter into active military duty, you may choose to (1) have your annual leave remain to your credit until you return to your civilian position, or (2) receive a lump-sum payment for all accrued and accumulated annual leave. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/lumpsum.htm> for additional information on lump-sum payments for annual leave.

ABSENT-UNIFORMED SERVICE (ABSENT-US OR AUS): The USERRA generally requires an organization to place an employee entering military duty or service on AUS unless the employee elects to use other leave or freely or knowingly provides written notice of intent not to return to their technician employment with the agency, in which case the employee can be separated.

INTERMITTENT USE OF LEAVE (While on AUS): In accordance with 5 CFR 353.208 (Use of Paid Leave During Uniformed Service), you are authorized while on active duty or inactive duty training to use annual leave, sick leave, earned

compensatory time off, time off awards or military leave intermittently with leave without pay each pay period. Please contact your HRO to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using intermittent leave.

HEALTH BENEFITS: If you are placed in a AUS status or separated while on military duty for more than 30 days and your duty is in support of a contingency operation, you may retain your FEHB coverage free of charge for up to 24 months from the date the absence to serve on military duty begins. See <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/eligibility/#url=Reservists> for further information on FEHB coverage and see <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/insurance-faqs/> for Frequently Asked Questions About FEHB for Federal Civilian Employees Called to Active Duty Service.

LIFE INSURANCE: If you are placed in a AUS status while on military duty, you may retain your FEGLI coverage for up to 24 months. The first 12 months are free. However, you must pay both the employee and agency share of premiums for Basic coverage, and pay the entire cost for any Optional insurance for the additional 12 months of coverage. If call to active duty beyond 12 months, you must inform your HRO of your intent to continue coverage beyond the 12 free months. Contact your HRO to ensure you are made aware of their procedures. For more information see <http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/calledup.asp> and <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sqlSite/default.htm>.

RETIREMENT: An employee who is placed in a AUS status while performing active military duty continues to be covered by the retirement law --i.e., the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Death benefits will be paid as if you were still in the civilian position. If you become disabled for your civilian position while performing duty with the uniformed service and have the minimum amount of civilian service necessary for disability benefits (5 years for CSRS, 18 months for FERS), you will become entitled to disability benefits under the retirement law. Upon eventual retirement from civilian service, the period of military service is creditable under either CSRS or FERS, subject to the rules for crediting military service.

If you separate to enter active military duty, you will receive retirement credit for the period of separation **when you exercise restoration rights to your civilian position.** If you do not exercise your restoration right, but later re-enter Federal civilian service, the military service may be credited under the retirement system, subject to the rules governing credit for the military service.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP): For purposes of TSP, no contributions can be made, either by the agency or by you, for any time in an AUS status or for a period of non-pay or separation. You should refer to the TSP Bulletin for Agency TSP Representatives, No. 01-22, dated May 3, 2001. You should also refer to the TSP Fact Sheet - Effect of Non-pay Status on TSP Participation. Both issuances are available from the TSP Internet web site at <http://www.tsp.gov/>.

If you are subsequently reemployed in, or restored to, a position covered by FERS or CSRS pursuant to 38 U.S.C. Chapter 43, you may make up missed contributions. FERS employees are entitled to receive retroactive Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and, if you make up your own contributions, then you will receive retroactive Agency Matching Contributions.

Also, if FERS employees separate and their Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and associated earnings are forfeited because you did not

meet the TSP vesting requirement, you are entitled to have these funds restored to your accounts after you are reemployed. In addition, if you separate and your accounts are disbursed as automatic cash outs, you may return to the TSP an amount equal to the full amount of the payment after you are reemployed. For additional information see the TSP Fact Sheet - "Benefits that Apply to Members of the Military Who Return to Federal Civilian Service" at

<https://www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/oc95-5.pdf>.

