

# **CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD**

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## **FULL-TIME PERSONNEL HANDBOOK 001 FULL-TIME FEDERAL TECHNICIAN PROGRAM**

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**Content** (listed by paragraph number)

Paragraph	
Purpose .....	1
Definitions.....	2
Abbreviations .....	3
Prohibited Personnel Practices.....	4
Merit Systems Principles .....	5
Weingarten Rights .....	6
Resources of Information .....	7
Preamble – National Guard Background .....	8
Full-Time Personnel Regulations (FPRs) .....	9
Appointments.....	10
Hours of Work .....	11
Lunch and Breaks .....	12
Federal Holidays .....	13
Leave Use and Accrual .....	14
Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).....	15
Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act (FEFFLA) .....	16
Extension of FEFFLA – Up to 24 Hours LWOP.....	17
Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP).....	18
Bone Marrow or Organ Donor.....	19
Military Leave.....	20
Leave Without Pay (LWOP).....	21
Court Leave.....	22
Excused Absence .....	23
Absence Without Leave (AWOL) .....	24
Overtime Pay .....	25
Compensatory Time.....	26
Compensatory Time for Travel.....	27
Travel .....	28
Physical Fitness Training Program .....	29
Employment Status .....	30
Official Personnel Records .....	31
Supervisor Work Folder.....	32
Classification.....	33
Employee Assistance Program (EAP) .....	34
Employee Benefits .....	35
Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) .....	36
Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) .....	37
Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).....	38
Flexible Spending Accounts for Federal Employees (FSAFEDS).....	39
Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) .....	40
Retirement.....	41

Civil Service Retirement System .....	42
Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) .....	43
Performance Evaluation.....	44
Length of Service Awards .....	45
Incentive Awards .....	46
Injury Compensation.....	47
Merit Placement and Promotion .....	48
Reduction in Force (RIF).....	49
Pay Administration .....	50
Labor-Management Relations.....	51
Discipline and Adverse Actions.....	52
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).....	53
Ethics and Conduct .....	54
Political Activities.....	55
Training and Development .....	56
Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment (USERRA).....	57
Voluntary Separation .....	58
Formal Resignations .....	59

**1. Purpose.**

a. This handbook is designed to familiarize California National Guard Technicians with the laws, rules, and regulations governing the technician program, as well provide an overview to the federal government civil service. In addition, this handbook provides a comprehensive understanding of rights, entitlements and benefits associated with being a military technician.

**2. Definitions.**

a. *Appointing officer* means a person having power by law, or by lawfully delegated authority, to make appointments to positions in the service of the Federal Government or the government of the District of Columbia.

b. *Appointment* brings an individual onto the rolls (staff) of an agency.

c. *Competitive position* means a position in the competitive service.

d. *Competitive status* means basic eligibility to be noncompetitively selected to fill a vacancy in a competitive position. A competitive status is acquired by career-conditional or career appointment through open competitive examination upon satisfaction completion of a probationary period, or may be granted by statute, executive order, or the Civil Service Rules without competitive examination.

e. *Conversion* changes an employee from one appointment to another appointment (under either the same or a different authority) in the same agency with no break in service or with a break of 3 days or less.

f. *Days*, unless otherwise defined or limited, means calendar days and not workdays. In computing a period of time prescribed in this chapter, the day of the action or event after which the designated period of time begins to run is not to be included. The last day of the period so computed is to be included unless it is a Saturday, a Sunday, or a legal holiday in which event the period runs until the end of the next day which is neither a Saturday, a Sunday, nor a legal holiday.

g. *Demotion* means a change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency:

- (i) To a lower grade when both the old and the new positions are under the General Schedule or under the same type graded wage schedule; or
- (ii) To a position with a lower rate of pay when both the old and the new positions are under the same type ungraded wage schedule, or are in different pay method categories.

h. *Dual Status* means employee is an active member of military component of the National Guard.

i. *Eligible* means an applicant who meets the minimum requirements for entrance to an examination and is rated 70 or more in the examination by OPM.

j. *Employee* means a civilian officer or employee.

k. *Excepted position* is a position outside the competitive service. This type of position is “excepted” from the rules that govern civil service employees in the areas of tenure and competitive requirements for appointments. The California National Guard has excepted position appointment authority. All dual status positions are expected.

l. *Extension* continues a time-limited appointment (one with an NTE date) up to the maximum time allowed by the authority under which it was effected.

m. *Indefinite Appointment* is an unlimited period of time where the need for an employee’s services is not permanent, but have the same employment benefits as permanent employees. This position has current appropriated federal funding that may or may not be considered essential to maintain the operations of the California National Guard mission. If the technician is on this type of appointment, the technician has employment benefits as permanent employees and falls under the same appraisal program.

n. *Noncompetitive action* means a promotion, demotion, reassignment, transfer, reinstatement, or an appointment based on prior service. *Non-Dual Status* means civilian employee with a non-active membership with the California Guard.

o. *OPM* means the Office of Personnel Management.

p. *Overseas* means outside the continental United States, but does not include Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, the Isthmus of Panama, Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands.

q. *Permanent appointment* means the position has permanent appropriated federal funding and the workload is considered essential to maintain the operations of the California National Guard mission. If the technician is on this type of appointment, the technician serves a one year probationary period and fall under the appraisal program.

r. *Position change* means a promotion, demotion, or reassignment.

s. *Promotion* means a change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency:

- (i) To a higher grade when both the old and the new positions are under the General Schedule or under the same type graded wage schedule; or
- (ii) To a position with a higher rate of pay when both the old and the new positions are under the same type ungraded wage schedule, or are in different pay method categories.

t. *Reassignment* means a change of an employee, while serving continuously within the same agency, from one position to another without promotion or demotion.

u. *Reemployed annuitant* means an employee whose annuity under subchapter III of chapter 83 of title 5, United States Code, was continued on reemployment in an appointive position on or after October 1, 1956.

v. *Register* means a list of qualified applicants compiled in order of relative standing for certification.

w. *Reinstatement* means the noncompetitive reemployment for service as a career or career-conditional employee of a person formerly employed in the competitive service who that had a competitive status or was serving probation when he was separated from the service.

x. *Status quo employee* means an employee who failed to acquire a competitive status when the position in which he was serving was placed in the competitive service by a statute, Executive order, or Civil Service rule, which permitted his retention without the acquisition of status.

y. *Temporary Appointment* is a period of employment Not to Exceed (NTE) 1 year. Temporary appointments are where workload has been defined but funding is based on annual appropriations and may not be a permanent part of the budget. Temporary appointments are based on a temporary workload and appointments are Not to Exceed (NTE) one year duration. Temporary appointments may be held back-to-back but are appointed at less than one year intervals. Term appointments are Not to Exceed 4 years.

z. *Tenure* means the period of time an employee may reasonably expect to serve under his current appointment. It is granted and governed by the type of appointment under which an employee is currently serving without regard to whether he has a competitive status or whether his appointment is in a competitive position or in an excepted position.

aa. *Transfer* means a change of an employee, without a break in service of 1 full workday, from a position in one agency to a position in another agency.

### 3. Abbreviations.

AGR	Active Guard Reserve
AWOL	Absence Without Leave
CAO	Change of Appointing Office
CNG	California National Guard
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
COP	Continuation of Pay
CSRS	Civil Service Retirement System
DCPS	Defense Civilian Pay System
DFAS	Defense Finance and Accounting Service
DOB	Date of Birth
DOD	Department of Defense
DS	Dual Status
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EOD	Entry on Duty
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FEDVIP	Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program
FEFFLA	Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act
FEGLI	Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
FEHB	Federal Employees Health Benefits

FERS	Federal Employees Retirement System
FICA	Federal Insurance Contributions Act (Social Security)
FMLA	Family Medical Leave Act
FPH	Full-Time Personnel Handbook
FPR	Full-Time Personnel Regulations
FOH	Federal Occupational Health (EAP Provider)
FWS	Federal Wage System
GOV	Government Owned Vehicle
GS	General Schedule
GTR	Government Travel Regulations
HMO	Health Maintenance Organization
HRO	Human Resources Office
IPP	Irregular Performance Pay
IDP	Individual Development Plan
JTR	Joint Travel Regulations
KSA	Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
LES	Leave and Earnings Statement
LWOP	Leave Without Pay
LWOP-US	Leave Without Pay-Uniformed Services
NDS	Non-Dual Status
OASDI	Old-Age Survivors and Disability Insurance
OPF	Official Personnel Folder
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OTS	On The Spot
OWCP	Office of Workers' Compensation Program
PD	Position Description
POV	Privately Owned Vehicle
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
PRD	Pay Rate Determinant
RIF	Reduction-In-Force
RTD	Return to Duty
RWRI	Regular Within-Rage Increase
SEP-US	Separation-Uniformed Services
SCD	Service Computation Date
SASA	Special Act or Service Award
SSP	Sustained Superior Performance
TDY	Temporary Duty
TPM	Technician Personnel Manual
TPR	Technician Personnel Regulation
TOA	Time-Off Award
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
WG	Wage Grade

**4. Prohibited Personnel Practices.**

a. Twelve prohibited personnel practices are defined by law at [5 USC § 2302](#). A personnel action (such as an appointment, promotion, reassignment, or suspension) may need to

be involved for a prohibited personnel practice to occur. Generally stated, § 2302(b) provides that a federal employee authorized to take, direct others to take, recommend or approve any personnel action may ***not***:

- i. discriminate against an employee or applicant based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicapping condition, marital status, or political affiliation;
- ii. solicit or consider employment recommendations based on factors other than personal knowledge or records of job-related abilities or characteristics;
- iii. coerce the political activity of any person;
- iv. deceive or willfully obstruct anyone from competing for employment;
- v. influence anyone to withdraw from competition for any position so as to improve or injure the employment prospects of any other person;
- vi. give an unauthorized preference or advantage to anyone so as to improve or injure the employment prospects of any particular employee or applicant;
- vii. engage in nepotism (*i.e.*, hire, promote, or advocate the hiring or promotion of relatives);
- viii. engage in reprisal for whistleblowing – *i.e.*, take, fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take a personnel action with respect to any employee or applicant because of any disclosure of information by the employee or applicant that he or she reasonably believes evidences a violation of a law, rule or regulation; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety (if such disclosure is not barred by law and such information is not specifically required by Executive Order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or the conduct of foreign affairs – if so restricted by law or Executive Order, the disclosure is only protected if made to the Special Counsel, the Inspector General, or comparable agency official);
- ix. take, fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take a personnel action against an employee or applicant for exercising an appeal, complaint, or grievance right; testifying for or assisting another in exercising such a right; cooperating with or disclosing information to the Special Counsel or to an Inspector General; or refusing to obey an order that would require the individual to violate a law;
- x. discriminate based on personal conduct which is not adverse to the on-the-job performance of an employee, applicant, or others; or
- xi. take or fail to take, recommend, or approve a personnel action if taking or failing to take such an action would violate a veterans' preference requirement; and
- xii. take or fail to take a personnel action, if taking or failing to take action would violate any law, rule or regulation implementing or directly concerning merit system principles at [5 USC § 2301](#).

