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Technician Personnel

Technician Branch Staff:

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Supv Human Resource Spec	Mrs. Deb Burling	x8187
	Maj Sean O'Neill	x8175
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Recruitment, Staffing & Pay	Mrs. Denise Anderson	x8177
Benefits & Services	MSgt Jody Kouma	x8190
	OC Amanda Almanza	x8197
	SSG John Winterfeld	x8173
Technician Training /Travel	Mrs. Diane Voichoski	x8184
Labor Relations	Mr. Jason Grams	x8185

Website: <https://states.gkoportal.ng.mil/states/NE/Directorates/J1/Technician-Branch/Pages/default.aspx>

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Supervisors and Federal Employees, as a reminder, the appraisal rating period ends 1 October. Annual Assessments must be accomplished NLT 30 November.

FEDERAL HOLIDAYS-2015

Federal law establishes the following public holidays for Federal employees.

Holidays on OPM: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/#url=Overview>

2015

11 Nov – Veterans Day
25 Dec – Christmas

26 Nov – Thanksgiving Day
1 Jan 16 - New Years Day

When a holiday falls on a non-workday for an employee covered by a compressed work schedule and the actual holiday date is not a Sunday, the last regularly scheduled workday preceding (before) the holiday is the employee's in lieu of holiday.

If an actual holiday date falls on Sunday: Actual date holidays are 4 Jul, 11 Nov, 25 Dec and 1 Jan each year. Employees whose basic workweek is Monday through Friday the Monday immediately after is the legal holiday. For employees covered by a compressed work schedule (i.e. Tuesday – Friday) the holiday is the first regularly scheduled workday following the Sunday holiday as the in lieu of holiday off.

27 PAY DATES-AIR FORCE ONLY

Periodically, the pay year will be comprised of 27 paydays instead of the more common 26 paydays. This is the case for 2015 (Air Force payroll only) which will affect some of your deductions and withholding amounts as well. Deductions that are affected is Federal and State Taxes, Social Security, Medicare, TSP Contributions and TSP Catch-up Contributions. For example, employees who put the maximum TSP Contributions into their account per the example below:

TSP Maximum Employee Contribution for 2015: 18,000

$\$18,000/26 = \692.31 per payday over 26 paydays

$\$18,000/27 = \666.67 per paydays over 27 paydays

If the employee elected the \$692.31 amount ($\$692.31 \times 27 = \$18,692.37$), Employee exceeds the TSP Maximum and reaches the maximum contribution in payday 26. This results in no employee contribution, no agency matching, and employee only receives the automatic 1% government contribution for the 27th pay period.

TRICARE DENTAL

Friendly reminder, Technician personnel may enroll in the TRICARE Dental program (TDP) anytime and do not need a qualifying life event to do so. Technicians are eligible to purchase and enroll into the TRICARE Dental program via online and/or by calling 1-855-638-8371. To be eligible to enroll in the TDP, the sponsor (technician) must have at least 12 months remaining on his or her military service commitment at the time of enrollment.

2015 FEHB OPEN SEASON

The 2015 Federal Benefits Open Season for Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program will begin Monday, November 9th, 2015 through Monday, December 14th, 2015. This open season will implement the Self Plus One enrollment. Self Plus One is a new enrollment type in the FEHB program that allows employees to cover themselves and one eligible family member they designate to be covered. Specific information regarding cost, plans, and coverage may be found at <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/>

Open Season changes for FEHB plans must be accomplished via EBIS (Employee Benefit Information System) online at www.ebis.army.mil OR by phone at 1-877-276-9287, Option #3. Dental and/or Vision enrollments, changes or cancellations are accomplished at www.benefeds.com or by calling 1-877-888-3337.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) enrollment is completed via www.fsafeds.com or by phone 1-877-372-3337.

Contact MSgt Jody Kouma at 402-309-8190, OC Amanda Almanza at 402-309-8197 or SSG John Winterfeld at (402) 309-8173 for any benefits questions.

USE OR LOSE ANNUAL LEAVE

For 2015 the leave year began 11 Jan 15 and will end 9 Jan 16. Technicians may carry over into the next leave year a maximum of 240 hours of accrued annual leave. Employees must “use” their excess annual leave by the end of a leave year or they will “lose” (forfeit) it.

As required in the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) regulations, an employee must schedule his or her annual leave by **29 November 2015**, the third pay period prior to the end of the leave year to avoid forfeiture of annual leave. However, HR **highly** recommends scheduling and utilization of use or lose leave prior to the potential of lapse in appropriations after 11 December 2015.