RETURN TO CIVILIAN DUTY: If you entered active military duty (voluntarily or involuntarily) from any position, including a temporary position that expired during a period of active military duty, you have full job protection, provided you apply for reemployment within the following time limits:

(A) If you served less than 31 days, you must return to work at the beginning of the next scheduled workday following your release from service and the expiration of 8 hours after a time for safe transportation to your residence.

(B) If you served more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, you must apply for reemployment within 14 days of release by the military.

(C) If you served more than 180 days, you have 90 days to apply for reemployment.

Employees who served less than 91 days must be restored to the position for which qualified that they would have attained had their employment not been interrupted. Employees who served more than 90 days have essentially the same rights, except the agency has the option of placing an employee in a position for which qualified of like seniority, status, and pay.

Upon return or restoration, you generally are entitled to be treated as though you had never left for purposes of rights and benefits based upon length of service. This means you must be considered for career ladder promotions, and the time spent in the military will be credited for seniority, successive within-grade increases, probation, career tenure, annual leave accrual rate, and severance pay. If you were on a temporary appointment, you must serve out the remaining time, if any, left on the appointment. The military activation period does not extend the civilian appointment.

REDUCTION IN FORCE (RIF): When performing active military duty, Military Technicians have protection from reduction in force (RIF) and may not be separated from employment for a period of 1 year following separation from active military duty (6 months in the case of a Reservist called to active duty under 10 U.S.C. 12304 for more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, or ordered to an initial period of active duty for training of not less than 12 consecutive weeks), except for poor performance or conduct or for suitability reasons.

APPEAL RIGHTS: National Guard technicians do not have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board regarding a denial of reemployment rights by the Adjutant General. Military Technicians may file complaints with the appropriate district court in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 4323 (USERRA).

****You should contact your HRO for other USERRA rights not listed here.**

INJURY COMPENSATION

GENERAL INFORMATION: The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides medical and wage compensation benefits for temporary/permanent a work related injury or disease sustained in performance of civilian technician duties. The Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP) administers FECA while the Department of Labor has sole authority for all injury claim decisions.

WORK RELATED INJURY OR ILLNESS: If you are injured or become ill as a direct result of duties being performed or because of an environment exposure in the workplace, you must notify your supervisor immediately. The supervisor will advise you how to complete an OSHA reporting form online using any computer with internet access. Once the OSHA form is completed you will receive access to file an injury claim. If the injury requires immediate medical care, your supervisor will assist you in completing all required forms at a later date.

ABSENCE AND RETURN TO WORK: Medical documentation is required to support all work absences related to the claimed injury. The FECA requires injured employees to return to work performing some type of duties once the medical documentation has released the employee to either limited, light or full duty status.

FALSE CLAIMS: All claims must meet the OWCP requirements by law in order to be accepted by DOL as a work related injury/illness. Any misleading or false information submitted by an employee for a claim will be investigated by CID or DOL special agents. Fraud and abuse will be reported to the employing agency and OWCP for appropriate action. If found guilty, the employee may be adversely terminated from his or her employment, fined, and or imprisoned.

DEATH: The FECA provides for the payment of benefits to survivors if the technician dies due to a work-related injury or disease.

Chapter 14

RETIREMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION: There are two Federal retirement systems:

- Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)
- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)

The Civil Service Retirement System covers National Guard Military Technicians employed prior to 1 January 1984. The Federal Employees Retirement System covers National Guard Military Technicians employed on or after 1 January 1984. Both CSRS and FERS provide the technician a measure of income protection in case of disability. Both retirement systems will provide for your family in case of death and will pay you an annuity after your retirement. Technicians contribute 7% of gross pay towards retirement.

Please review The CSRS and FERS Handbook, Chapter 40, for it provides information on various time frames for planning your retirement. The handbook is located at: <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/csrsfers-handbook/>.

