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September 1979

Questions and Answers

The Civil Service Reform Act

The Performance Appraisal Work Group included (left to right) George Reagle (TSP), Mario Damiata (TSP), Ron Cano (TSP), and Dave Fay (RM). Kathy Demeter (OCC), Veronica Ellison (AD), and Bob Nicholson (R&D) were also members.



The Merit Pay Work Group (left to right) Paul Levy (TSP), Brian McLoughlin (AD), Joe O'Gorman (EF), Nancy-Jane Stubbs (R&D), and Marilyn Jacobs (P&P) meet with CSRA Coordinator Jerry Byrnes (AD). Bob Fitzsimon (AD) is also a member of the work group.

Reforming the system that governs the hiring, training, rewarding, and removal of Federal employees is not an easy task, but that's precisely what Public Law 95-454 was written to do. Better known as the Civil Service Reform Act, the law is designed to improve government efficiency and balance management authority with employee protections. Once all of its features have been implemented by 1981, the law will affect virtually all Federal employees.

The Act should result in improving the delivery of services to the American public and making working for the Federal Government more challenging and rewarding. After

President Carter signed the bill into law on October 13, 1978, he said that implementing the principles of the reform bill will make the civil service system "a merit system that rewards achievement and responds to human needs."

Among the major features of the Act are an independent and equitable appeals process; protections against abuse of the merit system; and incentives and rewards for good work and skilled management.

For the first time in law, the Act defines nine basic merit principles to govern all personnel practices in the Federal

(See **CSRA** on page 2.)

CSRA — A New Performance Appraisal System

by George Reagle

government and also defines prohibited practices.

The current government-wide requirement for adjective performance ratings (outstanding, satisfactory, unsatisfactory) will be repealed under the Performance Appraisal System of the law so that each agency may develop and phase-in its own appraisal systems by 1981. Performance appraisals will be the basis for decisions to train, reward, assign, promote, demote, retain, or remove employees.

The Merit Pay System will govern the pay increases of managers and supervisors in grades GS-13 through GS-15. Employees covered under this system will no longer receive automatic within-grade increases but will be eligible each year for merit pay increases.

Here at NHTSA, two groups of dedicated employees are hammering out ideas and writing policies to direct the agency's own Performance Appraisal and Merit Pay for Managers and Supervisors systems. Mr. George Reagle (TSP) is chairing the Performance Appraisal Work Group. Ms. Nancy-Jane Stubbs (R&D) is chairing the Merit Pay Group. Both recently answered the most frequently asked questions concerning each system and how it will affect all of

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George Reagle

Q. Could you tell us why the Performance Appraisal Work Group was formed?

A. Basically, the Work Group was formed to develop options and recommendations for use by the NHTSA Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) Coordinator to develop and implement a new performance appraisal system as required by the Act. To meet this objective we developed questions and issues centered around basic requirements of the CSRA and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations. Each Group member randomly interviewed employees throughout the Administration to get feedback on the questions, and to identify other issues of importance. The group came to a consensus on the most important options and made its recommendations.

Q. It has been said that the CSRA, and in particular the new Performance Appraisal, will help improve workforce productivity. Do you believe that this can be achieved in our Administration?

A. Yes. Under the provisions of the CSRA supervisors are responsible for identifying job elements, and critical job elements, for each position under his/her control. Once these have been identified the supervisor sets levels of performance for each job element, which will then be used to appraise an employee's performance.

Under the present system an employee is not appraised on work related elements, but more so on personality and on behavioral traits. By setting standards of performance for each job element the employee and supervisor will be more conscious of expected levels of performance and hopefully, this will improve productivity.

Q. You mentioned that the supervisor has the responsibility to identify job elements and to establish performance standards. What role does the employee play in this process?

A. One of the major issues that the Performance Appraisal Work Group had to deal with was

how should the employee be included in the process. If one reads the CSRA and regulations put out by OPM it is quite evident that employee participation is strongly encouraged. We recommended that at the beginning of the appraisal period the supervisor and employee meet in order to discuss organizational and personal goals and objectives. Following this, each person would review the existing position description and, at a scheduled meeting, identify job elements and establish performance standards. Once communicated in writing the supervisor will use these factors in the appraisal of the employee's performance. In addition, during the appraisal if situations arise that have an impact on established job elements and performance standards the employee is expected to discuss these changes with his or her supervisor.

Q. What if the supervisor and employee cannot reach an agreement on job elements and performance standards?

A. If this situation arises, the Performance Appraisal Work Group strongly recommends that the supervisor and employee work together to handle any disagreements. However, in cases where disagreements cannot be settled we have recommended that the first line supervisor should have the final say.