An agency may consider restoring annual leave that was forfeited if the reason is under one of the following conditions: (1) Exigency of public business. The exigency, or mission demand, must be of such importance as to preclude the use of schedule leave. The exigency must be approved, normally in advance, through supervisory channels. (2) Sickness, injury or other medical condition for which sick leave is appropriate. (3) Administrative error through no fault of the technician. Regulatory rules require “use or lose” annual leave to be scheduled in writing before the start of the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year. Military duty is not considered a condition of exigency due to annual leave could be used.

Documentation required to request restoration or forfeited annual leave is the OPM 71 with scheduled dates of leave, official approval, statement of reasons for canceling the use of leave, documentation for the beginning and ending dates of the exigency, and calendar dates the canceled leave was rescheduled for use.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFERENTIAL PAY (EDP) AND HAZARDOUS DUTY PAY (HDP)

SUPERVISORS: The Environmental Differential Pay (EDP) and Hazardous Duty Pay (HDP) Committee will be conducting a meeting.

Request supervisors submit the annual TAG-NE Form 550-1 in accordance with NE TPR 550 for certification or re-certification no later than 31 October 2015.

Contact Ms. Denise Anderson at 402-309-8177 for questions.

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[Technician Travel & Training](#)

Human Resource Development Staff

Mrs. Diane Voichoski – HRDS – x8184

FY 2016 ARNG Technician Travel and Training:

Now is the time to enter your FY2016 first quarter travel requests in Defense Travel System (DTS). Be sure to attach documentation such as registration procedures and Letters of Instruction to explain/justify why this is high priority travel for you and what happens if you do not attend.

[Human Resources Information Systems \(HRSIS\)](#)

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HRSIS Staff

CMSgt Mike Courtney – HRSIS Manager – x8189

Performance Appraisal Application (PAA)

As mentioned previously in this newsletter, Annual Appraisals in PAA are due by 30 Nov 2015. I just wanted to remind all Technician Supervisors that PAA Plans for FY 2016 are due also. As you start a new plan for each Technician employee, you can copy each Job Objective from the previous plan and paste them into the new plan. You can make changes to any of the Job Objectives as needed. Please be sure to pay attention to the plan dates and the effective dates for the Job Objectives. The Appraisal period is 1 Oct to 30 Sep each FY.

The Guide to help create a Plan in PAA is located on the Army SharePoint site – under PAA <https://states.gkoportal.ng.mil/states/NE/Directorates/J1/Pages/default.aspx>

You may also contact Mr. Grams, MSgt Kouma and Chief Courtney if you have any PAA questions.

POC: CMSgt Mike Courtney

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HRO-SP Staff

HR Manager	Ms. Polly Putney	x8172
HR Assistant / Benefits	Mr. Tim Diedrichsen	x8180
HR Assistant / Payroll	Ms. Bonnie Shipley	x8178

30-DAY Window - Insurance Status Changes

Employees or spouses that have a qualifying status change have 30 DAYS to change benefits. All changes must be consistent with the qualifying event. All requests will be made through the Employee Work Center (EWC) and the necessary documentation must be attached in the benefits change process.

Employees have 30 DAYS to initiate the change in the EWC. WHEN COUNTING THE 30 DAYS, THE DATE OF THE EVENT MUST BE COUNTED AS DAY ONE.

As an example, if an employee got married on August 15, 2015 -- August 15th would be day one and September 13, 2015 would be day 30 of the **30-day window** for making insurance changes. The process would need to be

completed by September 13th. When the employee is changing benefits in the EWC they need to attach an electronic copy of the marriage license/certificate BEFORE they complete the process. Look for and complete the attachment BEFORE leaving the last page of the process.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST DAY, especially the last day falls on a weekend.

If you are not sure of when the 30-day window ends or if you have questions, contact Human Resources as soon as you know about a possible status change.

Marital Status Changes / W-4 Changes

If an employee's marital status changes during the year they can change their marital status in the Employee Work Center (EWC) on the LINK website – www.link.nebraska.gov . This will not automatically change the amount of withholding that comes out of an employee's check for Federal and State taxes. Employees will still need to submit a completed W-4 to Human Resources. All applicable fields should be completed even if some information, such as exemptions, extra withholding or marital status, is not changing.

To make sure a W-4 is completed correctly, employees should review the Hot Links in the lower left-hand corner of the LINK website. This will allow employees to look at current W-4 information. Please review check stubs in the pay period after a change has been processed to make sure withholding increases or decreases by appropriate amounts.

Wellness Website / Program Enrollment Deadline

To finish qualifying (step 3) for the Wellness Health plan for the 2016/2017 plan year employees must **sign up** for a Wellness program, such as Walk This Way, by November 20, 2015. Employees must then complete the requirements of that program by March 31, 2016. Visit www.wellnessoptions.nebraska.gov to review the programs available and how to sign up. Call Health Fitness, 1-866-956-4285, for login assistance and questions about the website, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST. Note: Employees that began participating in any State health plan on or before April 1, 2015 must have already completed the first two steps, an on-line Health Assessment and a Biometric Screening, in the spring of 2015 (April-May).