CIVIL SERVICE RETIREMENT SYSTEM (CSRS): Your age and number of years of federal service determine your eligibility for retirement. To be eligible for an immediate annuity you must be:

Voluntary CSRS Retirement

- Age 62 with 5 years' service, or
- Age 60 with 20 years' service, or
- Age 55 with 30 years' service

Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) CSRS Retirement – When a Military Technician loses military membership for reasons NOT related to misconduct or non-performance, they may be eligible for a DSR. When this occurs, and the CSRS technician is age 50 with 20 years of federal service, or any age with 25 years of service, he/she is eligible for an immediate retirement annuity. However, there is a 2% reduction in the retirement annuity for each year their age is under age 55.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM (FERS): The FERS retirement is a three-tiered program including FERS, Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan. Your age and years of Federal service determine your eligibility for retirement. To be eligible for an immediate annuity you must be:

Voluntary FERS Retirement

- Age 62 with 5 years of service, or
 - Age 60 with 20 years of service, or
 - *Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with 30 years of service, or
 - *MRA with 10 years of service (reduction of 5% per year for each year under age 62).
- (*NOTE: Your MRA is dependent on your birth year ranging from age 55 - 57)

FERS Discontinued Service Retirement

To qualify for an involuntary annuity you must be:

- Age 50 with 20 years of service, or
- Any age with 25 years of service

If you lose your military membership, not for cause, you may retire with a full annuity under the DSR provision if you are at least age 50 with 25 years of service. You may also be eligible to receive a Retiree Annuity Supplement until you become eligible for Social Security benefits at age 62.

WITHDRAWALS UPON SEPARATION: If you decide to leave technician service prior to retirement age, you can withdraw all of the contributions that were withheld from your salary. If you have completed at least 5 years of civilian service but are not eligible to retire with an immediate annuity, you may leave the money in the fund and at age 62 be entitled to a "deferred annuity". If you separate from technician service, and die before reaching age 62, your survivor is entitled to a lump sum payment of your contributions. **CAUTION:** If you are a FERS technician and choose to withdraw your retirement funds upon separation, you will void a future annuity for this period of service. You cannot redeposit a FERS refund; withdrawal of the pension funds permanently eliminates the Federal service from your record.

PRIOR FEDERAL SERVICE TIME: If you have worked for the Federal Government prior to this appointment, you may have additional creditable service towards retirement. Please bring this to the attention of the HRO.

MILITARY DEPOSIT SERVICE: All Title 10 honorable active duty military service is potentially creditable. CSRS technicians employed October 01, 1982 or later and FERS Technicians will not receive credit for their military service unless a deposit is made.

FERS - a deposit of 3% of military taxable earnings is required in order to receive credit for civilian retirement purposes. (For service under USERRA 0.8%).

CSRS - a deposit of 7% of military taxable earnings is required to receive credit for civilian retirement purpose. (For service under USERRA 7.0%).

Technicians covered by CSRS prior to October 1, 1982 will receive credit for military service until age 62 without making a deposit. If a deposit is not made, the annuity will be reduced at age 62.

INTEREST ACCRUAL DATE: No interest is charged if the deposit is received by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) prior to your third anniversary date in a retirement covered position. In the case of USERRA, your interest accrual date is 3 years from the date you return to duty status.

Chapter 15

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP)

GENERAL INFORMATION: The Thrift Savings Plan is a retirement savings plan for FERS and CSRS employees. FERS technicians must consider the TSP as a major component of their retirement and are strongly encouraged to maximize this benefit. Because your TSP account is a tax-deferred account, you cannot withdraw it until you leave federal service except in instances of extreme hardship or upon reaching age 59 1/2. An advantage of the TSP is that you pay no taxes on contributions or earnings until you withdraw your account.

Both FERS and CSRS employees, as well as members of the uniformed services can participate in TSP. You can begin contributing your own money to the TSP within 60 days of being hired, or any time thereafter. Your payroll contribution will begin the first full pay period after your agency accepts your TSP Election Form (TSP-1). You can contribute either a percentage of your basic pay each pay period or a fixed dollar amount. If you make your contributions as a percentage of your pay, the amount of your contributions will automatically increase as you receive pay raises. Your annual dollar total cannot exceed the Internal Revenue Code limit, which varies from year to year. You can start, change, stop, or resume TSP contributions at any time.