## **5. Merit Systems Principles.**

a. Federal personnel management should be implemented consistent with the following merit system principles:

- i. Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
- ii. All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation,

race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.

iii. Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.

iv. All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.

v. The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.

vi. Employees should be retained on the basis of adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.

vii. Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.

viii. Employees should be--

(1) protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and

(2) prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.

ix. Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences--

(1) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or

(2) mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

(3) in administering the provisions of this chapter--

(a) with respect to any agency (as defined in section 2302(a)(2)(C) of this title), the President shall, pursuant to the authority otherwise available under this title, take any action including the issuance of rules, regulations, or directives; and

(b) with respect to any entity in the executive branch which is not such an agency or part of such an agency, the head of such entity shall, pursuant to authority otherwise available, take any action, including the issuance of rules, regulations, or directives; which is consistent with the provisions of this title and which the President or the head, as the case may be, determines is necessary to ensure that personnel management is based on and embodies the merit system principles.

#### **6. Weingarten Rights.** *For Technicians Covered by a Bargaining Agreement*

a. The rights of unionized employees have the right to have a union representative present during investigatory interviews. These rights have become known as the *Weingarten* rights.

b. Employees have *Weingarten* rights only during investigatory interviews. An investigatory interview occurs when a supervisor questions an employee to obtain information which could be used as a basis for discipline or asks an employee to defend his or her conduct.

c. If an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, the employee has the right to request union representation. Management is not required to inform the employee of his/her *Weingarten* rights; it is the employee's responsibility to know and request.

d. When the employee makes the request for a union representative to be present management has three options:

- i. it can stop questioning until the representative arrives.
- ii. it can call off the interview or,
- iii. it can tell the employee that it will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up his/her rights to a union representative.

e. The Supreme Court clearly acknowledges a representative's right to assist and counsel workers during the interview. The Supreme Court has also ruled that during an investigatory interview management must inform the union representative of the subject of the interrogation. The representative must also be allowed to speak privately with the employee before the interview. During the questioning, the representative can interrupt to clarify a question or to object to confusing or intimidating tactics.

f. While the interview is in progress the representative cannot tell the employee what to say but he may advise him/her on how to answer a question. At the end of the interview, the union representative can add information to support the employee's case.

**7. Resources of Information.** The following web sites may be use for additional information and assistance.

The following websites may be useful for additional information and assistance.

[www.calguard.ca.gov/cahr](http://www.calguard.ca.gov/cahr)

[www.dfas.mil/mypay/](http://www.dfas.mil/mypay/)

[www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds](http://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds)

[www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)

[www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.asp](http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.asp)

[www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp)

[www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov)

[www.esgr.com](http://www.esgr.com)

[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

<http://www.foh4you.com/>

<https://www.benefeds.com/Portal/>

<https://compop.dcpds.cpms.osd.mil>

[www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

Human Resources Office

Personal Pay Information

Flexible Spending Accounts

Office of Personnel Management

FEGLI (Life Insurance)

FEHB (Health Benefits)

Thrift Savings Plan

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Office of the Worker's Compensation Program (OWCP)

Employee Assistance Program

FEDVIP (Dental and Vision Insurance Program)

My Biz

Technician Vacancy Announcements

**8. Preamble. National Guard Background.**

a. 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 selection as a National Guard Technician, you have become a federal employee covered by the National Guard Technician Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-486), and Title 32, United States Code 709 (32 USC 709). Because of this law, you hold a position referred to as military technician. The 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, Soldiers and Airmen.

b. Military technicians are employees of the Department of the 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. 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, rights and privileges as other federal employees.

c. The National Guard also employs non-military technicians referred to as non-dual status or NDS technicians. If employed as a NDS technician, the terms and conditions of employment are very similar to those described in this handbook but not identical in all cases. As a NDS, you are not required to maintain military membership but must adhere to all policies, procedures and protocol of dual status technicians.

**9. Full-Time Personnel Regulations.** *(As of 1 April 2008)* The following publications can be found at: <http://www.calguard.ca.gov/cahr/Pages/Publications.aspx>

FPH 001	Full-Time Federal Technician Program	Handbook
FPR 100	Full-Time Personnel Publications System	Regulation
FPR 101	Full-Time Personnel Publications System Master Catalog	Regulation
FPR 202	Workplace Anti-violence	Regulation
FPR 203	Physical Fitness Incentive Program	Regulation
FPR 204	Telecommuting CNG Form 690-34 Tele-work Project Agreement CNG Form 690-35 Tele-work Project Checklist	Regulation Form Form
FPR 205	Mass Transit Fringe Benefit Program	Regulation
FPR 206	Technician Permanent Change of Station CNG Form 690-11 Request and Authorization for Technician Permanent Change of Station DD Form 1618 PCS Transportation Agreement DD Form 1705 Request for Real Estate Reimbursement	Handbook Form Form Form
FPR 207	DoD Priority Placement Program CNG Form 690-43 PPP Registration Worksheet CNG Form 690-44 PPP Notice of Address Change	Regulation Form Form
FPR 208	Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct	Regulation
FPR 293	Office Personnel Folder and Supervisory Files	Regulation
FPR 297	Privacy Procedures for Official Records	Regulation
FPR 300	Technician Employment	Regulation
FPR 301	Superior and Special Qualifications Appointments CNG Form 690-8, Request for Advanced-in-Hire Rate	Regulation Form
FPR 302	Dual Status (DS) Technician Employment	Regulation
FPR 303	Military Technician Compatibility CNG Form 690-10 Military Technician Compatibility Waiver Request Air Guard Compatibility Table Army Guard Compatibility Table	Regulation Form Supplement Supplement
FPR 304	Expert and Consultant Appointments	Regulation
FPR 305	Understudy and Directorate Management Intern Programs	Regulation

FPR 308	Volunteer Service	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-42 Documentation of Volunteer Service	Form
FPR 315	Non-Dual Status Technician Employment	Regulation
FPR 316	Temporary Employment, Temporary Promotion, Details	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-3, Conditions of Temporary Employment	Form
	CNG Form 690-3, Conditions of Promotion Employment	Form
FPR 335	Merit Placement	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-1, Technician Vacancy Announcement Request	Form
FPR 338	Qualification Requirements	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-16, Qualification Standard – Job Analysis Worksheet	Form
FPR 340	Other Than Full-time Career Employment	Regulation
FPR 351	Workforce Realignment and Reduction in Force	
	Regulation	
FPR 353	Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)	
	PL 103-353	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-38, USERRA LWOP-US Technician Checklist – PDF	Form
	CNG Form 690-39, USERRA SEP-US Technician Checklist – PDF	Form
	CNG Form 690-40, USERRA Return to Duty Technician Checklist – PDF	Form
FPR 410	Technician Development Program	Regulation
FPR 430	Performance Management	Regulation
	CNG Form 430, Technician Performance Appraisal Report	Form
FPR 431	Performance Improvement Plan	Regulation
FPR 432	Performance Based Reductions in Grade and Removal Actions	Regulation
FPR 451	Technician Awards Program	Regulation
FPR 511	Position Management Plan	Regulation
FPR 530	Pay and Compensation	Regulation
FPR 531	Within-Rate Increases and Locality-based Comparability Payments	Regulation
FPR 532	Premium Pay and Differentials	Regulation
FPR 536	Grade and Pay Retention	Regulation
FPR 537	Student Loan Repayment Program	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-17, Student Loan Repayment Nomination	Form
	CNG Form 690-17, Student Loan Repayment Service Agreement	Form
FPR 550	Environmental Differential Pay and Hazardous Duty Pay	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-13, EDP/HDP Situation Request	Form
	CNG Form 690-14, Certificate of Authorization for EDP/HDP	Form
FPR 575	Recruitment, Relocation and Retention Incentives	
	Regulation	
	CNG Form 690-19, Recruitment Incentive Nomination	Form
	CNG Form 690-20, Recruitment Service Agreement	Form
	CNG Form 690-21, Relocation Incentive Nomination	Form
	CNG Form 690-22, Relocation Service Agreement	Form
	CNG Form 690-23, Retention Incentive Nomination	Form
	CNG Form 690-24, Retention Incentive Agreement	Form
	CNG Form 690-25, Annual Recertification of Retention Incentive	Form
FPR 630	Hours of Duty, Absences and Leave	Regulation
	CNG Form 690-4, Request for Advanced Sick Leave	Form

FPR 715	Voluntary and Non-Disciplinary Actions	Regulation
FPR 752	Discipline and Adverse Action	Regulation
FPR 800	Service and Benefits	Regulation
FPH 810	Technician Worker's Compensation	Handbook
FPR 820	Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	Regulation
FPH 831	Retirement Handbook	Handbook
FPR 910	Labor Management Relations	Regulation
	129th RQW Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
	144th FW Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
	146th AW Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
	163rd ARW Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
	162nd CCG Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
	CA Army National Guard Labor Management Agreement	Supplement
FPR 912	Agency Grievance Procedure	Regulation
FPR 920	Political Activities	Regulation
FPH 930	Technician Equal Opportunity Program	Handbook
FPR 930	Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint System	Regulation

**10. Appointments.**

a. The National Guard Technician Program falls under the Excepted Service. Most Federal Government civilian positions are part of the competitive civil service – meaning to obtain a Federal job the applicant must compete with other applicants in open competition. The National Guard is one of those agencies excluded from the competitive civil service procedures. This means that the California National Guard has its own hiring system which establishes the evaluation criteria they use in filling their internal vacancies. The California National has various types of appointments which include full-time and part-time positions, permanent, indefinite, term and temporary appointments, and dual status and non-dual status positions.

b. The majority of positions at the California National Guard are full-time, permanent, dual status personnel. These positions are supplemented by non-dual status, indefinite, term, temporary, and part-time appointments.

i. Other than Permanent appointments have workloads that are temporary in nature or have an indefinite status.

(1)Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) temporary employee hired to backfill deployed DS technicians for contingency operations are limited to maximum two (2) year appointments.

(2)Indefinite appointment is an appointment with an unlimited period of time in which the need for an employee's services is not permanent but has the same employment benefits as permanent employees. This position has current appropriated federal funding that may or may not be considered essential to maintain the operations of the California National Guard mission. If the technician is on this type of appointment, the technician has employment benefits as permanent employees and falls under the same appraisal program.

