

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Ave.
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354

July 25, 2001

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Information Bulletin No. OF&A 2001-042

To: State and Center Directors
State Fire Management Officers
Personnel Officers

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation Management Policy

Subject: National Fire Plan - Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances (3R's)

On April 16, 2001, the Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, issued a memorandum establishing an additional requirement for the review and approval of recruitment and relocation bonuses and retention allowances for positions filled under the DOI National Fire Plan. This memo also further supplements earlier guidance on waiving the dual compensation limitations when reemploying a federal annuitant into a DOI National Fire Plan position. A copy of this memo and Personnel Bulletin 01-02 (Departmental Policy on Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances) are attached. Please ensure that requests for bonuses, allowances, and/or dual compensation waivers meet these additional requirements.

Your requests for my review and recommendation of 3R's incentives and/or approval of dual compensation waivers for reemployed annuitants should be submitted to my attention, through Human Resources.

If you have additional questions, please contact Barb Sivey at (208) 387-5527.

Signed by:
Timothy M. Murphy
Acting Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Pat Lewis
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

2 Attachments

- 1 - Personnel Bulletin No. 01-02 (4 p)
- 2 - National Fire Plan - Recruitment Incentives memo (1 p)

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WO-540

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

Memorandum

APR 16 2001

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau Personnel Officers

From: Robert J. Lamb
Deputy Assistant Secretary - Budget and Finance

Subject: National Fire Plan - Recruitment Incentives

This memorandum establishes an additional requirement for review and approval of a Recruitment Bonus, Relocation Bonus or Retention Allowance (3R's) for positions filled under the Department of the Interior's (DOI) National Fire Plan. Further, it supplements earlier guidance on waiving the dual compensation limitations when re-employing a federal annuitant in a DOI National Fire Plan position.

Personnel Bulletin 01-02 delegates authority to approve the 3R incentives to heads of bureaus and equivalent organizations. Requests to use this authority for positions filled under the DOI National Fire Plan must be routed through the Director, Office of National Wildland Fire and Aviation Policy at the National Interagency Fire Center. The Director will review requests and make recommendations that help maintain consistency and prudence in the use of the 3R's among bureaus and with the U.S. Forest Service.

Secretarial Order No. 3227 delegates the Director, Office of National Wildland Fire and Aviation Policy, authority to waive salary reduction requirements when re-employing a federal annuitant in a DOI National Fire Plan position. The Office of Personnel Management expects that efforts to hire, including use of bonuses, will be exhausted before waiving dual compensation limitations for re-employed annuitants. Therefore, requests to waive the dual compensation limitations for re-employed federal annuitants must state the maximum recruitment bonus was offered but was insufficient incentive to return the annuitant to federal employment.

Our point of contact in the Office of Personnel Policy is Jim Tingwald. He can be reached at (202) 208-6755 or email [Jim.Tingwald\(@ios.doi.gov\)](mailto:Jim.Tingwald@ios.doi.gov).

Thank you for your assistance with these matters.

/s/ William D. Bettenberg (acting)

cc:

Director, Office of National Wildland Fire and Aviation Policy

April 13, 2001

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 01-02 (575)

SUBJECT: Departmental Policy on Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances.

1. This bulletin establishes the Department of the Interior's policy on the use of recruitment and relocation bonuses and retention allowances. It supersedes previous guidance issued under Personnel Management Letter No. 91-5 (575), dated July 15, 1991.

2. Authorities. Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) sections 5753 and 5754 and Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 575.

3. Policy. The Department of the Interior hereby establishes a policy for the payment of recruitment bonuses and relocation bonuses and retention allowances in accordance with the regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 5 CFR Part 575. Heads of bureaus and equivalent organizations will be responsible for administering this policy.

a. Approving Officials.

(1) The Executive Resources Board (ERB) approves recruitment bonuses and relocation bonuses and retention allowances for employees occupying positions in the Senior Executive Service, Senior Level, and Scientific and Professional categories. Requests for payment of a bonus or allowance for employees at this level must be submitted to the Chairperson of the ERB through the appropriate Assistant Secretary or equivalent official.

(2) Decisions to approve or disapprove payment of recruitment bonuses, relocation bonuses and retention allowances for employees in the Immediate Office of the Secretary and in the Office of the Secretary will be made by the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (PMB). Requests will be submitted through the appropriate assistant secretary or equivalent official to the Assistant Secretary - PMB.

(3) Except for positions covered by paragraph, 3a(1) and (2), above, decisions to approve or disapprove payment of recruitment bonuses, relocation bonuses and retention allowances will be made no lower than the heads of bureaus or equivalent organizations.

b. Criteria for Payment. The following criteria must be met or considered in authorizing these payments.

(1) Recruitment Bonuses and Relocation Bonuses - Individual and Group. Each bonus paid will be based on a written determination that, in the absence of a bonus, the bureau or organization would encounter difficulty in filling the position with a high quality candidate. Group relocation bonuses may be approved as provided for in 5 CFR 575.204(d). In determining

of such a payment, including group bonuses, the following factors will be considered.

(a) The success of recent efforts to recruit high quality candidates for similar positions;

(b) Recent turnover in similar positions;

(c) Labor market factors that may affect the ability of the bureau or organization to recruit high quality candidates for similar positions now or in the future;

(d) Special qualifications needed for the position; and

(e) In the case of recruitment bonuses, the practicality of using the superior qualifications appointment authority alone or in combination with a bonus.