For FERS technicians hired after July 31, 2010, you will automatically be enrolled in TSP and 3% of your basic pay is deducted from your pay each pay period and deposited in the traditional balance of your TSP account, unless you have made an election to change or stop your contributions. The government automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your salary to your TSP account, whether you decide to contribute or not. If you choose to contribute to the TSP, the government will match your contributions up to 3% of your salary, and will contribute 50 cents on the dollar for the next 2%. Government contributions stop at 5%. You can contribute additional funds in accordance with the current rules. For up-to-date information on TSP see the web site at www.tsp.gov.

TRADITIONAL (PRE-TAX) TSP: You make before-tax contributions to TSP and defer paying taxes on your contributions and their earnings until you withdraw them. If you are a uniformed services member making tax-exempt contributions, your contributions will be tax free at withdrawal but your earnings will be subject to tax.

ROTH (AFTER-TAX) TSP: You make after-tax contributions to TSP (unless you are making tax-exempt contributions) and your earnings are tax-free at withdrawal as long as you meet certain IRS requirements.

You can contribute to both traditional and Roth accounts if you want. You can contribute any percentage or amount and change your election or investment choices at any time at www.tsp.gov. If you are FERS, your Agency Matching Contributions are based on the total amount of money (traditional and Roth) that you contribute each pay period. All agency contributions are deposited into your traditional balance.

WITHDRAWAL FROM YOUR TSP ACCOUNT: The purpose of the TSP is to provide you with a source of income for your retirement. It is not a savings account that can be withdrawn at any time. If you think you may need your money in the near future, or if you do not have other funds saved for emergencies, you will want to consider your other needs carefully before deciding how much to contribute to the TSP. However, while you are still employed by the Federal Government, the TSP loan program can provide you access to funds you have contributed to your account. In addition, participants who are age 59 1/2 or older can make a one-time withdrawal from their TSP accounts while they are in Federal service. For more information on withdrawals and on loans visit TSP website at www.tsp.gov or contact your HRO. You may withdraw from your TSP account upon separation from federal service. However, if you withdraw funds from your TSP account, you may be subject to an early withdrawal penalty and the funds received will be considered taxable income.

Chapter 16

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

All National Guard Military Technicians are subject to the basic political activity restrictions of the 1993 Hatch Act. Some guidelines under this law are:

WHAT THE TECHNICIANS MAY DO (BUT NOT IN UNIFORM !):

- Technicians may participate in non-partisan activities and in public affairs so long as participation does not affect the efficiency or integrity of the National Guard.
- Technicians may participate in the activities of a political party.
- Technicians may serve as delegates to a party convention and attend nominating caucuses.

- Technicians may display articles associated with political parties, circulate nominating petitions, canvass for votes and manage partisan campaigns.
- Technicians may display bumper stickers on private automobiles even though they are parked in government parking lots.
- Technicians may register to vote, act as poll watchers, election judges or provide other election assistance to partisan elections.
- Technicians may run as candidates in non-partisan campaigns or as independents.
- Technicians may contribute to partisan campaigns on non-duty time.
- Technicians may attend fundraisers, give speeches, stuff envelopes and organize mail or telephone solicitations.

WHAT TECHNICIANS MAY NOT DO:

- Technicians may not participate in political activities while on duty or wearing a uniform, badge, insignia, or other similar item that identifies the National Guard or the technician's position.
- Technicians may not participate in union activities while on duty.
- Technicians may not allow their official title to be used in conjunction with political fundraising activities.
- Technicians may not solicit subordinates to contribute time, money or services for any activity.
- Technicians may not participate in political activities while in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties by an individual employed by the Federal Government.
- Technicians may not participate in political activities while using a government-owned/leased vehicle or while using a privately owned vehicle in the discharge of official duties. This includes the use of government-owned office equipment and communications network.
- Technicians may not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election.

There are exceptions for non-partisan elections. Check with the JAG for additional guidance.