(3)Term appointment is a period of employment of more than 1 year but not more than 4 years where the need for an employee's services is not permanent.

(4)Temporary appointment is a period of employment Not to Exceed (NTE) 1 year intervals for a maximum of four (4) years employment. Temporary appointments are where workload has been defined but funding is based on annual appropriations and may not

be a permanent part of the budget. Temporary appointments are based on a temporary workload and appointments are Not to Exceed (NTE) one year duration. Temporary appointments may be held back-to-back but are appointed at less than one year intervals.

c. Veteran’s Preference. **This is not applicable in the National Guard Technician Program.** Further information may be found at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) as it applies to other organizations.

d. Dual Status. Positions in the National Guard Technician Program that require military membership in the National Guard as a condition of technician employment are in the excepted service under the provisions of 32 USC 709. This status means that the technician is “excepted” from the rules that govern civil service employees in the areas of tenure and competitive requirements for appointments. For those positions that are designated as Dual Status positions, loss of military membership for any reason will cause termination of technician employment.

e. Non-Dual Status (NDS). Positions that are supplemental to dual status positions and are designed to maintain continuity of day-to-day operations during deployments and emergency operations. This type of position is held by a “competitive” selection gained from open competition.

f. Permanent. This position has permanent appropriated federal funding and the workload is considered essential to maintain the operations of the California National Guard mission. If the technician is on this type of appointment, the technician serves a one year probationary period and fall under the appraisal program.

g. Civil Service Status. Employment as a military technician (excepted) does not result in competitive civil service status.

**11. Hours of Work.**

The fulltime technician workweek varies depending on the unit of assignment. Generally, technicians are required to work 80 hours in a two-week pay period. Supervisors are responsible for supplying work schedules to their technicians.

**12. Lunch and Breaks.**

Technicians are authorized two paid 15 minute (paid) breaks (morning and afternoon) and one unpaid 30 minute lunch break. Breaks cannot be used consecutively, cannot be accumulated and cannot be used at the end of the workday.

**13. Federal Holidays.**

a. The Federal government is closed in observance of the following holidays. Only technicians in a pay status will be paid on these days.

New Year’s Day	1 January
Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday	Third Monday in January
President’s Day	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	4 July
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Veteran’s Day	11 November
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November

Christmas Day	25 December
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b. Holiday schedules are published annually in a Technician/AGR Administrative Instruction (TAAI).

14. **Leave Use and Accrual.**

a. Permanent, Indefinite and Temporary Technicians accrue leave as follows:

	Annual	Sick
0 – 3 yrs of service	4 hrs per pay period	4 hrs per pay period
3 – 15 yrs of service	6 hrs per pay period	4 hrs per pay period
15+ yrs of service	8 hrs per pay period	4 hrs per pay period

b. Annual Leave. As an employee of the Federal government, technicians are eligible for authorized absences from work without loss of pay for vacations, family needs, and other emergency or personal situations. Except in emergencies, technicians must obtain the supervisor's advanced approval so leave time and work responsibilities are coordinated to ensure orderly office operations and completion of assignments. A technician may carry over no more than 240 hours of annual leave to the next leave year. Technicians are required to schedule and expected to utilize any leave over 240 hours or it will be lost.

c. Advanced Annual Leave. Under certain circumstances, technicians may be granted annual leave hours before technicians have actually earned them. Annual leave can be advanced up to the amount technicians can be expected to accrue by the end of the leave year. If technicians are retiring or separating from federal service, the amount technicians will earn prior to the anticipated date of retirement or date of separation may be advanced.

d. 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. Sick leave may also be used for any activity related to adoption of a child. It is the technician's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible regarding the necessity of use of sick leave (contact the supervisor for work site leave policies). Supervisors may require a medical certificate or administratively acceptable evidence for an absence for approving sick leave for an absence in excess of 3 workdays, or for a lesser period if the supervisor determines it is necessary.

e. Advanced Sick Leave. The California National Guard's policy for advancing sick leave is at the discretion of the agency and is as follows:

f. Sick leave may be advanced in cases of serious disability or ailments when required by the urgency of the situation. Total advancement of sick leave cannot exceed 240 hours at any one time and is subject to the following conditions:

i. CNG Form 690-4 (Request for Advanced Sick Leave) has been completed and approved by the technician's supervisor. Air Force requests are approved by base command. Army requests are submitted to the Directorate for Human Resources for approval.

ii. The request for advanced sick leave must be supported by a medical certificate. A medical certificate is a written statement signed by a registered practicing physician or other practitioner certifying the incapacitation, examination, or treatment, or the period of

disability while the patient (or technician’s family member) is receiving professional treatment. Under the Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act (FFLA),

iii. 40 hours of sick leave may be advanced for family care or bereavement.

(1) All available accumulated sick leave is exhausted before advancement (except in the case of family care or bereavement).

(2) Annual leave that would otherwise be forfeited is used.

(3) There is reasonable assurance that the technician will return to duty to earn and repay advanced sick leave.

(4) The number of sick leave hours that may be advanced may never exceed 240 hours at any time. Sick leave may be advanced to care for a family member with a **serious** illness. When it is known that the technician is to be retired or where it is anticipated that he/she is to be separated, the total advanced sick leave may not exceed an amount which can be repaid by sick leave accruals prior to the separation. Sick leave advancement is determined by the amount of Federal service as shown below:

<u>TOTAL FEDERAL SERVICE</u>	<u>ADVANCE</u>
90 days or less	No Advance
Less than 1 year	40 hours
1 to 3 years	80 hours
3 to 5 years	160 hours
Over 5 years	240 hours

**15. Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).**

a. 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).

b. This Act allows technicians to use up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12 month period for:

i. the birth of a son or daughter of the employee and the care of such son or daughter;

ii. the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care;

iii. the care of spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition; or

iv. a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her positions.

v. because of any qualifying exigency (as the agency shall, by regulation, determine) arising out of the fact that the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.

c. Request Procedures. 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.

d. Intermittent Use. Under certain conditions, a technician may use the 12 weeks of FMLA leave intermittently. A technician may elect to substitute annual leave and/or sick leave, consistent with current laws and OPM’s regulations for using annual and sick leave, for any unpaid leave under the FMLA. FMLA leave is in addition to other paid time off available to a

technician, meaning all other accrued leave balances should be exhausted prior to invoking FMLA. Technicians must provide notice of his or her intent to take family and medical leave not less than 30 days before leave is to begin or, in emergencies, as soon as is practicable.

e. Supporting Medical Documentation. Certification of Health Care Provider (Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993), Form WH-380, enclosure 1, is provided for use when FMLA leave is invoked. Recent expansion of the FMLA, dated 28 January 2008, provides an eligible technician who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service-member shall be entitled to a total of 26 workweeks of leave during a 12-month period to care for the service-member. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single 12-month period. Leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule. During the single 12-month period, an eligible technician shall be entitled to a combined total of 26 workweeks of leave.

16. **Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act (FEFFLA).**

a. The Federal Employee Family Friendly Leave Act provides support to technicians by allowing the use of their sick leave to care for family members in routine medical situations and/or for bereavement purposes.

b. Most federal technicians may use a total of up to 104 hours (13 workdays) of sick leave each year for family care or bereavement purposes, further defined below. A covered full-time employee may use up to 104 hours (13 workdays) of sick leave each leave year for these purposes. Part-time employees and employees with uncommon tours of duty are also covered, and the amount of sick leave permitted for family care and bereavement purposes is prorated in proportion to the average number of hours of work in the employee's scheduled tour of duty each week. Family care or bereavement purposes is defined as:

i. To provide care for a family member who is incapacitated as a result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth;

ii. To provide care for a family member as a result of medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment; or

iii. To make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member.

c. Most federal technicians may use a total of up to 12 administrative workweeks of sick leave each leave year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. The term "serious health condition" has the same meaning as used in OPM's regulations for administering the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). That definition includes such conditions as cancer, heart attacks, strokes, severe injuries, Alzheimer's disease, pregnancy, and childbirth. "Family member" is defined as spouse, and parents thereof; children, including adopted children, and spouses thereof; parents; brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; and any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship. If a technician previously has used any portion of the 13 days of sick leave for general family care or bereavement purposes in a leave year, that amount must be subtracted from the 12-week entitlement. If a technician has already used 12 weeks of sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, he or she cannot use an additional 13 days in the same leave year for general family care purposes. A technician is entitled to a total of 12 weeks of sick leave each year for all family care purposes.

d. Administratively acceptable documentation may be required to support absence used for sick leave for family care or bereavement purposes. Administratively acceptable

documentation may include medical documentation from family member's physician, death certificate, obituary notice, and other documents that officially validate the absence.

e. Family Care for Prenatal, Birth and Recovery from Birth. A birth mother is entitled to use accrued sick leave for medical appointments, hospitalization, and her period of incapacitation following childbirth. A birth father may use a total of up to 12 weeks of accrued sick leave each year to accompany the mother to prenatal appointments, to be with her during her period of hospitalization, and/or to care for her during her recovery period. (Most doctors certify that the recovery period is about 6 weeks.) An agency may request administratively acceptable evidence of the mother's period of incapacitation for the use of sick leave.

f. Each Parent Has Individual Entitlements to Use FEFFLA and FMLA. Both parents may use up to 12 weeks of sick leave each year to care for a child with a serious health condition. Both parents may use up to 13 days of that 12-week period to care for a child with a minor illness or to accompany a child to a medical, dental, or optical appointment. An agency may request administratively acceptable evidence of a child's illness or treatment. Parents may not use sick leave to be absent from work to bond with or care for a healthy child.

g. Voluntary Leave Transfer Program for Care of Family Member. Technicians may make written application to his or her supervisor to become a leave recipient under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program. If a technician is not capable of making application on his or her own behalf, a personal representative of the potential leave recipient may make written application on his or her behalf. The Human Resources Office is tasked with reviewing all applications for evaluation of meeting the following criteria for becoming a recipient:

i. A medical emergency; or

ii. If either the mother or father exhausts her or his sick and/or annual leave, she or he may receive donated annual leave under the employing agency's voluntary leave transfer and/or leave bank programs. These programs allow Federal employees to donate annual leave to assist another Federal employee who has a personal or family medical emergency (including pregnancy and childbirth) and who has exhausted her or his own available paid leave. An employee may receive donated annual leave from both the agency leave transfer and leave bank programs. Donated annual leave may be used only for a medical emergency--e.g., the mother's period of incapacitation or the illness of a child--and may not be used to care for a healthy child; and

iii. The potential leave recipient's absence from duty without available paid leave because of the medical emergency is (or is expected to be) at least 24 hours (or, in the case of a part-time employee or an employee with an uncommon tour of duty, at least 30 percent of the average number of hours in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty).

