

THE Personnel Touch

HR NEWSLETTER • VOLUME III • ISSUE 2 1999

Salary Increases

Salary increases this year will be effective October 1, 1999 for all eligible A&P and USPS employees hired by September 30th. Eligible employees refers to employees who are, at a minimum, meeting their required performance standards. If an ineligible employee achieves performance standards subsequent to the salary increase implementation date, the employee may receive an increase on the date the employee becomes eligible, but not retroactively.

Eligible employees will receive a 2.8% pay increase or a minimum of \$1,000 on their September 30, 1999 base rate of pay. Part-time employees will receive an increase amount commensurate with their respective FTE. All new in-unit and out-of-unit A&P employees must be hired prior to May 1, 1999 and June 30, 1999, respectively, to be eligible for this annual salary increase. Employees who are on a non-renewal appointment will not be eligible for the salary increase.

Retirement Program Changes

Passed by the 1999 Legislature

Summarized below are several bills passed by the 1999 Legislature:

Survivor Benefits

Amends the 1998 provision that allows a joint annuitant of a member who dies within one year before vesting to purchase up to one year of retirement credit in order to vest the

member's benefit and become eligible to receive a survivor's benefit. A joint annuitant may now purchase this additional credit with a combination of the two methods allowed in 1998 rather than only one of the two - by using the deceased member's accumulated annual

leave and by using the member's eligible out-of-state or in-state service. The amendment also clarifies that the cost to purchase the service is the contribution rate in effect for the period of time being claimed, plus 6.5% interest.

DROP

A Special Risk Class member who completes 25 years of special risk service before he/she reaches age 50 many now wait until age 52 before electing to participate in the DROP.

SB 150

Effective July 1, 2000, all members who retire after that date will have their retirement benefits paid by direct deposit of funds through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). A retiree may request an exception if he/she can demonstrate a hardship. Exceptions will be processed by the Office of the Comptroller, not the Division of Retirement. Requests for hardship consideration should be sent in writing to: EFT Section, Office of the Comptroller, Room 414 Fletcher Building, 101 West Gaines Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0350.

SB 1924

Effective July 1, 1999, all A&P positions are eligible to participate in the Optional Retirement Program.



E-mail Etiquette

E-mail has greatly augmented the amount of mail we receive on campus. In fact, e-mail is quickly becoming

an intrinsic part of our "tool chest" at work. While e-mail may increase personal productivity, it should not be used as a substitute for critical interpersonal skills. E-mail should not be used to reprimand, deliver bad news, or to discuss emotional issues.

Just as in all other forms of communication, there are some practices and forms prescribed by social convention that should be followed. Here are just a few guidelines for e-mail etiquette, that I have come across over time.

- Write useful subject lines that describe the main theme of your message
- Restrict the number of topics in each message, preferably to one. Use subdividers if your message must contain more than one subject.
- Keep your writing brief.
- Use quoted text carefully, walking the line between preserving context of the thread and minimizing message length.
- Use white spaces to break up your text.
- Don't assume everyone understands abbreviations, acronyms, slang and regionalisms.
- Be careful with sarcasm and subtle humor; one person's joke is another person's insult.
- Double-check your messages before sending.

- Many netizens speak English as a second language, making clarity and attention to grammar paramount.
- Don't feel pressured to respond to a message immediately; if asked for information, better to dig a little and make sure you're providing the correct answer than to shoot off something that may be wrong

Etiquette: Words call forth emotions and are universally the means by which we influence our fellow creatures. By words, one of us can give to another the greatest happiness or bring about utter despair.

—Sigmund Freud

Employee Benefits Update

The following changes to the health insurance program will take effect October 1, 1999:

- Health insurance premiums will increase from \$14.96 to \$16.15 biweekly for individual coverage and from \$53.80 to \$58.10 biweekly for family coverage.
- The HMO's co-payments for physician office visits will increase from \$5.00 to \$10.00 and co-payments for prescription drugs will increase as follows:

	From	To
Brand name drugs	\$10.00	\$20.00
Generic drugs	\$ 5.00	\$ 7.00

- Under the State Employee's Prescription Drug Plan (participants of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield Plan) supply limits will continue as currently being provided (30 day supply with the card and 90 day supply through mail order), co-payments will increase as follows:

	From	To
Brand name drugs with card or mail order	\$15.00	\$20.00
Generic drugs with card or mail order	\$ 5.00	\$ 7.00

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FIU FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
 Hope, Knowledge and Opportunity

Planning a Vacation?

Florida International University employees and their immediate families have the opportunity to become members of the Corporate Cruise Club at no cost. This membership entitles employees to receive special savings and upgrades (up to 50% off book rates) on 32 cruise lines and over 180 ships worldwide!

Corporate Cruise Club membership cards are available in the Office of Human Resources at University Park, PC 224, or at North Campus, LIB 322.

The Office of Human Resources also has discount coupon packages for vacations at Disney World Magic Kingdom, Epcot Center, Disney-MGM Studios, Pleasure Island, Typhoon Lagoon, River Country, Discovery Island, Disney Animal Kingdom, Busch Gardens, Sea World, Universal Studios, etc.

Plan ahead, and have a great summer!!!

Airport Fast Park®

The Office of Human Resources is introducing a new discounted benefit for employees who leave their cars at Miami International Airport (MIA) while travelling.