Chapter 17

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

All technicians are required to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity and to conduct business in an ethical manner. You are required to perform your assigned duties conscientiously and always conduct yourself in a manner that reflects credit on you and the National Guard. If your conduct is in violation of any statute, regulation, or other proper authority, you will be held accountable. Violation of any standard of conduct may be the basis for disciplinary action. It is not the intent of this publication to list every restriction or requirement imposed by law, regulation or other proper authorities. Some of the prohibited acts that can result in disciplinary action are:

- Using a government vehicle without authorization
- Misusing official and/or classified information
- Gambling and betting on duty
- Misusing government property such as, supplies, personal computers, telephones, or fax equipment

- Using a government-issued travel card for personal use
- Refusing to cooperate in an administrative investigation
- Accepting gifts and favors from subordinates or customers
- Filing fraudulent claims
- Using illegal drugs, alcohol or intoxicants while on duty
- Misusing government postage/mail
- Making false statements
- Engaging in illegal political activity
- Using obscene or vulgar language
- Accepting outside employment that conflicts with your technician duties or discredits the National Guard

Your actions must never discredit the National Guard, whether you are on-duty or off.

Chapter 18

DISCIPLINE AND ADVERSE ACTION

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS: A disciplinary action may be an action from an oral admonishment to a letter of reprimand. An oral admonishment lets you know you must stop doing certain things (example: tardiness). A letter of reprimand is a disciplinary action without an adverse action connected to it. It is a written notification of the problem with a warning of what might happen if the situation is not corrected. The timeframe that the letter of reprimand will remain in effect in your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is typically 1-3 years. Letters of Reprimand can be grieved through the negotiated grievance procedure for bargaining unit technicians, and through the agency administrative grievance procedures for non-bargaining unit technicians.

ADVERSE ACTIONS: There are three types of adverse actions:

- Suspension without pay
- Reduction to lower grade
- Removal from technician employment

Due process measures to protect a technician from an unfair adverse action include the right to an appellate review of the case file or an administrative hearing. The final level of appeal on some adverse actions rests with The Adjutant General. Check with your supervisor or HRO for which appeal process may apply based on the underlying nature of the adverse action.

APPEAL AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES: There are specific grievance and appeal procedures outlined in the labor-management contract. A copy of this contract can be obtained from the HRO.

Chapter 19

VOLUNTARY SEPARATION FROM THE TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

This is a voluntary action and written notice should be given to your supervisor at the earliest possible date. Resignations should be in writing, preferably on a Request for Personnel Action (SF 52) to include your reason for resigning and your forwarding address. Accepting a commission, changing your military position,

or moving to another military unit, may all be considered voluntary actions that might result in your separation. Contact the HRO prior to separation for information regarding your benefits.

Chapter 20

LIFE EVENTS

CHANGE IN FAMILY STATUS: It is imperative if you have any change in family status such as marriage, birth/adoption of a child, divorce, or death of a family member to contact the HRO for assistance and updating your personnel records.

SURVIVOR BENEFITS: Death often occurs when least expected. You should have your personal affairs in order and keep your family informed regarding your benefits and entitlements. In the event of your death, a representative from the Human Resources Office will assist your family in filing a death claim.

DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY: You do not need to prepare a designation of beneficiary form unless you wish to designate your beneficiaries other than "by-law" (spouse, child, parent, and next-of-kin). If you do designate beneficiaries, you must keep your designations current because once a designation has been made; it overrides a will or any other legal document. Benefits paid are:

- Unpaid wages
- Federal Employee Group Life Insurance
- Thrift Savings
- Retirement annuity or refund of contributions

Chapter 21

CLASSIFICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION: The classification process may impact a number of different aspects of your career, including advancement opportunities, pay, training, upward mobility, and other personnel programs.

The grade of your job is determined by the application of job-grading standards or position classification standards.

Your position description lists the major duties and responsibilities required of your position. Your position description has already been classified. A position classification specialist has reviewed the description of the assignment, compared it with OPM classification standards and made a determination as to the appropriate pay plan, title, occupational series, and grade level. Classification standards are on file in the Human Resources Office or at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/> and are available for your review.