h. FMLA/FEFFLA Timekeeping Codes:

<b>DA</b>	Birth of son/daughter or care of newborn
<b>DB</b>	Adoption or foster care
<b>DC</b>	Care for spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition
<b>DD</b>	Serious health condition of employee
<b>DE</b>	Family Care/Bereavement: Sick Leave to provide care for a family member Make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member

<b>DF</b>	Sick Leave for Adoption Purposes
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i. Family medical leave codes will be reported with the applicable leave codes (LS, LA, LB, LG, KA, LQ, LR, CT, and CN). These codes DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, and DF will be reported in the ENV/HAZ/OTH field as an exception through timecard Format 1 and the SDA.

j. *Example:*

W E E K	D A Y	TYPE HOUR	HOURS	JOB ORDER NUMBER	ENV HAZ	LST HR	TMP SFT
<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>						
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>LS</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>DD</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>LS</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>DD</b>		

**17. Extension of FEFFLA - Up to 24 Hours LWOP.**

a. President Clinton extended encouragement to federal agencies to ensure that Federal employees may schedule and be granted up to 24 hours of leave without pay each year for the following activities:

b. School and Early Childhood Educational Activities--to allow employees to participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of a child. This would include parent-teacher conferences or meetings with child-care providers, interviewing for a new school or child-care facility, or participating in volunteer activities supporting the child's educational advancement. In this memorandum, "school" refers to an elementary school, secondary school, Head Start program, or a child-care facility.

c. Routine Family Medical Purposes--to allow parents to accompany children to routine medical or dental appointments, such as annual checkups or vaccinations. Although these activities are not currently covered by the FMLA, the FEFFLA does permit employees to use up to 13 days of sick leave each year for such purposes. Agencies should assure that employees are able to use up to 24 hours of leave without pay each year for these purposes in cases when no additional sick leave is available to employees.

d. Elderly Relatives' Health or Care Needs--to allow employees to accompany an elderly relative to routine medical or dental appointments or other professional services related to the care of the elderly relative, such as making arrangements for housing, meals, phones, banking services, and other similar activities. Although Federal employees can use unpaid leave or sick leave for certain of these activities under the FMLA or FEFFLA, such as caring for a parent with a serious health condition, agencies should ensure employees can use up to 24 hours of unpaid time off each year for this broader range of activities related to elderly relatives' health or care needs.

e. Advanced Sick Leave under FEFFLA. At the discretion of the agency, an employee may be advanced up to 104 hours of sick leave each leave year (or a proportional amount for an employee on a part-time schedule or uncommon tour of duty) for family care or bereavement purposes. At the discretion of the agency, a technician may be advanced a maximum of 30 days

of sick leave (or a proportional amount for an employee on a part-time schedule or uncommon tour of duty) to provide care for a family member with a serious health condition.

i. CNG Form 690-4 (Request for Advanced Sick Leave) has been completed and approved by the technician's supervisor. Air Force requests are approved by base command. Army requests are submitted to the Directorate for Human Resources for approval.

**18. Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP).**

a. 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. Requests for donated leave are published in the HRO Technician/AGR Administrative Instruction (TAAI) notices and posted on the HRO web site. If technicians wish to donate leave or apply to become a leave recipient, contact the supervisor.

b. For Leave Recipients, a technician may make written application, form OPM 630 (Application to Become a Leave Recipient under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program), to become a leave recipient if he/she expects to be absent from duty, in an unpaid leave status, for at leave ten (10) days due to a medical emergency.

c. For Leave Donors, a technician may submit a form OPM 630-A (Request to Donate Annual Leave) requesting a specified number of hours of his/her accrued annual leave be transferred from his/her account to the account of a specified leave recipient.

**19. 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 an excused absence.

**20. Military Leave.**

a. Military leave is authorized for permanent and indefinite technicians. Eligible technicians are authorized 120 hours of paid Military Leave each fiscal year (1 October) for the purpose of active duty, active duty for training, or Inactive Duty Training (IDT). 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. Military leave is charged in 1 hour increments and is not charged during times that the employee would not normally be at work.

i. *22 Days Leave.* Eligible technicians are authorized an additional 22 days of non-paid 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 for when mobilized under contingency orders. This is NOT a dual compensation benefit. Technicians will receive the greater of the Civilian or Military pay. Collection of the lesser amount will be accomplished by the appropriate pay section.

ii. *44 Days Leave.* Technicians are authorized an additional 44 days non-paid military leave in a calendar year for participation in non-combat operations outside the United States and its territories. This leave is in addition to the 15 days (120 hours) military leave received at the beginning of each fiscal year (October). Technicians utilizing 44 days military leave DO NOT receive military pay but are paid their full technician pay only. Active duty orders must state "WITHOUT PAY" while on 44 days military leave.

21. **Leave Without Pay (LWOP).**

Based upon written request, technicians may, at the discretion of the agency, 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 technician status and benefits pending actions of disability retirement or injury compensation claims. LWOP may be granted whether or not there is an annual or sick leave balance. An SF 52, Request for Personnel Action, must be processed for LWOP in excess of 30 days and will be granted only in special circumstances.

22. **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 or for personal reasons, the technician must be in an appropriate leave status.

23. **Excused Absence.**

a. An “excused absence” is absence from duty, administratively approved, without loss of pay and without charge to leave. The term “excused absence” is used interchangeable with the term “administrative leave.” Both refer to a technician’s absence from work, with approval, without a charge to annual leave or sick leave. This type of absence results from an administrative determination that the circumstances surrounding the particular absence are such that a technician should not lose pay or be charged 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.

b. Examples include voting, blood donation (NTE 4 hours), certain conferences and conventions. Contact HRO for administrative determination and/or approval. Listed below are the more common situations in which excused absence can be granted.

c. Voting. Excused absence may be granted to permit an employee to report to work 3 hours after the polls open or leave work 3 hours before the polls close, whichever involves less time away from work. For example, if polls are open 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., an employee with duty hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. may report to work at 9:30 a.m. The 30 minutes of excused absence would permit the employee to report to work 3 hours after the polls open.

d. Blood Donation. Employees who donate blood may be granted excused absence to cover travel to and from the donation site, the actual donation of blood, and recovery. This provision does not cover an employee who gives blood for his or her own use or receives compensation for giving blood.

e. Permanent Change of Duty Station (PCS). Employees authorized PCS within the Department of Defense may be granted excused absence before departing the old duty station and following arrival at the new duty station to accomplish personal tasks resulting from the move (e.g., to close or open personal bank accounts; obtain State driver's license or car tags). In similar situations, employees coming to the Department of Defense from other Federal Agencies may also be granted excused absence after the employee is placed on the Department of Defense's employment roll. This provision does not cover time involved in complying with PCS requirements such as obtaining passport and vaccinations, adhering to Government housing

authority requirements, or being present for packing and receiving of household goods. Accomplishing tasks that are conditional to the PCS is considered to be an official duty.

f. Employment Interview. Employees under notice of separation or change to lower grade for any reason except personal cause may be granted excused absence for job searches and interviews. Employees competing for positions within the Department of Defense may also be granted excused absence for merit placement interviews. This provision does not cover travel time to job searches and interviews outside the commuting area.

g. Counseling. Excused absence may be granted to permit an employee to attend the initial counseling session (e.g., drug, alcohol, financial) resulting from a referral under the employee assistance program. This provision does not cover the official duty status of an employee is in during the initial referral to the employee assistance program.

h. Certification. An employee may be granted excused absence to take an examination (e.g., certified public accountant examination) in his or her functional area if securing the certification or license would enhance the employee's professional stature, thereby benefiting the Department of Defense. This provision does not cover time spent preparing for such examinations.

i. Volunteer Activities. Excused absence may be granted to employees participating in management-sponsored volunteer projects (e.g., adopt a school). This provision does not cover volunteerism in general. Such activity should be promoted through established leave programs and the flexibility offered through alternative work schedules.

j. Emergency Situations. Excused absence may be granted to employees to assist in emergency situations. This provision does not cover employees who respond to emergencies in National Guard/Reserve status.

k. Physical Examination for Enlistment or Induction. Excused absence may be granted to an employee to undergo medical examinations required by appropriate military authorities for enlistment or induction into the United States Armed Forces. This provision does not cover travel time outside the commuting area or situations in which the employee receives military compensation; can use military leave; or, undergoes additional tests, examinations, treatments for conditions discovered or suspected as a result of the examinations.

l. Congressional Medal of Honor Holders. Invited Congressional Medal of Honor holders may be granted excused absence to attend or participate in events such as inauguration of the President of the United States; Congressional Medal of Honor Society conventions; and, services on Memorial Day or Veterans Day.

m. Funerals. Excused absence may be granted to employees to attend funerals under the conditions established in 5 U.S.C. 6321 (reference (c)). This provision does not cover situations in which funeral leave is granted under 5 U.S.C. 6326 (reference (c)), and 5 CFR 630.801 (reference (b)), or the official duty status of an employee in connection with funerals of fellow Federal law enforcement officers or Federal firefighters under 5 U.S.C. 6327 (reference (c)).

n. Periods of excused absence are considered part of an employee's basic workday even though the employee does not perform his or her regular duties (e.g., an employee who performed duty for 36 hours and was granted 4 hours of excused absence would be paid for 40-hours even though the employee only performed 36 hours of regular duty). Consequently, the authority to grant excused absence must be used sparingly.

o. The Head of a DoD Component (or designee) shall delegate, to the lowest practical level, authority to grant excused absence. Such delegations should be at levels where the budgetary and mission impact of excused absence decisions can be fully realized.

p. Comptroller General decisions limit discretion to grant excused absence to situations involving brief absences. Where absences are for other than brief periods of time, a grant of excused absence is not appropriate unless the absence is in connection with furthering a function of the Department of Defense.

q. 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, the supervisor will advise their technicians when they will be required to report to work.

24. **Absence Without Leave (AWOL).**

If technicians are absent from work without authorized leave approved by the supervisor, technicians are Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and placed in a non-pay status. An AWOL charge may result in disciplinary action.

25. **Overtime Pay.**

National Guard technicians are not entitled to overtime pay.