Airport Fast Park® is one of the largest nation-wide airport parking companies in the United States. The company has recently opened a 1400 space parking lot directly across from Miami International Airport. The facility is located on 4101 NW 31st Street (NW 31st and Lejeune Rd.), it is completely fenced, well lit and 24 hour camera monitored. Personnel are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They offer the option of fast, safe and professional parking when traveling out of MIA.

Simply park your car in the Airport Fast

Park® lot, at an assigned space (no reservations are required), and a courtesy van will be waiting for you in front of your car to help you load your luggage. The driver will take you directly to the airport and drop you off in front of your terminal within 3-5 minutes.

Upon your return, walk outside of baggage claim and step into one of their vans which continually circles the airport terminal. No phone calls or reservations are required to be taken back to your car. **Airport Fast Park® discounted daily rate for FIU employees is \$7.00 a day, compared to \$10.00 a day at MIA's lots.**

If you have made your travel arrangements through Carlson Wagonlit Travel, they will provide the discounted coupon with your tickets. If the coupon is not included or if you would like extra discount coupons, do not hesitate to ask for more at the travel agency, or request then by calling the Benefits Department at 348-2530.

For more information about Airport Fast Park®, check their web site at **www.airportfastpark.com** or call their office at (305) 871-4669.

Benefits Open Enrollment Alert

With Fall just around the corner, so is the annual Open Enrollment period for the University's benefit programs. The Office of Human Resources is encouraging all employees to verify the accuracy of their office location which is listed in the University Telephone Directory. This address must be correct in order to receive your open enrollment information. If your address needs to be corrected, please contact the Office of Human Resources to complete a new University Address Change Form.

Careers: Think not of yourself as the architect of your career, but as the sculptor. Expect to have to do a lot of hard hammering and chiseling and scraping and polishing.

—B.C. Forbes

EMPLOYMENT UPDATE

In accordance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the University must verify the identity and employment eligibility of all new employees by having them complete an Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9) on the employee's first day at work. (Please advise new employees that identification is required for the completion of this form.)

Our offices will process I-9 Forms daily between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. at University Park and 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 Noon at North Campus. OPS and College Work Study time cards will be available for pick up during this designated time.

If you have any questions, contact University Park or North Campus at (305) 348-2181 or (305) 919-5545, respectively.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome,

A Preventable Injury

The number one work-related injury may be one of the easiest to prevent. As the workplace changes with advances in technology, so do the injuries affecting employees. In 1980, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) accounted for only 18 percent of reported workplace injuries. By 1990, this figure had increased to a staggering 48 percent, and by 1997, CTS accounted for 53 percent of all work-related injuries, more than all others combined. This dramatic change is largely due to the increased use of computers and word-processors, along with growing awareness of this condition. Any repetitive motion can cause trauma to the wrist. Activities such as knitting, bowling or gardening can cause or contribute to the development of CTS.



CTS is the most common nerve entrapment condition. The median nerve becomes trapped within the carpal tunnel at the wrist. The symptoms vary, but the most common are pain, and tingling or numbness of the thumb and index or middle fingers. This can occur in one or both wrists.

The truly remarkable thing about CTS is that the majority of cases are avoidable. A few ergonomic changes in the workplace can prevent the onset and aggravation of CTS. However, if the worker continues doing the same task in the same manner, CTS will worsen.

We see many instances of a person having surgery, only to return to the same job without any changes made to the workplace; the patient is then at high risk for recurrence.

As with many conditions, medical science has made great strides in this area and early intervention can greatly reduce the pain, suffering, and disability associated with CTS. This can consist of stretching exercises for the wrist and hand, anti-inflammatory medication, and wrist splints.

Thirty years ago, medical schools taught that surgery was the only treatment for CTS in order to relieve pressure on the nerve. Today, surgery is increasingly used as a last resort, reserved for severe cases or those resistant to non-invasive treatment. There is also increasing

evidence that acupuncture is effective in the treatment of CTS. Any regimen should include evaluation and modification of the patient's workplace.

Ultimately, the key to dealing with CTS is taking precautions to avoid it. In the words of Benjamin Franklin: 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'

This article was written by Tom Quinn, D.O. Medical Director, Humana Workers' Compensation Services on Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and is reprinted from the Winter 1998 edition of WorkWise produced by Humana® Workers' Compensation Services.

REMINDER

The Office of Human Resources may not process Personnel Action Forms for employees that are paid by grant funded accounts without the approval of the Contracts and Grants section of the Controller's Office.

The process is slowed down significantly when departments send Personnel Action Forms directly to Human Resources without first routing them through the Controller's Office for approval. Please help us expedite this process so that we may serve you better.

UPCOMING EVENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER

Franklin Covey

Time Management (\$149)
July 29 9am-3pm GC 150

New Employee Orientation

9-11am PC 521

August 3, August 24
August 31, September 14
September 21, September 28

9-11am ECS 451

August 17, September 8

Training Sessions Listed Below

9am-Noon PC 224

Business Writing

September 23

Supervisor Skills Workshop

September 15

Assertiveness Skills

August 12

Stress Management

August 18 & September 29

Customer Service

August 4 & September 22

Presentation Skills

July 28 & September 9

Benefits Open Enrollment

September 13 through October 15

Employee Benefits Fair

University Park
October 5
GC Ballroom

North Campus
October 6
WUC Ballroom

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