CLASSIFICATION APPEALS: If you disagree with the classification of your position, you may want to consider a classification appeal through your supervisory chain. The HRO can advise your supervisor of the procedures for

submitting an appeal. One of three things may occur as a result of a classification appeal:

1. The position can be upgraded
2. The position can retain the present grade level
3. The position can be downgraded

Note: If it is determined you are assigned to an incorrect position description, you may be reassigned due to clarification of duties and responsibilities.

Chapter 22

MERIT PROMOTION AND PLACEMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION: It is the policy of NGB that Military Technician positions are staffed on the basis of merit, fitness, and qualifications without regard to political, religious, labor organization affiliation (or not), marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying physical handicap or age and will be based solely on job-related criteria. Applications are invited from all interested, eligible applicants. Basic qualifications are determined and applicants are then ranked according to the degree to which they meet each of the KSA's and other merit requirements. A list of qualified applicants is then presented to the Selecting Official for selection.

The quality of an applicant's responses to KSA's and information contained in the application will help determine whether he or she is among the best-qualified candidates for the job. Therefore, it is important applicants carefully prepare and submit complete and accurate information for job consideration.

Chapter 23

REDUCTION-IN-FORCE

A Reduction-In-Force (RIF) occurs when the state or activity is obligated to reassign, demote, separate, or furlough one or more Military Technicians due of lack of work or shortage of funds. The cause may come from the action of Congress, the President, the Office of Management and Budget or from decisions by DoD, DA, DAF, or NGB officials who have been authorized to make such decisions. Whatever the source, management officials must decide which activities or programs are affected and how to distribute the remaining resources.

Before a RIF is conducted, the state must identify and describe the organizational and/or geographic limits within which Military Technicians will compete for retention. This is called the competitive area. The second category is by grade and occupation. This is called the competitive level. Each competitive level consists of all positions in a competitive area in the same grade and series *and* similar enough in duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules and working conditions so the incumbent of one position could successfully perform the critical elements of any other position in the length of time it would take to orient any new but fully qualified employee. Dual status and Non-dual status Military Technicians are listed on separate retention registers.

The names of all Military Technicians in a competitive level are listed on a retention register in the order of their relative retention standing. Relative standing is determined by the HRO unless there is a current bargaining unit agreement provision that is applicable. RIF regulations are very complex. The information provided in this Handbook is intended to give you only the most basic information. Consult HRO for complete RIF regulations.

Chapter 24

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The National Guard has a strong commitment to developing the talents, skills, and abilities of its technicians. Once you are employed, you will receive the training you need to perform your job. This may range from on-the-job developmental assignments to formal classroom instruction. Your supervisor is responsible for working with you to determine your training needs. All requests for formal training must be submitted by your supervisor to the HRO Employee Development Specialist.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP): An essential part of your career development is the Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP is a developmental action plan that structures training and development based on your duties and responsibilities. It details training activities designed to meet established goals and objectives. The development of an IDP takes many factors into consideration including your present skill level, your potential, your goals and the needs of the National Guard. Your supervisor will work with you to prepare your IDP.

CONSTITUTION DAY AND CITIZENSHIP DAY: September 17 of each year is designated "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day" to commemorate the signing of the Constitution and to recognize all who, by coming of age or by naturalization, have become citizens. Your agency should provide you with training and/or education materials on the Constitution annually. If you are a new employee, you should receive this training and/or education material as part of your new employee orientation.

Chapter 25

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

In the National Guard Technician Program, the bargaining unit, consist of all technicians who are not supervisors, confidential management assistants, auditors, and in some cases, personnelists and national security employees. If you are a bargaining unit employee, you have the legal right to form, join or assist any labor organization or to refrain from such activity. Technicians may represent the labor union and present its views to management or Congress without penalty or reprisal.