26. **Compensatory Time.**

a. In lieu of overtime pay, you will be granted compensatory time. The amount of time off given is equal to the time you spent outside your normal duty hours, irregularly scheduled work, or for time spent in a travel status away from the employee's official duty station when such time is not otherwise compensable. 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.

b. Compensatory time cannot be granted or received in lieu of holiday pay.

c. Compensatory Time Codes

Comp Time - Earned	CE
Comp Time – Taken	CT

27. **Compensatory Time for Travel.**

a. As with regular compensatory time, you must receive your supervisor's approval before beginning your travel. In most cases, time traveling to and from a Temporary Duty (TDY) location outside of the normal administrative workweek is compensated through Compensatory Time and should be coded appropriately on the Time and Attendance records. Comp Time for travel, also referred to as "travel comp", has a different set of codes for earning and use.

b. Compensatory Time for Travel Codes

Comp Time Earned - Travel	CB
Comp Time Taken - Travel	CF

28. **Travel.**

a. When travel in connection with duties is required, travel and per diem is authorized in accordance with Department of Defense Joint Travel Regulations (JTVL Reg VOL II). If technicians are required to travel, the technician 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, motel, meals, etc.

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

c. Technicians cannot be directed to stay in billeting if the quarters are inadequate. This has been determined by DoD Directive 4165.63-M and the JTR as the same quality of furnishings, facilities, and services as they would have in a good quality, mid-level hotel with at least 250 square feet net living area, private room, and private bath. Technicians are required to check with billeting at their TDY location to determine if adequate quarters are available for the Technician.

d. Upon completion of TDY travel, submit a travel voucher (DD Form 1351-2) to the appropriate reimbursement office within five days. Technicians are required to furnish receipts for any official miscellaneous expenses over \$75. These receipts should be attached to the travel voucher claim. If technicians 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.

e. Defense Travel System (DTS) all technicians need to register for this method of travel orders. To gain access to DTS the individual will need to attend on-line training and receive the certificate. To complete the process by sending your information to CAJS-J1-HRO for processing and access granted.

## 29. **Physical Fitness Training Program.**

Technicians may be granted authorized absences for up to 3 hours per week (1 hour intervals) to participate in an approved physical fitness program. This physical activity must be coordinated with your supervisor and conform to The Adjutant General's policy on the Physical Fitness Training Program (Reference CNGFPR 203).

## 30. **Employment Status.**

a. A permanent employee is a technician subject to Merit Placement (competitive) procedures and compatibility criteria who has successfully completed a one-year trial period. Permanent technicians are eligible for all employment benefits.

b. Trial Period. All National Guard 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 separated during this trial period if performance does not meet expected standards.

c. Indefinite Appointment. Indefinite employment is temporary in nature but without a time limit. Benefits are the same as a permanent technician with the exception of tenure (indefinite appointees do not serve a trial period). Indefinite technicians may be separated after a 30 day notice letter is issued by the agency.

d. Temporary Employment. Technicians may be hired for short periods of time. These temporary appointments do not confer the same benefits as permanent or indefinite appointments (temporary appointees do not serve a trial period) and the employee may be separated at any time.

## 31. **Official Personnel Records.**

Official Personnel Folders (OPFs) are established and maintained in the Human Resources Office. This folder contains official documents pertaining to your technician employment. You are encouraged to periodically review your OPF. If an employee decides to leave federal employment, the Official Personnel Folder is forwarded to the Federal Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

**32. Supervisor Work Folder.**

Supervisors are required to maintain an employee work folder. This folder may be reviewed at any time by the technician. Technicians are furnished copies of all Notification of Personnel Actions (Standard Form 50).

NOTE: Technicians are strongly encouraged to maintain these notifications along with other technician documents such as their application and resume.

**33. Classification.**

a. 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 (PD) 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 job-grading standards and made a determination as to the appropriate pay plan, title, occupational series, and grade level. The standards are on file in the Human Resources Office and are available for your review.

b. 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 happen as a result of a classification appeal:

- (1) Position can be upgraded.
- (2) Position can retain the present grade level.
- (3) 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.

**34. Employee Assistance Program (EAP).**

a. General Information. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a resource provided to technicians (and their family members) to use for non-work related problems at no cost to the employee. The California National Guard recognizes that personal problems can affect the employee's work, health and family. Some typical problems resulting in work problems are: parent/child relationship, alcohol or drug abuse, dealing with death and/or grief, financial problems, and legal issues.

b. Counseling. When an employee calls EAP, a trained professional will assist the employee (or family member) in finding the most appropriate counselor for the situation. A meeting is scheduled at an office in the employee's area. Contact with EAP is strictly confidential. A management initiated referral to the EAP is appropriate when management recognizes serious work performance problems related to alcohol/drug use, severe emotional issue or safety issues.

c. Management Initiated Referral. A management initiated referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is appropriate when management recognizes serious work performance problems related to alcohol/drug use, severe emotional issues or safety issues. Management should meet with the employee to discuss the referral. An authorization form to release information regarding services should be signed and dated by the employee and his/her supervisor. The form should specifically indicate what information could be released to the supervisor. Once the employee agrees to seek EAP services, the supervisor will call the Intake Department regarding the referral. The Guidance Consultant will gather information regarding the reason for the referral, the supervisor's expectation regarding the referral, and name and telephone/fax number of the supervisor.

d. Contact Information. The EAP for the California National Guard is provided by Federal Occupational Health (FOH). FOH is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide sensitive support and counseling – no matter what the need. Employees can call FOH toll-free at 1-800-222-0364 or 1-888-262-7848(TTY). EAP provides information and resources online anytime a technician needs trusted, expert information, resources or referrals at [www.FOH4you.com](http://www.FOH4you.com).

35. **Employee Benefits.**

General Information. The Technician Act of 1968 was established to provide National Guard technicians employment benefits and entitlement to a retirement system that was equitable to other federal employees.

36. **Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI).**

a. Eligibility. All permanent and indefinite technicians with regularly scheduled tours of duty are eligible to enroll in the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance. 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 31 days of the date of your appointment or qualifying life event, or after waiting one year from your last waiver of life insurance. Temporary 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.

b. Non-Pay (LWOP) Status. Technicians on Leave Without Pay (LWOP), to include military active duty, will continue to be covered for a period not to exceed one year at no cost to the employee.

c. FEGLI and 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.

37. **Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB).**

a. 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. If you don't make an election, you are considered to have declined coverage and you must wait until the next open season to enroll, or until you have a qualifying life event.

NOTE: Enrollment is NOT retroactive, and it cannot be made effective the day you enter on duty as you must have been in a pay status during some part of the pay period which precedes

the one in which your enrollment becomes effective. Once this requirement has been met your enrollment will become effective on the first pay period that begins after HRO receives your enrollment request. Thus the earliest that your health insurance can possibly become effective is the beginning of the pay period that begins after the pay period in which you are hired. You will not be reimbursed for any medical expenses incurred prior to the effective date. You need to consider this in canceling any other health insurance coverage you may already have, and for scheduling of doctor visits or tests. If you are converting from a non-covered position to a covered position, you may elect health coverage effective your first pay period in the covered position.

b. Health plans provide varying benefits at different 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 Qualifying Life Event (QLE) to enroll. Some examples of a QLE are marriage, divorce or the birth/acquisition of a child. For more information on health plans and enrollment, go to the Office of Personnel Management web site at [www.opm.gov/insure/04/index.asp](http://www.opm.gov/insure/04/index.asp), contact your supervisor, the remote designee at your unit, or call the HRO.

c. 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. If you have a temporary full-time or part-time appointment and you complete one year of current continuous employment, you are eligible to enroll in the FEHB program. You are covered from the effective date of enrollment without a medical examination or restrictions based on your age or preexisting condition.

d. 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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday).

e. Premium Conversion Program. Technicians may use pre-tax dollars to pay health insurance premiums to the FEHB under the “Premium Conversion” program. Premium conversion uses Federal tax rules to let employees deduct their share of health insurance premiums from their taxable income, thereby reducing their taxes. You are automatically enrolled in premium conversion unless you waive participation. If you wish to waive premium conversion, you must complete a Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) Premium Conversion Waiver/Election Form.

f. Costs. FEHB premiums are paid through payroll deduction. The government shares the cost of health coverage for technicians who have permanent or indefinite technician appointments. After serving 12 months, temporary technicians can enroll in FEHB but must pay both the employee and the government share of the premium plus a 2% surcharge for administrative costs.

g. 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.

h. Choice of Plans and Options:

i. Fee-for-Service (FFS) Plan - Health coverage in which doctors and other providers receive a fee for each service such as an office visit, test, procedure, or other health care service. The plan will either pay the medical provider directly or reimburse you for covered services after

you have paid the bill and filed an insurance claim. When you need medical attention, you visit the doctor or hospital of your choice. In an FFS plan, the plan's regular benefits include deductibles and coinsurance. But in some locations, the plan has set up a POS network of providers similar to what you would find in an HMO. The plan encourages you to use these providers, usually by waiving the deductibles and applying a copayment that is smaller than the normal coinsurance. Generally, there is no paperwork when you use a network provider.

j. Point of Service (POS) - A product offered by an HMO or FFS plan that has features of both. In an HMO, the POS product lets you use providers who are not part of the HMO network. However, there is a greater cost associated with choosing these non-network providers. You usually pay deductibles and coinsurances that are substantially higher than the payments when you use a plan provider. You will also need to file a claim for reimbursement, like in an FFS plan. The HMO plan wants you to use its network of providers, but recognizes that sometimes enrollees want to choose their own provider.

k. Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) - Under the FEHB Program, PPOs are only available through enrollment in a Fee-For-Service plan. The PPO is similar to FFS insurance except it uses a network of providers. PPO's give you the choice of using doctors and other providers within the plan's network (the PPO benefit), or using ones outside the plan's network. You don't have to use the PPO, but there are advantages if you do. (Be aware, however, that some of the services provided in a PPO hospital may not be covered by PPO arrangements. Room and board will be covered, but anesthesia and radiology, for instance, will probably be covered under non-PPO benefits.)

l. Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) - A health plan that provides care through contracted or employed physicians and hospitals located in particular geographic or service areas. HMOs emphasize prevention and early detection of illness. Your eligibility to enroll in an HMO is determined by where you live or, in some plans, where you work.

m. Non-Pay Status. A technician in Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status may continue FEHB coverage for a limited period. If the period of non-pay status is more than 30 days, you must contact the HRO prior to commencement for specific costs and length of coverage.

n. 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

o. 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 22. 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.

p. FEHB and 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.