Q. What about the use

of a Reviewing Official in cases where disagreements arise and cannot be settled?

A. Our group has no objections to using a Reviewing Official. In fact, we recommended that at the discretion of the first line supervisor, the second line supervisor should be consulted. In addition, second line supervisors should be required to review the final appraisal in order to ensure consistency and fairness.

Q. Do you really believe supervisors and employees are capable of working together in a constructive manner to identify job elements and establish performance standards?

A. I do not believe it is going to be easy. However, joint discussion of performance standards and performance appraisal will foster greater communication and cooperation between supervisors and employees.

Q. Could you explain what a Critical Job Element is (CJE)?

A. A Critical Job Element is a component of an employee's job that is of sufficient importance that performance below the standard established by management requires remedial action and denial of a within-grade increase, and may be the basis for removing or reducing the grade level of that employee. Such action may be taken

without regard to performance on other components of the job.

Q. Does this imply that if an employee fails in one of the CJE's he or she can be fired?

A. Not necessarily. If a person fails to perform at a minimally acceptable level of performance, that employee must be given an opportunity to improve performance. If performance does not improve he or she can be reassigned to another position, downgraded to a level that is commensurate to performance, required to take necessary training, or removed.

Q. How are supervisors held accountable for making the Performance Appraisal system work?

A. All supervisors must go through the same job analysis with their supervisors in order to identify job elements and establish Performance Standards. In order to hold supervisors accountable, the Work Group has recommended that at least one of the CJE's for each supervisor be related to how well the supervisor administers the new system.

Q. When will this system be implemented?

A. Hopefully, the appraisal of supervisors under this system will begin on January 1, 1980. It should be implemented for all other employees on October 1, 1980.

CSRA — Understanding Merit Pay

by Nancy-Jane Stubbs



Nancy-Jane Stubbs

Q. What is "Merit Pay"?

A. Merit Pay is the systems linkage of pay to performance for managers and supervisors in grades GS-13 through GS-15 as a replacement for the automatic cost-of-living and within grade step increases.

Q. How does a merit pay system differ from the current government system?

A. The Merit Pay System differs in several ways from the current compensation system. (1) compensation will be based on the achievement of performance criteria that have been established between affected employees and their supervisors. (2) there will not be any "semi-automatic" within-grade increases - performance rather than length of service will be the basis for any adjustments; (3) affected employees receive a

guarantee of only half of the annual cost of living increase; and (4) superior employees may have their pay adjusted in any year up to the maximum of the grade.

Q. How will the determination of the employees to be covered by the Merit Pay be made?

A. The law provides that all supervisors and management officials GS 13-15 will be covered by a merit pay compensation system. These determinations are presently being made within NHTSA by the Associate Administrators and Office Directors based on the definitions contained in the Labor Management Relations (LMR) Section of the Act. Affected employees will be consulted to ensure that they understand what their responsibilities are perceived to be by management.

Q. What are the advantages of being under Merit Pay?

A. An employee under Merit Pay has the opportunity to increase his or her salary at a faster rate than is now possible. The system directly associates work performance with pay and does not include length of service as a criterion for level of pay. Such raises would be part of basic pay and thus reflected in



Jerry Byrnes

increased retirement and other fringe benefits.

Q. Are there any "guaranteed" salary increases for employees covered by Merit Pay?

A. Every employee is guaranteed one-half of the annual percentage adjustment to government salaries that takes place each October or the minimum of his grade level, whichever is higher. Any other pay adjustment will be based on performance. The merit pay workgroup is currently working to develop a compensation scheme to propose to the agency.

Q. What types of schemes are being contemplated and how can managers and supervisors voice their views?

A. There are three possible ways to provide the committee with input. One is to attend meetings

which are being scheduled for affected employees in the various organizational elements. Secondly, you may attend the weekly question and answer period which follows subgroup meetings each Tuesday morning at 10:30. Thirdly, all of the committee members welcome your personal input and will answer any questions you may have.

As to the schemes contemplated, based on the recommendation of the Performance Appraisal Subcommittee for five performance appraisal rankings, we are considering what compensation should be associated with each ranking and whether there should be salary limits within each grade for the varying levels of performance. The primary questions are should two employees be given the same percentage increase if they are both rated superior, regardless of what their current salary is, and should those employees rated less than superior be allowed to reach the maximum salary of that grade.