The Adjutant General and the labor union(s) have a collective bargaining agreement (contracts) which are available through your HRO or labor union representatives. A list of labor union stewards should be posted on bulletin boards at each work location. You can obtain applications to join the labor union from any

steward or labor union official. Nothing requires a technician to become or remain a member.

Chapter 26

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO)

It is the National Guard's policy to provide equal employment opportunity and fair treatment for all technicians and applicants for employment regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age or handicap. Discrimination and reprisal for participating in the complaint process will not be condoned. Management officials will take immediate and appropriate action to correct any occurrence of discrimination or sexual harassment.

COMPLAINTS: If you feel you have been discriminated against, or you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you must file a complaint with an EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the discriminatory or harassing act, or within 45 calendar days of when you should have reasonably known about the act. A list of EEO Counselors is posted on each unit's bulletin board.

Should you have questions concerning the Equal Employment Opportunity Program or the complaint process, please contact the State EEO Manager.

Chapter 27

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program is a referral program that assists any technician who has behavioral problems that affect work performance. This assistance is provided through discrete and confidential referral of technicians to appropriate treatment specialists. Some problems commonly dealt with through the EAP include: alcohol and drug abuse, behavioral disorders, excessive stress from adverse family situations, financial difficulty, legal entanglement or other personal problems that interfere with job performance or health.

While your supervisor or manager is never to be in the role of your diagnostician or counselor, he or she may suggest you consider the EAP when less than satisfactory job performance/conduct persists. Performance/conduct factors that may indicate the need for referral include: assignment failures, excessive absenteeism or tardiness, unexcused absences, deteriorating personal appearance, altercation with fellow technicians, prolonged lunch hours, frequent disappearances, poor judgment, moodiness or anxiety. Participation in the EAP will be in strict confidence. Records relating to treatment will not be placed in any work folder without your permission.

Also remember, EAP can also be very helpful to you and your family in coping with the stress and disruption associated with your call to active duty. If you

are affected by deployment, you should notify your HRO to learn what programs are available to you and your family.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE: The use of illegal drugs and excessive use of alcohol are incompatible with membership in the National Guard. Use of illegal drugs and excessive use of alcohol adversely affect our every day job performance, combat readiness, health, safety and morale. If you have a problem with alcohol or drugs, please contact the EAP for professional assistance.

Chapter 28

TELEWORK PROGRAM

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 was signed into law on December 9, 2010. The Act is a key factor in the Federal Government's ability to achieve greater flexibility in managing its workforce through the use of telework. Telework is an alternate work arrangement that may be available to you. Telework allows you to conduct some or all of your work away from the primary workplace. The work location might be your home, a telework location center, an office close to your home or other acceptable location agreed to by all. The telework arrangement may be fixed whereby you work one or more days away or as needed. Telework is not a right; management decides whether or not a technician may telework. Check with your supervisor or HRO for information on the telework policy/program.

Chapter 29

MASS TRANSIT BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Mass Transportation Benefit Program (MTBP) was established in October 2000 and is offered to eligible employees and military service members, to the extent authorized by law and regulations, to reduce pollution and traffic congestion, preserve the environment, and expand transportation alternatives in the National Capital Region.

The MTBP is an employer-provided mass transportation fare subsidy that is offered to eligible employees who use mass transportation for their commute to and from work. The employee is provided a dollar value of their monthly commuting benefit directly to the employees' registered SmarTrip cards to help defray the cost of public transportation. Contact your supervisor or HRO for procedures and eligibility.

Chapter 30

MISCELLANEOUS

PHYSICAL FITNESS: Military Technicians may be granted authorized absences to participate in an approved physical fitness program. This physical activity must be coordinated with your supervisor and conform to your state's policy.

SMOKING POLICY: The National Guard smoking policy prohibits smoking in all National Guard buildings and work areas. This includes, but is not limited to, private offices, hallways, auditoriums, conference rooms, restrooms and supply rooms. Smoking is also prohibited in government vehicles. Smoking is allowed only in designated smoking areas.