### 38. **Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).**

a. The Federal Employee Dental and Vision Benefits is a supplemental dental and vision benefits program available to eligible Federal and Postal employees, retirees, and their eligible family members on an enrollee-pay-all basis. This Program allows dental and vision insurance to

be purchased on a group basis which means competitive premiums and no pre-existing condition limitations. Premiums for enrolled Federal and Postal employees are withheld from salary on a pre-tax basis.

b. Eligible individuals can enroll in a dental plan and/or a vision plan. They may enroll in a plan for **Self-only, Self plus one, or Self and family** coverage. Eligible family members include an enrollee's spouse and unmarried dependent children under the age of 22, or if age 22 or older, incapable of self-support. The rules for family members' eligibility are the same as they are for the FEHB Program.

c. Employees must be eligible for the FEHB Program in order to be eligible to enroll in FEDVIP. It does not matter if they are actually enrolled in FEHB - eligibility is the key. Annuitants do not have to be eligible or enrolled in the FEHB Program.

d. For enrollment/premium questions regarding the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program, please contact BENEFEDS at 1 (877) 888-3337. To enroll in FEDVIP, please visit [www.BENEFEDS.com](http://www.BENEFEDS.com).

### 39. **Flexible Spending Accounts for Federal Employees (FSAFEDS).**

a. This tax-favored program sets aside pre-tax money to pay a variety of health-care or dependent-care related expenses (dental, medical, vision). FSAs are not carried over from year to year; you must renew enrollment each year. Enroll 60 days from your date of appointment or an open season each year (mid-Nov through mid-Dec). Permissible changes based on qualified status changes (marriage, children, employment, residence, dependents eligibility, etc). The FSA is handled through a third party contractor. Individuals in LWOP-US status may also cancel coverage. The two FSAs offered to eligible employees are:

b. A Health Care FSA (HCFSA), through which you may use pre-tax allotments to pay for certain health care expenses that are not reimbursed by FEHB (or any other source) and not claimed on your income tax return. The maximum amount you may set aside in any tax year is \$3,000 and the minimum is \$250.

c. A Dependent Care FSA (DCFSA), through which you may use pre-tax allotments to pay for eligible dependent care expenses. The maximum amount you may set aside in any tax year is \$5,000 (\$2,500 if you are married and filing a separate income tax return) and the minimum amount is \$250.

d. Specific requirements, amounts and coverage often vary from year to year. See the following website to obtain the latest information on Federal Spending Accounts for Federal Employees at <http://www.fsafeds.com>

### 40. **Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP).**

a. The FLTCIP is insurance to cover care needed to help perform the daily activities if 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. LTC is handled through a third party contractor to form The Long Term Care Partners, LLC. For more information visit the LTC web site at <http://www.ltcfeds.com>.

b. Disability Insurance. Long or Short Term Disability Income helps replace lost income if you are disabled (non-work related). The National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) Technician Insurance Program (underwritten by Relistar) provides disability

insurance with premiums paid by payroll deduction. New employees have 30 days from the effective date of appointment to enroll and are guaranteed acceptance into a disability insurance program without health questions or examinations. Contact your Remote Designee or the HRO for more information.

**41. Retirement.**

a. General Information. The National Guard Technician Program consists of two retirement systems:

- i. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).
- ii. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

b. The Civil Service Retirement System covers National Guard Technicians employed prior to 1 January 1984. If you are just entering the federal system, you will be in the Federal Employees Retirement System. Both CSRS and FERS give the technician a measure of income protection in case of disability. Both retirement systems will provide for your family in case of death; and both systems will pay you an annuity after your retirement. Each Technician contributes 7% of gross pay towards retirement. For FERS employees, 6.2% pays for the Social Security portion of retirement and 0.8 % goes into the FERS retirement fund.

c. Military Service Deposit. All honorable active duty military service is potentially creditable. CSRS technicians hired 1 October 1982 or later and FERS Technicians will not receive credit for their military service unless a deposit is made.

i. FERS - a deposit of 3% of military taxable earnings is required in order to receive credit for civilian retirement purposes.

ii. CSRS - a deposit of 7% of military taxable earnings is required to receive credit for civilian retirement purpose. Technicians covered by CSRS prior to Oct 01, 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.

**42. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).**

a. 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:

- i. Voluntary CSRS Retirement:
  - (1)Age 62 with 5 years service.
  - (2)Age 60 with 20 years service.
  - (3)Age 55 with 30 years service.

ii. Involuntary CSRS Retirement. Involuntary Retirements occur if a technician loses military membership for reasons NOT related to misconduct or non-performance. When this occurs, if 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 your retirement annuity for each year your age is under 55.

**43. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).**

a. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The FERS retirement is a three-tiered program. The three components are Social Security Benefits, Basic Benefit Plan and the Thrift Savings Plan.

i. FERS employees pay full Social Security taxes and a small contribution to the Basic Benefit Plan. In addition, your agency puts an amount equal to 1% of your basic pay each pay period into your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account. You are able to make tax-deferred contributions to the TSP and a portion is matched by the Government.

ii. The three components of FERS work together to give you a strong financial foundation for your retirement years.

(1) Basic Benefit Plan (annuity)

(2) Social Security Benefits

(3) Thrift Savings Plan

b. Basic Benefit Plan. The first and sometimes smallest component of the retirement equation of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) is the Basic Benefit plan.

i. Basic Annuity Calculation. To determine the FERS basic benefit annuity is 1 percent of the high-three average salary multiplied by length of creditable service. For example, if you are a FERS technician and you work for 20 years, your retirement annuity will be 20% of your average “high 3”.

ii. Eligibility. If you were automatically covered by FERS, or you elected to transfer from the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) to FERS, you will participate in the Basic Benefit plan.

iii. Vesting. To be vested (eligible to receive your retirement benefits from the Basic Benefit plan if you leave Federal service before retiring), you must have at least 5 years of creditable **civilian** service. Survivor and disability benefits are available after 18 months of civilian service.

iv. Prior Federal Service. 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.

v. Creditable Service. Creditable service generally includes:

(1) Federal civilian service for which contributions have been made or deposited.

(2) Military service, subject to a deposit requirement. To receive credit for military service, generally, you must deposit 3% of your military base pay. Interest begins 2 years after you are hired. With certain exceptions, you cannot receive credit for military service if you are receiving military retired pay. (See Note below)

(3) Leaves of absence for performing military service or while receiving workers’ compensation.

vi. Credit is not allowed for civilian service after 1988 when no contributions were withheld.

**Note:** Service in the National Guard, except when ordered to active duty in the service of the United States, is generally not creditable. However, you may receive credit for National Guard service, followed by Federal civilian reemployment that occurs after August 1, 1990, when **all** of the following conditions are met:

(1) The service must interrupt civilian service creditable under the Civilian Service Retirement System (or FERS) and be followed by reemployment in accordance with the appropriate chapter of the laws concerning Veterans Benefits, commonly referred to as “sandwiched time”; and

(2) It must be full-time (and not inactive duty), and performed by a member of the U.S. Army National Guard, or U.S. Air National Guard; and

(3)It must be under a specified law (i.e., Title 10, Presidential order) and you must be entitled to pay from the U.S. (or have waived pay from the U.S.) for the service.

vii. The deposit for National Guard service that meets the criteria is limited to the amount that would have been deducted from your pay for retirement if you had remained in the civilian service.

viii. Contributions. Your contribution to the Basic Benefit Plan is the difference between 7% of your basic pay and Social Security’s old age, survivor, and disability insurance tax rate, or 0.80%.

**Note:** Your Leave and Earning Statement (LES) will show only the current contributions made under the current payroll office. Meaning: If you have changed agencies, payroll offices (from Army to Air or Air to Army) or had a break in service, prior contributions may not be reflected in your accumulative balance. All previous contribution data has been forwarded to the Office of Personnel Management for retirement accounting purposes.

ix. Refunds. You may withdraw your basic benefit contributions if you leave federal employment. However, if you do, you will not be eligible to receive benefits based on service covered by the refund. There is no provision in the law for the redeposit of FERS contributions that have been refunded.

x. Retirement Options. There are three categories of retirement benefits in the Basic Benefit Plan:

- (1)Immediate
- (2)Early
- (3)Deferred

xi. Eligibility is determined by your age and number of years of creditable service.

xii. In some cases, you must have reached the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) to receive retirement benefits. The following chart shows the MRA.

Minimum Retirement Age	
<i>If you were born:</i>	<i>Your MRA is:</i>
Before 1948	55
In 1948	55 and 2 months
In 1949	55 and 4 months
In 1950	55 and 6 months
In 1951	55 and 8 months
In 1952	55 and 10 months
In 1953 through 1964	56
In 1965	56 and 2 months
In 1966	56 and 4 months

In 1967	56 and 6 months
In 1968	56 and 8 months
In 1969	56 and 10 months
In 1970 and after	57

xiii. Voluntary FERS Retirement:

- (1) Age 62 with 5 years of service.
- (2) Age 60 with 20 years of service.
- (3) \*Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with 30 years of service.
- (4) \*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.

xiv. Involuntary FERS Retirement. To qualify for an involuntary annuity you must be:

- (1) Age 50 with 20 years of service.
- (2) Any age with 25 years of service.
- (3) If you lose your military membership, you may retire with a full annuity if you are at least age 50 with 25 years of service.

(4) You may also be eligible to receive a Special Retirement Supplement until you reach age 62, when you become eligible for Social Security benefits.

xv. Separation Withdrawals. If you decide to leave technician service prior to retirement age, you can withdraw all the retirement money that was withheld for your retirement fund. 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 for FERS TECHNICIANS.** 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.

xvi. Military Service Deposit. No interest is charged if the deposit is received by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) prior to your third anniversary date (3 years after your hire 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.

c. Social Security.

i. The term “Social Security” means benefit payments provided to workers and their dependents who qualify as beneficiaries under the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) programs of the Social Security Act. OASDI replaces a portion of earnings lost as a result of retirement, disability, or death. It is designed to provide benefits that replace a greater percentage of earnings for lower-paid workers than for higher-paid workers. This means that Social Security benefits are more important for lower-paid workers than higher-paid workers.

ii. As an employee with FERS coverage, you have Social Security coverage. You also are covered under Social Security’s Medicare Hospital Insurance program. This pay a

portion of hospital expenses incurred while you are receiving Social Security disability benefits or retirement benefits at age 65 or older.

iii. For further information, call the Social Security Administration (SSA) at (800) 772-1213 or visit the SSA website located at: <http://www.ssa.gov>.

d. Thrift Savings Plan.

i. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings plan for FERS and CSRS employees, however FERS technicians must understand that it is the largest and most significant foundation of their retirement system. TSP accounts are tax deferred (taken out prior to taxes) so funds cannot be withdrawn until you leave federal service except in instances of extreme hardship or upon reaching age 59 1/2. This should not be confused with the TSP Loan program. An advantage of the TSP is that you pay no taxes on your contributions to TSP or earnings until you withdraw your account.

ii. TSP Account Withdrawals. You may withdraw from your TSP account upon separation from federal service. However, if you withdraw money from your TSP account prior to age 59 1/2 you may be subject to an early withdrawal penalty and the money received will be considered taxable income. The TSP Withdrawal Booklet outlines the specifics. It may be obtained from your HRO or the TSP website.

iii. To maximize contributions, technicians are highly encouraged to use the TSP program to the fullest advantage possible. Technicians are normally eligible to participate in the TSP beginning the first day of the pay period following receipt of the TSP election form (TSP-1) by the HRO. For FERS technicians, the government automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your salary beginning the first pay period after you have completed the required waiting period after your entry on duty, whether you decide to contribute or not. If you choose to contribute to the TSP, the government will match your contributions after you have completed the required waiting period up to 3% of your salary, and will contribute 50 cents on the dollar for the next 2%. Government matching contributions stop at 5%. (Note: If you are not contributing 5% - you are throwing away free money in the form of matching contributions!). 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](http://www.tsp.gov).

iv. Matching Contributions by Agency:

Employee Contribution	Agency Contribution	Total Result to Employee:
0	Automatic 1%	1%
First 1%	1%	2%
Second 1%	1%	3%
Third 1%	1%	4%
Fourth 1%	½%	4 ½%
Fifth 1%	½%	5%

e. Designation of Beneficiary.

i. General Information. If you die while you are a Federal employee, payments will be made in a particular order set by law as follows:

(1) First to your widow or widower.