Q. Will the number of employees affected and the number rated "superior" or "outstanding" affect the percent of compensation given?

A. Yes, both of these factors plus the organizational level at which the money is distributed will affect compensation. Because the amount of money will be equal to a percentage of

salaries that OPM will prescribe based on several factors (one-half the annual comparability increase plus an amount equal to within-grade and quality step increases that would have been given if the employees were not under the merit plan) instead of set percentage adjustments, we will probably recommend "shares" of the merit pay pool.

Q. At what level will the pay distribution take place?

A. This has not been decided. Two factors must be weighed: the size of the group must be large enough so that there is enough money in the merit pay pool to reward superior achievers yet the group must be small enough so that the distributing employee knows the personnel whom he will be rating. The distributing employer in turn will be rated on how well his organization performs and how effectively he allocated his merit pay funds.

Q. How will abuses be curbed?

A. The primary curbs for abuses will be continued training, an audit system, and possibly a review board. None of these have been established. Other suggestions would be most welcome.

Q. What procedure will there be for grieving a merit pay determination?

A. Merit Pay determinations cannot be grieved. However, appeals may be filed with the Merit Systems Protection Board in cases involving alleged violations of merit principles or prohibited personnel practices.

Q. When will the first Merit Pay distribution take place?

A. At present we are hoping to develop the Merit Pay plan and trial test it in the coming year. We hope to make the first actual pay distribution October 1, 1980.

Q. What if I'm at the top of my grade, how does merit pay affect me?

A. If you are at the top of your grade, you may not receive monies from the merit pay pool since your base salary cannot exceed the salary for the top of the grade. However, if you are rated "superior" or "outstanding," you are eligible for a cash award.

For more information on the Merit Pay System, contact Ms. Stubbs (472-7040), Paul Levy (426-1675) Joe O'Gorman (426-2820) Bob Fitzsimon (426-0112), or Marilyn Jacobs (426-1581).

For more information on the CSRA contact NHTSA Coordinator Jerry Byrnes in Room 5301 at 426-1496.

Airbags — A Timely Issue



Bob Nelson and Mary Klink (RM) have been busy around the Washington area this summer inflating (and repacking) airbags in one of NHTSA's '77 Chevrolet demonstration Impalas. The demonstrations at local high schools, safety shows, and on Capitol Hill will hopefully dispell the confusion concerning airbag safety and benefits.

Julie Martin (RM) discovers first hand that airbags are installed in the steering wheel hub and dashboard, that they inflate in about one-twenty-fifth of a second, and begin to deflate within seconds.

Personnel

Welcome Aboard

Georgia Betts, Secy Typist, NEF-12.
James Bradley, Accountant, NAD-60.
Barbara Burden, Secy Typist, NPP-01.
Mara Craggs, Program Analyst, NTS-01.
Robert Jones, Contract Spec., NAD-30.
Delmas Maxwell, Math Statistician, NTS-12-02.
Celia Peckover, Clerk Typist, NEF-13.
Howard Pritz, Mechanical Engineer, NRD-50.
Grace Robinson, Clerk Typist, NMR-11.
Steven Zardman, Supervisory Program Analyst, NRM-30.

Congrats on Promotion

Timothy Abney, Mechanical Engineer, NRD-12.
Leon Delarm, Supervisory Safety Standards Engineer, NRM-12.
Patricia Hudson, Admin.

Staff Asst., NRM-01.
Guy Hunter, Supervisory Safety Standards Engineer, NRM-12.
Duane Perrin, Supervisory Safety Standards Engineer, NRM-11.
Stuart Rednar, Safety Defects Engineer, NEF-13.
James Simons, Economist, NPP-20.
Gary Toth, Res. Highway Engineer, NRD-32.
Barbara Whitmore, Management Analyst, NAD-43.

'Bye and Good Luck

Thomas Herlihy, Att-Adv., NOA-30.
Pamela Laughery, Clerk-Steno, NEF-20.
Lynn Miller, Clerk-Steno, NAD-20.

Job Openings

For complete details on these job openings, see the official vacancy announcements. Vacancy

announcements are posted on the NHTSA Bulletin Boards at both the Nassif and Transpoint Buildings. They are also distributed to each Office Director.

Supervisory Mechanical Engineer, GS-830-15, R&D. Opens: 8-24, Closes: 9-14. NHTSA 79-84.

Director, Office of Defects Investigation. Opens: 9-4, Closes: 10-5. NHTSA 79-82.

Supervisory Investigator, GS-1801-15, ODI. Opens: 8-24, Closes: 9-14. NHTSA 79-76.