SAFETY/HEALTH: It is the goal of the National Guard to provide you and your fellow employees a safe workplace. Safety equipment is provided and must be utilized as required. Unsafe conditions must be immediately reported to your supervisor or the Safety Office.

SELF SERVICE – MY BIZ /MY WORKPLACE: As part of the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System(DCPDS), the Self Service Modules, My Biz and My Workplace, permit you, and managers secure, real-time, on-line access to personnel information, at any time, from a government computer (.mil extension).

My Biz allows you access to view information from your official personnel records including appointments, position, personal, salary, benefits, awards and bonuses, performance, and personnel actions. In addition, you may update information such as your telephone numbers, work email address, handicap code, foreign language proficiency information, ethnicity and race identification, emergency contact information, and education data on-line with My Biz. You are highly encouraged to review your personnel information for accuracy and report any discrepancies to your HRO. You should also ensure your My Biz account contains your correct work email address so that you may directly receive important information (i.e., Performance Appraisal Application correspondence, mass emails) related to your appointment.

My Workplace brings key information to managers and supervisors about their technicians together in one place, streamlining the human resources decision-making process and helping to balance managerial tasks with day-to-day demands more easily. My Workplace keeps managers and supervisors informed about their technicians' personnel actions. With quick and easy access to technicians' personnel information, managers are able to make budget decisions, staffing plans and work distributions more efficiently. For more information about access to My Biz and My Workplace, contact your HRO.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES, ITS TERRITORIES AND POSSESSION: In accordance with DoDI 1215.06, technicians must be in a Title 10 status when on land outside the United States, its territories, and possessions. The phrase "on land" means that National Guard members can fly to or between Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands in Title 32 status so long as they do not land on foreign territory. Title 10 status is critical for it ensure that members are covered by Status of Forces Agreements or similar arrangements providing protections for visiting U. S. Forces.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AWOL	Absence With Out Leave
AUS	Absent-Uniformed Service
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CSR	Customer Service Representative
CSRS	Civil Service Retirement System
DCPDS	Defense Civilian Personnel Data System
DFAS	Defense Finance and Accounting System

DS	Dual Status
DSR	Discontinued Service Retirement
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EDP	Environmental Differential Pay
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFT	Electronic Funds Transfer
FECA	Federal Employees' Compensation Act
FEDVIP	Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program
FEGLI	Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
FEHB	Federal Employees Health Benefits Program
FERS	Federal Employees Retirement System
FLTCIP	Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
FSA	Flexible Spending Account
FWS	Federal Wage System (w age grade pay system)
GS	General Schedule (Pay System)
HRO	Human Resources Office
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IDT	Inactive Duty Training
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
LES	Leave and Earning Statement
MRA	Minimum Retirement Age
NDS	Non-Dual Status
NPA	Notification of Personnel Action
OPF	Official Personnel Folder
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OWCP	Office of Workers' Compensation Program
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
QLE	Quality Life Event
QSI	Quality Step Increase
RIF	Reduction-in-Force
RPA	Request for Personnel Action
SSP	Sustained Superior Performance
TAG	The Adjutant General
TCC	Temporary Continuation of Coverage
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
USC	United States Code
USERRA	Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
WG	Wage Grade (Pay System)
WL	Wage Leader
WS	Wage Supervisor
WGI	With-in-Grade Increase

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HRO Points of Contact:



Administration: COMM: () _____ DSN: _____

FAX: _____ COMM: () _____
DSN: _____

HRO Work center	Extension
Human Resources Officer	
Deputy Human Resources Officer	
Supervisory Human Resource Management Specialist	
Labor Relations Specialist	
Employee Relations Specialist	
Human Resource Development Specialist	
Classification Specialist	
Staffing Specialist	
Human Resources Specialist (Information Systems)	
Active Guard/Reserve Manager	
State Equal Employment Manager	

Human Resources Office Website:

An on-line source for job listings, regulations, policies, handbooks, HR specialist's pages, and human resources points of contact

Notes

[illegible]