(2) Second, if none of the above, to your child or children, with the share of any deceased child distributed among descendants of that child (a court will usually have to appoint a guardian to receive payment for a minor child).

(3)Third, if none of the above, to your parents in equal shares or the entire amount to your surviving parent.

(4)Fourth, if none of the above, to the executor or administrator of your estate.

(5)Fifth, to your other next of kin as determined under the laws of the State where you live.

ii. If you are satisfied with the above order of payment, you do not have to take any action. But if you want funds to go to someone else, you need to file Designation of Beneficiary as follows:

(1)FEGLI (Form SF-2823.

(2)FERS (Form SF-3102).

(3)TSP (Form TSP-3 – Mail directly to Thrift Savings Plan).

(4)Unpaid Compensation (Form SF-1152).

#### 44. **Performance Evaluation.**

a. General Information. Performance appraisals consist of critical elements and performance indicators. You should receive a copy of your performance plan no later than 30 days after placement in a position. Critical elements define what kind of work you will be expected to perform, and the standards (or performance indicators) describe how well you must perform to meet certain levels of expectation. A critical element is defined as a component of a position consisting of one or more duties and responsibilities which contribute towards accomplishing organizational goals. Unacceptable performance in any critical element will result in an unacceptable rating.

b. Performance Appraisals. At least once a year (in your birth month), your supervisor will rate your performance on the job. You must have been working under the performance critical elements and performance indicators for a minimum of 120 days (check your local negotiated union agreement for minimum rating period) to receive a rating.

c. Progressive Review. Employees can expect formal performance feedback sessions from their supervisor at least semi-annually. These feedback sessions give the supervisor and the employee a chance to comment on job performance to date and may be used as supporting documentation for the final appraisal.

d. 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 that must be attained to demonstrate acceptable performance. The technician will be given a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and a reasonable period of time (approximately 60 to 90 days) to show acceptable performance improvement. Once the technician has been afforded a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance, the agency may propose a reduction in grade or a removal action if performance is still at an unacceptable level.

e. Appeals. Technicians may file an appeal if they are dissatisfied with their performance appraisal. The appeals process is defined in the negotiated union contract or as determined by the HRO.

#### 45. **Length of Service Awards.**

Technicians are awarded certificates and pins as they reach milestones in Federal Service (5-year increments beginning at 5-years of credible service).

46. **Incentive Awards.**

a. General Information. The Incentive Awards Program is designed to improve operations and services. Its purpose is to motivate, increase 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.

b. Irregular Performance Pay (IPP). An Irregular Performance Pay (IPP), formerly known as Quality Step Increase (QSI), is appropriate recognition of performance that significantly exceeds high quality by General Schedule (GS) technicians. The minimum period of high quality performance for this award is six (6) months in the same job and grade level. To be eligible for an IPP, the technician's overall performance must have been "outstanding" as reflected on the employee's most recent CNG Form 430 along with justification and a rating of "fully successful" under the Pass/Fail system OR "outstanding" under the 5-tier performance system. Technicians may receive a maximum of one IPP every 52 weeks. By statute, Federal Wage System (FWS) (WG, WL, WS) technicians are not authorized IPPs.

c. Sustained Superior Performance (SSP). The Sustained Superior Performance (SSP) Award is a monetary award in recognition of significant superior performance of duties and responsibilities that clearly exceed a technician's assigned position requirements. The sustained superior performance on which the award is based must have been maintained for at least six (6) months and in the same job and grade level, unless the technician was demoted during the period for reasons other than cause. Award eligibility will not be affected by position changes occurring after the period covered by the recommendation. To be eligible, the technician's overall performance must have been rated "fully successful" on the employee's most recent Technician Performance Appraisal Report, CNG Form 430. Technicians may be awarded one to ten percent (1 - 10%) of their total salary (base salary plus locality pay), not to exceed \$10,000. A Commander or Director may nominate an award of eleven to fifteen percent (11-15%) of a technician's total salary when such an award is warranted.

d. Special Act or Service Award (SASA). A Special Act or Service Award (SASA) may be awarded to technicians in recognition of a singular act of heroism, or similar one-time special act, service, or scientific achievement that contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or is otherwise in the public interest. The act, service, or scientific achievement may or may not involve measurable monetary benefits and may be awarded to an individual or group of individuals. Technicians may be awarded one to ten percent (1 - 10%) of their total salary (base salary plus locality pay), not to exceed \$10,000. A Commander or Director may nominate an award of eleven to fifteen percent (11-15%) of a technician's total salary when such an award is warranted.

e. On The Spot (OTS). An On-The-Spot Cash (OTS) Award is intended to recognize personal accomplishments that result in quality service, within or without the technician's organization. This award can be used to recognize day to day accomplishments and a technician's extra work efforts. All technicians of the California National Guard are eligible.

An OTS Award does not preclude a technician from being considered for any other award. OTS Awards range from a \$25 minimum to a maximum of \$500. In each case, the amount paid to the employee is net for W-2 purposes. Withholding for deductions is computed by the Directorate of Human Resources. The OTS is the only incentive that is processed for net purposes.

f. Time-Off Award (TOA). A Time-Off Award (TOA) is awarded to technicians or group of technicians who perform service in an exceptional manner. Receipt of a TOA does not preclude a technician from being considered for any other award. All technicians of the California National Guard are eligible. The minimum TOA is one day (8 hours). No more than 40 hours may be granted for a single contribution. A technician may receive no more than 80 hours during a leave year. Hours awarded are not held as regular annual leave on a technician's Leave and Earnings Statements (LES) and must be used within one year of the effective date of the award. By statute, technicians may not "cash in" TOA hours under any circumstance and unused hours will be forfeited without further compensation. Timekeepers must use code LY to draw TOA hours.

g. Beneficial 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.

h. Honorary Award. These include awards such as the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service, the Department of Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, and certificates of achievement, etc.

#### 47. **Injury Compensation.**

a. General Information. The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) and the Office of the Worker's Compensation Program (OWCP) provides compensation benefits for a permanent/temporary disability due to personal injury or disease sustained in the performance of duty.

b. Injured at Work. Contact your supervisor immediately if you are injured at work. Your supervisor will secure the forms required to document your injury and submit your claim. No matter how small the injury may seem to you, it is important that you discuss the matter with your supervisor. If your injury requires absence from the workplace, it is possible for you to be compensated for this time without charge to sick or annual leave. You are expected to return to work as soon as possible, subject to written medical restrictions, even if it is in a light duty status.

c. Traumatic Injury. One that occurs within a single day or work shift and is caused by a specific event or incident. Examples: cuts, burns, broken bones, etc. This type of injury is reported on Form CA-1.

d. Occupational Illness/Disease. One that occurs over more than one work shift and is caused by exposure, repeated stress or strain. Example: hearing loss, carpal tunnel syndrome or dermatitis. This type of illness or disease is reported on Form CA-2.

e. Continuation of Pay (COP). This is continuation of an employee's regular pay for up to 45 calendar days of wage loss. This is granted when a disability and/or medical treatment and is only given following a traumatic injury.

f. False Claims. If a technician files a false claim he/she is subject to prosecution and, if found guilty, could be fined or imprisoned.

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

h. Workers' Compensation Payroll Codes

Date of Injury (Submitted CA-1 only)	LU
Continuation of Pay (Submitted CA-1 only)	LT
Workers' Compensation LWOP (Submitted CA-1 or CA-2)	KD

48. **Merit Placement and Promotion.**

a. General Information. Promotions in the National Guard Technician Program are based on a system of merit. Vacant positions may be announced with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) stated in the announcement. Applications are invited from all interested eligible applicants. Minimum qualifications are determined. A list of qualified applicants is then presented to the Selecting Official for interview and selection then forwarded to HRO for approval and appointment.

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

49. **Reduction in Force (RIF).**

A Reduction-In-Force (RIF) occurs when an agency is obligated to demote, separate, or furlough one or more employees because of lack of work, shortage of funds or reorganization. The cause may come from the action of the President, Congress, the Office of Management and Budget or from decisions of the head of the agency or some official who has been authorized to make such decisions. Once the decision has been made to conduct a RIF, officials of the agency must decide what organizations and programs to reduce and how to distribute the remaining resources.

50. **Pay Administration.**

a. General Information. Technicians are paid bi-weekly via electronic funds transfer (EFT). Allotments may be taken out of your pay for the following purposes:

- i. Union dues.
- ii. Savings bonds.
- iii. Allotments to financial institutions.
- iv. Charitable institutions such as the Combined Federal Campaign.

b. 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. If there is an error or question about information, such as incorrect earnings, leave accumulation, taxes or other listings; you should contact your supervisor immediately for assistance.

c. Holiday Premium Pay. Holiday Premium pay is additional pay, when authorized in advance, for holiday work. Compensatory time cannot be taken in lieu of Holiday Premium Pay.

d. Environmental Differential Pay. Wage Grade (WG) 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.

e. 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.

f. General Adjustments. Pay increases are granted upon receipt of revised pay schedules (generally at the beginning of each calendar year). Pay tables are published on the Office of Personnel Management web site at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov).

g. Regular Within-Rate Increase (Reg WRI). Regular Within-Rate Increases are granted based on length of service and performance.

i. Wage Grade (WG) Waiting Periods for Reg WRIs. Wage Grade (WG, WL, WS) technicians: Temporary, indefinite and permanent Wage Grade employees are eligible for a WRI the pay period following completion of the required waiting period provided performance is fully acceptable and no equivalent increase (promotion) was received during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

- (1) Step 1 to Step 2 - 26 calendar weeks of creditable service in Step 1.
- (2) Step 2 to Step 3 - 78 calendar weeks of creditable service in Step 2.
- (3) Step 3 to Step 4 - 104 calendar weeks of creditable service in Step 3.
- (4) Step 4 to Step 5 - 104 calendar weeks of creditable service in Step 4.

ii. General Schedule (GS) Waiting Periods for Reg WRI. Only indefinite and permanent General Schedule technicians are eligible for a WRI. A WRI will occur 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 (promotion) during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

- (1) Step 1 to Step 2, Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 - 52 calendar weeks of creditable service (1 year between each step).
- (2) Step 4 to Step 5, Step 5 to Step 6 and Step 6 to Step 7 - 104 calendar weeks of creditable service (2 years between each step).
- (3) Step 7 to Step 8, Step 8 to Step 9 and Step 9 to Step 10 - 156 calendar weeks of creditable service (3 years between each step).