(2) Retention Allowances - Individual and Group. Each retention allowance paid will be based on a written determination that the unusually high or unique qualifications of the employee or a special need of the bureau or equivalent organization for the employee's services makes it essential to retain the employee and that, in the absence of such an allowance, the employee would be likely to leave federal service. This determination will be based on a written description of the extent to which the employee's departure would affect the bureau's or organization's ability to carry out an activity or perform a function essential to its mission. For group retention allowances the same written determination must be made. The targeted group will be narrowly defined using factors such as occupational series, grade level, distinctive job duties, unique qualifications, assignment to a special project, organization or team designation, geographic location and performance level. Performance level may not be the sole or primary basis for authorizing a group retention allowance. In determining whether a retention allowance, including group retention allowances, should be paid and the amount of such payment, the following factors should be considered:

(a) The success of recent efforts to recruit candidates and retain employees with qualifications similar to those of the employee for positions similar to the employee's position;

(b) The availability in the labor market of candidates for employment who could perform the full range of duties and responsibilities assigned to the position held by the employee.

c. Payment of Bonuses and Allowances - Individual and Group.

(1) Payment of recruitment bonuses and relocation bonuses are calculated as a percentage of the employee's rate of base pay and are paid as a lump sum. The maximum bonus will not exceed 25 percent of the employee's rate of basic pay. The amount of a relocation bonus for a law enforcement officer (as defined in 5 CFR 575.205(b)) may not exceed the greater of \$15,000 or 25 percent of the officer's basic pay.

(2) The following requirements apply to payment of retention allowances:

(a) A retention allowance is calculated as a percentage of the employee's rate of basic pay and paid in the same manner and at the same time as basic pay. The maximum individual retention allowance will not exceed 25 percent of basic pay. The maximum retention allowance for a group or category of employees will not exceed 10 percent of basic pay (or 25 percent with Office of Personnel Management approval).

(b) A retention allowance may not be authorized for an employee to the extent that such an allowance, when added to the annual rate of all other continuing payments to which the employee is entitled, would cause the annual rate of all continuing payments to exceed the rate then payable for level I of the Executive Schedule.

(c) An employee receiving a recruitment bonus or relocation bonus must complete the period of service requirement before a retention allowance may be paid. However, a relocation bonus may be paid to an employee already receiving a retention allowance.

(d) A retention allowance may be continued as long as the conditions giving rise to the original determination to pay the allowance still exist. Designated approving officials will review each allowance determination at least annually to determine if payment is still warranted. This determination will be certified in writing by the approving official.

(e) Retention allowances will be reduced or terminated when the conditions in 5 CFR 575.307 are met.

(3) The payment of a bonus or allowance in one instance will not require a similar decision in other instances.

(4) Determinations on the payment or nonpayment (or discontinuance of) bonuses or allowances are final. Employees will have no right to appeal or grieve such determinations.

d. Requirement for Service Agreements.

(1) Before a recruitment bonus is paid, the employee will sign a written agreement to complete a specified period of employment. The minimum period of service is 6 months. However, where appropriate, for reasons established by the approving official, an approving official is encouraged to seek agreements requiring a period of service beyond 6 months.

(2) Before a relocation bonus is paid, the employee must sign a written agreement to complete a specified period of employment. The minimum period of service requirement should be 6 months. However, where appropriate, for reasons established by the approving official, an approving official is encouraged to seek agreements requiring a period of service beyond 6 months.

(3) If the employee fails to complete the length of service required in paragraphs 1 or 2, above, he or she will be required to reimburse the Department for the amount of the bonus on a pro rata basis. The repayment will be accomplished in accordance with the Department's regulations for collections by offset from an indebted Government employee under 5 U.S.C.

5514 and 5 CFR 550, subpart K.

(4) The above repayment requirements do not apply when an employee is involuntarily separated, or in the case of a relocation bonus, is provided with a written determination by the head of the bureau or equivalent organization (or a designated representative) that it is necessary to relocate the employee to a position in a different commuting area. The repayment may be waived in whole or in part as prescribed by the Department's debt collection rules when recovery would be against equity and good conscience or against the public interest.

e. Documentation and Records. The Department's Human Resource (HR) Strategic Plan has a focus area dedicated to "enhancing a quality workplace and competitive benefits." Use of recruitment and retention incentives is a positive indicator of program performance in that area. Bureaus should track authority usage in their HR accountability systems and encourage their use. Further, each designated approving official is responsible for ensuring that the basis for any recruitment bonus and relocation bonus and retention allowance is documented in accordance with 5 CFR Part 575. Documentation shall be available for review and submission upon request. In addition, on a fiscal year basis, each designated approving official shall compile and maintain the following information:

(1) The number of recruitment bonuses and relocation bonuses and retention allowances offered and the number accepted (individual and group);

(2) The percentage of salary offered and accepted in each individual case; and

(3) A summary statement assessing the effect of the bonus/allowance authority on the ability to fill positions with qualified candidates in a timely manner or in the case of retention allowance, to retain the services of employees.

f. Program Oversight and Evaluation. Bureaus and equivalent organizations will review the use of these authorities at least annually. The results of such reviews will be made available upon request.

4. The Department point of contact on this policy is Jim Tingwald, (202) 208-6755, mail stop; 5221 MIB, email:Jim_Tingwald@ios.doi.gov.

//original signed //

Carolyn Cohen
Director, Personnel Policy