Website: <https://stateofnebraska.bioviva.healthfitness.com> . You can also call Customer Service at 866-956-4285 to ask questions.

Logging Steps in Walk This Way

For an alternate way of logging steps in the Walk This Way program, employees can go to the Walk This Way screen and hover their cursor over 'LOG PROGRESS' in the tool bar toward the top of the screen then click on 'SUMMARY' that appears in the drop-down menu. Find the days where you would like to add steps and click on 'add steps' to the right of that date. When finished adding the number of steps click on 'save'.

Changes to Addresses, Phone Numbers and Direct Deposit

Employees can change their addresses, update phone numbers and change direct deposit information in the Employee Work Center (EWC). Go to the LINK website – www.link.nebraska.gov to get to the EWC. Once you are logged in click on the appropriate icon (Pay – for direct deposit changes or Personal Information – for address or phone number changes).

[AGR Guard Reserve](#)

Tricare Webinar

Educating Tricare beneficiaries about benefits available to NG and Reserve Service Members. Wednesday, 18 November 2021, 1300-1400hrs, no registration required.

<https://conference.apps.mil/webconf/TRICAREFORNGR>

For audio dial 1-800-857-9816, pass code 38154

Affordable Care Act

In January 2016, DFAS will provide the service members or individuals eligible for Tricare coverage during tax year 2015 either a 1095-C or 1095-B. The 1095 documents that you have the minimum essential coverage. This form will be required with your 2015 federal tax return. The 1095 will be available through myPay no later than 31 January 2016.

Initial Tour Continuation Board

The next tour continuation board is scheduled on or about 15 December 2015. Individuals whose records will appear before the board have been notified and given a suspense date of 1 December 2015. Letters of recommendation from supervisors have a suspense of 15 November 2015.

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[Equal Employment Office/Diversity/Organizational Development](#)

(Point of contact for the following information is LaVonne Rosenthal, 309-8111.)

That's the Spirit – Making the holidays work for you

(The following information is from Federal Occupational Health (FOH) Employee Assistance Program.) Taking a holistic approach to caring for yourself this holiday season—and throughout the year—can really make a difference in your physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Here are some suggestions to help keep you in balance:

Get in the spirit and connect

For many, the end of the year is a traditional time of celebration. These festivities carry common themes of connection and generosity—bringing light to the darkening winter months. Below are a few ways to fully enjoy the holiday spirit.

Connect with yourself

• Take time for you

- Get up early and listen to your favorite music, while the rest of the house is asleep
- Take a walk by yourself
- Enjoy a relaxing bath or massage

• Slow down and be in the present moment

- Be conscious of what you're eating, drinking, and talking about
- Be fully there and aware during conversations with others
- Deep breathing
- Use deep breathing to relax and slow down, so that you can enjoy the moment
- Progressive relaxation
- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and relax your body one area at time, starting with your feet

Connect with nature

- Visit a safe natural setting—like a park or botanical garden—and enjoy the beauty

Connect with others

- Offer someone a smile and a friendly “hello”
- Visit a neighbor
- Volunteer or visit a nursing home or hospital

Be generous

- Let someone go ahead of you, whether in traffic or a retail checkout line
- Give your time: Consider doing volunteer work with a community organization
- Give your attention: Actively listen when someone is talking

- Give to your favorite charity

Be grateful

- Reflect on all the good people, experiences, and things in your life
- Give personal thanks to people who have made your life better or easier

Coping with challenging connections

While connecting with friends and loved ones can be nurturing and affirming, some behaviors and personalities can add increased stress to the holidays. Here are some tips on how to cope.

Breathe deeply

- Start with a gentle and complete exhale, then take slow deep breaths to calm the body
- Count 'em out: Even seven conscious and deep breaths can help you feel less anxious or agitated

Go out for some fresh air

- Walk away from a situation that becomes too emotionally charged
- Calmly excuse yourself and go somewhere quiet and safe
- Do not get pulled back into the situation; be clear about your decision not to engage with the other person

Put things in context

- If you only see someone once a year on the holiday, let the smaller things slide

Calmly assert your opinion

If you determine that something is important to you, calmly assert yourself and give your opinion. Realize, however, that your opinion may not be accepted. The goal is to have your voice heard, not to convince others to change their minds. If the other person hears what you have to say, that can pave the way for a healthy dialogue.

Making the best of time with yourself

While some people are dealing with the stress of activities and social obligations, others may find themselves with more alone time than they would like.

Reach out to others

- Give a friend or family member a call
- Do volunteer work

Make yourself available

- Go to a public place where other people are creating community
- Join a social group or sports club

Please contact Ms. Rosenthal at 402-309-8111 if you have any questions or need further assistance.

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