\*Note: Excess time in a personal (non-military related) Leave Without Pay status may result in a delay of your WRI. Contact the HRO for specifics.

h. Severance Pay. Indefinite and permanent technicians who have been employed for at least 12 months may be eligible for severance pay if separated involuntarily and not for cause and ineligible for an immediate annuity.

## 51. **Labor-Management Relations.**

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

b. The Adjutant General and the union(s) have a collective bargaining agreement (contract) which is available through your HRO or union representative. A list of union stewards

should be posted on bulletin boards at each work location. You can get applications to join the union from any steward or union official. Nothing requires a technician to pay union dues.

**52. Discipline and Adverse Actions.**

a. Disciplinary Action. A disciplinary action may be anything from an oral admonishment to a letter of reprimand. An oral admonishment lets you know that you must stop doing certain things (example: tardiness). A letter of reprimand is more serious because it is a written notification of the problem with a warning of what might happen if the situation is not corrected. The letter is kept temporarily in the Human Resources Office for a specified period. Disciplinary actions can be grieved through the negotiated grievance procedure for bargaining unit technicians and through the agency grievance procedure for non-bargaining unit technicians.

b. Adverse Action. There are three types of adverse actions:

- i. Suspension from work.
- ii. Change to lower grade.
- iii. Removal from position.

c. There are considerable due process measures to protect a technician from an unfair disciplinary or adverse action, including the right to an administrative hearing. The final level of appeal on these actions rests with The Adjutant General.

d. Appeal and Grievance Procedures. There are specific appeal and grievance procedures outlined in the labor contract. Labor contracts can be obtained from the HRO website. Non-union employees need to use the Joint Forces Headquarters (JFHQ) grievance procedures.

**53. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO).**

a. General Information. 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, gender, national origin, religion, age or handicap. Discrimination and reprisal for participating in the complaint process will not be tolerated. Management officials will take immediate and appropriate action to correct any occurrence of discrimination or sexual harassment.

b. Diversity. Diversity Management is an organizational culture that accepts and values human differences and similarities and the positive contribution they can bring to our organization. It involves understanding the human environment and appreciating the gender, race, culture, and ethnic variations of our workforce.

c. 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.

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

**54. Ethics and Conduct.**

a. General Information. All technicians are required to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity and to conduct business in an ethical manner on and off duty. You are required to perform your assigned duties conscientiously and to 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.

- b. Some of the prohibited acts that can result in disciplinary action are:
- i. Using a government vehicle without authorization.
  - ii. Misusing official and/or classified information.
  - iii. Gambling and betting on duty.
  - iv. Misusing government property: such as, supplies, personal computers, telephones, or fax equipment.
  - v. Using a government-issued travel card for personal use.
  - vi. Refusing to cooperate in an administrative investigation.
  - vii. Accepting gifts and favors from subordinates or customers.
  - viii. Filing fraudulent claims.
  - ix. Using illegal drugs, alcohol or intoxicants.
  - x. Misusing government postage/mail.
  - xi. Making false statements (orally or in writing) or rumors.
  - xii. Engaging in illegal political activity.
  - xiii. Using obscene or vulgar language.
  - xiv. Accepting outside employment that conflicts with your technician duties or discredits the National Guard.
  - xv. Your actions must never discredit the National Guard, whether you are on-duty or off.

**55. Political Activities.**

a. All National Guard technicians are subject to the basic political activity restrictions of the 1993 Hatch Act.

b. Technicians may (but NOT in uniform):

- i. Participate in non-partisan activities and in public affairs, so long as participation does not affect the efficiency or integrity of the National Guard.
- ii. Participate in the activities of a political party.
- iii. Serve as delegates to a party convention and attend nominating caucuses.
- iv. Display articles associated with political parties, circulate nominating petitions, canvass for votes and manage partisan campaigns.
- v. Display bumper stickers on private autos even though they are parked in government parking lots.
- vi. Register to vote, act as poll watchers, election judges or provide other election assistance to partisan elections.
- vii. Run as candidates in non-partisan campaigns or as independents.
- viii. Contribute to partisan campaigns on non-duty time.
- ix. Attend fundraisers, give speeches, stuff envelopes and organize mail or phone solicitations.

c. Technicians may NOT participate in political activities:

- i. While on duty or wearing a uniform, badge, insignia, or other similar item that identifies the National Guard or the technician's position.
  - ii. Allowing their official title to be used in conjunction with political fundraising activities.
  - iii. Soliciting subordinates to contribute time, money or services for any activity.
  - iv. While in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties by an individual employed by the Federal Government.
  - v. 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.
  - vi. Using their official authority or influence to interfere with an election.
- d. There are exceptions for non-partisan elections. Check with JAG for additional guidance.

**56. Training and Development.**

a. General Information. The National Guard has a strong commitment to developing the talents, skills, and abilities of its technicians. The Government Employees Training Act, PL 85-507, emphasizes that training is a responsibility of the government and that training is necessary and desirable. Once you are employed, you may receive additional 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 on a SF 182 Authorization Agreement and Certification of Training.

b. 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.

c. Technician Personnel Regulation (TPR) 400 governs the policies which technicians attend school. When dual status (DS) technicians attend schools they must conform to the environment (uniform, AFPT, Drug testing, and weigh-ins).

d. Request for Training Procedures. All requests for training should be submitted on an Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training (SF182) that may be found at: [www.opm.gov/forms/pdf\\_fill/SF182.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/SF182.pdf). The request should be completed with pertinent information regarding the course attached. All technicians should ensure that Block 18 – Training Objective contains a clear and concise explanation of the purpose of the course as it relates to the technician’s position. Course costs and anticipated travel costs are necessary to project appropriate funding. Ensure all signatures are obtained prior to submission. The electronic copy using digital signatures via email may be routed through the supervisor to HRO Employee Development for processing.

e. Defense Travel System (DTS). Training Travel will be completed using the Defense Travel System (DTS). Every employee will sign up for DTS, while or during the “New Employee Training”.

#### 57. **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment (USERRA).**

a. General Information. Public Law 103-353, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, was enacted on 13 October 1994 and became effective on 12 December 1994.

b. Basic Entitlement. An employee, who performs duty with a uniformed service (including active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training), whether voluntary or involuntary, is entitled to be restored to the position he or she would have attained had the employee not entered the uniformed service, provided the employee:

i. Gave the agency advance notice of departure except where prevented by military circumstances.

ii. Was released from uniformed service under honorable conditions.

iii. Served no more than a cumulative total of 5 years (exceptions are allowed for training and involuntary active duty extensions, contingency operations, and to complete an initial service obligation of more than 5 years).

iv. Applies for restoration within the appropriate time limits.

c. While on duty with the uniformed services, the agency carries the employee on leave without pay unless the employee requests separation. A separation under these circumstances does not affect restoration rights.

d. Uniformed service as defined in 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 4303(16) means the Armed Forces, the Army, and Air National Guard when engaged in active duty for training, inactive duty training, or full-time National Guard duty; the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service; and any other category of persons designated by the President in time of war or emergency.

e. Time Limits for Reemployment. Employees who serve in the uniformed services:

i. Less than 31 days (or who leave to take a fitness exam for service) must report back to work at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work day following their

completion of service and the expiration of 8 hours after a time for safe transportation back to the employee's residence.

ii. More than 30 but less than 181 days must apply for reemployment no later than 14 days after completion of service.

iii. More than 180 days have 90 days after completion of service to apply for restoration.

iv. Employees who fail to meet these time limits may be subject to disciplinary/removal action.

f. Restoration. Employees who served less than 91 days must be placed in the position for which qualified that they would have attained had their employment not been interrupted. If not qualified for such position after reasonable efforts by the agency to qualify the person, the employee is entitled to be placed in the position he or she left.

g. Employees who served more than 90 days have essentially the same rights as described above except that the agency has the option of placing the employee in a position for which qualified of like seniority, status, and pay.

h. Employees with service-connected disabilities who are not qualified for the above must be reemployed in a position that most closely approximates the position they would have been entitled to, consistent with the circumstances in each case.

i. Employees who were under time-limited appointments finish the unexpired portion of their appointments upon their return.

j. Service Credit. Upon restoration, employees are generally treated as though they had never left. This means that time spent in the uniformed services counts for seniority, within-grade increases, completion of probation, career tenure, retirement, and leave rate accrual. (Employees do not earn sick or annual leave while off the rolls or in a non-pay status. To receive civil service retirement credit for military service, a deposit to the retirement fund is usually required to cover the period of military service. Only active, honorable military service is creditable for retirement purposes. If the employee is under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), a deposit of 7 percent of military basic pay (plus interest under certain conditions) is required. The deposit is 3 percent if the employee is under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

Note: Prior to the enactment of Public Law 103-353 in October 1994, National Guard service was creditable military service for civil service retirement only when the National Guard was activated in the service of the United States. The 1994 law made full-time National Guard service [as defined by 10 U.S.C. 101(d)] which interrupted creditable Federal civilian employment under CSRS or FERS and followed by restoration under chapter 43 of title 38, U.S.C., on or after August 1, 1990, creditable as military service.

## 58. **Voluntary Separation.**

General Information. An employee is free to resign at any time, to set the effective date of his/her resignation, and to have his/her reasons for resigning entered in the official records. This is considered a voluntary action and written notice should be given to your supervisor at the earliest possible date.

## 59. **Formal Resignations.**

Resignations should be in writing, preferably on a Request for Personnel Action (SF52) to include your reason for resigning and your forwarding address. Contact the HRO prior to your separation for information regarding your benefits.