Employee Relations Specialist, GS-230-9/11/12, AD. Opens: 8-21, Closes: 9-11. NHTSA 79-80.

Accounting Technician, GS-525-5/6, Region III. Opens: 8-21, Closes: 9-11. NHTSA 79-79.

Position Classification Specialist, GS-221-9/11/12, AD. Opens: 8-16, Closes: 9-6. NHTSA 79-78.

Program Analyst, GS-345-11, NRM. Opens: 8-20, Closes: 9-5. NHTSA 79-77.

NHTSA + Students = A Winning Combination

Summer must be nearly over. Suntans are fading, temperatures are cooler, and NHTSA's summer employees are going back to school.

Over 70 enthusiastic highschool, undergraduate, and graduate students filled positions as engineering, computer, math, and science aids, economic and management assistants, and clerical support in NHTSA's summer program this year. In addition to the valuable work experience students gained, they also participated in agency sponsored field trips, worked on the Auto Safety Hotline, and met with top NHTSA officials.

"In the past, most of NHTSA's recruiting was done through the Central Employment Office," Summer Program Coordinator Dolores (Dee) Richard said.

"This year, NHTSA contacted colleges directly, and had more than enough applicants for our positions," Dee said. In fact, we even had to turn students away."

Supervisors, she said, were pleased with their summer helpers' performance. And students seemed happy because they were busy. So busy, in fact, that Dee said some felt guilty leaving the office to go on the NHTSA sponsored field trips.

The summer employment program is, in one sense,

Gail Chalef, Alison Wills, Valerie Ragland, Jeff Smith, Metro driver R. A. Scott, and Gerry Uhlhorn (AD), board the bus to visit the GM plant.



good public relations. The trips for the students plus their summer job assignments will hopefully encourage them to consider permanent government employment once they finish school.

On the first outing, students visited a General Motors plant in nearby Baltimore and watched workers assemble cars and pick-ups. Most were impressed with the organization and machinery

involved in building cars. "Car body parts swing into position over conveyer belts from all directions, and drop onto chassis," one student said. "Suddenly there's a car where there was no car before."

The second field trip took students to FAA's Air Traffic Control Facility in Leesburg, Virginia where students could watch busy air traffic

(See **Students** on page 8.)



Debbie Marchini chats with Gerry Uhlhorn (AD) about the summer employment program.

Students (from page 7.)

controllers at work. They also visited Dulles International Airport where they watched (and heard!) a Concorde take-off.

Working for a day on the Auto Safety Hotline also gave students an idea of what goes on in NHTSA. Marcy Dollar, a clerk-typist from Executive Secretariat and a student from James Madison University said, "The phones rang almost constantly, but talking to people from all over the country was fun."

Near the end of their appointments, students had an opportunity to meet with Administrator Joan Claybrook in an informal briefing session. Ms. Claybrook encouraged students to ask questions or share their reactions to working for the agency for the summer.

Generally, the students had a lot of good things to say about NHTSA. Many have even worked for NHTSA before. For instance, Annemarie Hill, a mechanical engineering

On three separate occasions, Administrator Joan Claybrook met with groups of summer employees. Here Ms. Claybrook is featured with (left to right) John Wander, RD coop student; Kathryn Hatch, RM; Jeff McCormick, RM; Eileen McNulty, OCC; Marsi Mazuzan, NAD; and Neil Kornblatt, OCC.



student from the University of Maryland just completed her second summer in R&D. Darlene Goodyear once a full-time employee in TSP returned between semesters at the University of Pennsylvania where she's studying to be a dental technician.

Supervisors and students agree: the summer employment program is a bonus for everyone. The program offices get bright, interested workers, and students get valuable work and career experience that may help them decide what to pursue at school.

But we're always sorry to see them go.



Pat Pietrzak (AD) chats with summer employees David Lee and Marcy Dollar.

Security Reminder

The Office of Investigations and Security, Office of the Secretary, DOT is charged with the physical security of your work environment. As such, certain facts have been demonstrated that require the constant vigilance of all employees. Here are the basic physical security safeguards which will aid you in your employment.

Each evening secure all easily concealed items of Government property, particularly electronic and small desk calculators.

Keep your purse or wallet with you or locked up at all times. Do not leave it unattended even for a brief period.

Do not leave money or valuables in your office overnight.

If you bring your shopping to the office, give it the same protection you afford your other personal property.

To report a loss or theft, call 426-2626 (Nassif Bldg.) or 426-9154 (Trans Point Bldg.)