



**HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE
MARYLAND NATIONAL GUARD**

TECHNICIAN HANDBOOK

1 APRIL 2005

Technician Handbook

Congratulations on your selection and welcome to the Maryland National Guard Technician Program!

Congress established the Technician Program in “The Technician Act of 1968,” which is also known as Public Law 90-486. The Technician Program is a critical component of the National Guard in all fifty-four states, territories and District of Columbia. This program was established to provide National Guard technicians with fair and just compensation, employment benefits, and entitlement to a retirement system that is equivalent to other federal employees. The law also designates, through the Secretaries of the Army and Air Force, The Adjutant Generals of each state, to employ and administer the Technician Program. This authority is further delegated to the Human Resources Officer (HRO). It is the HRO’s responsibility to review and administer human resource policies and procedures for the National Guard Technician Program. Our HRO staff is committed to administering these policies and implementing systems that ensure fair and equitable treatment, job satisfaction, just compensation, and recognition for work well done.

Our National Guard members continue to face many new and exciting challenges. We are accepting new roles and missions and are transforming to stay abreast with the constant changes in weapon systems, technology, military doctrine, and the mobilization of soldiers and airmen.

This Technician Handbook is intended to guide and assist you in answering many of your questions involving the conditions of your employment and benefits. It is designed to serve as a quick reference resource, and most of the information mirrors the National Guard Bureau Technician Handbook. The Technician Handbook outlines procedures that are applicable, but since most of the information is general in nature, detailed procedures may vary. We encourage you, our customers, to contact your Human Resources Office should you have any questions regarding your technician career and benefits.

You can reach the Human Resources Office several different ways. Visit our Home Page on the following intranets: Army - <https://55.25.254.243/hrowebsite/index.htm> or Air - <https://www.warfield.mdbalt.ang.af.mil/hro/index.htm>. Once there, browse our home page, or click on our Contact Information link for specific points of contact. You can always stop by the 5th Regiment Armory, Balcony Level, Room 26, Baltimore, MD, anytime during working hours, but please call ahead to make sure that the Human Resources Specialist that will be handling your situation is available. You may also call our main office number at (410) 576-6054.

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Chapter 1

BACKGROUND

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 your 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). Because of this law, you are referred to as a military technician. Your 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.

Military Technicians are employees of the Department of Army or Department of the Air Force. Military Technicians are required to maintain military membership in the National Guard in order to retain employment. These military technicians are referred to as dual-status technicians. 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, a military technician enjoys the same benefits, privileges and rights as other federal employees.

The National Guard also employs non-military technicians referred to as competitive technicians or Non Dual Status (NDS) technicians. If you are a NDS technician, your terms and conditions of employment are very similar to those described in this handbook, but not identical in all cases. Because the vast majority of our technicians are military technicians (not NDS), this handbook primarily addresses the military technician workforce. For additional information on the NDS Technician Program, please contact the Human Resources Office.

Chapter 2

EXCEPTED SERVICE

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 you are “excepted” from the rules that govern civil service employees in the areas of tenure and competitive requirements for appointments. Loss of military membership for any reason will cause termination of technician employment.

VETERAN’S PREFERENCE - This is not applicable in the National Guard Technician Program.

MILITARY UNIFORM - You are required to properly wear the uniform in accordance with your respective services’ regulations while performing technician duties. Additionally, compliance with established grooming, weight management and physical fitness requirements are essential. While in uniform, even after duty hours, proper customs and courtesies will be extended as appropriate.

ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES - National Guard Technicians may attend military schools in a technician status to enhance their job performance. As such, they are required to wear the military uniform and perform all activities related to the appropriate preparation, security and maintenance of classroom facilities and equipment. These duties may include, but are not limited to, classroom cleanup, class leader responsibilities, completion of homework assignments and participation in physical fitness. Other duties that may be assigned from time to time while in a technician status that are military in nature may include the wearing and use of chemical warfare equipment, carrying of a weapon when required by the duties of their position, and the firing of a weapon for range firing and weapons qualification.

COMPATIBLE MILITARY ASSIGNMENT - You are required to be assigned to a military position and unit compatible with your military technician position. Failure to maintain military compatibility is a condition of employment and is grounds for termination.

TRAVEL and TEMPORARY DUTY (TDY) - When travel in connection with your duties is required, travel and per diem will be authorized in accordance with Department of Defense Joint Travel Regulations. If you are required to travel, you will be issued a government credit card. This card may be used to obtain a cash advance (within per diem limits) from an ATM, and other travel expenses such as transportation, lodging, meals, etc.

Under no circumstance should a government travel card be used for personal use. It is your responsibility to promptly pay your credit card bill. Disciplinary action will result for abuse, misuse, or failure to satisfy the indebtedness of your government travel card.

Upon completion of TDY travel, submit a travel voucher (DD Form 1351-2) to the appropriate reimbursement office within five days. You are required to furnish receipts for any official miscellaneous expenses over \$75. These receipts should be attached to your travel voucher claim. If you need assistance in completing your voucher, ask your supervisor. A correctly completed voucher will assist the appropriate office in promptly processing your claim.

CIVIL SERVICE COMPETITIVE STATUS - Employment as a military excepted service technician does not result in civil service competitive status.

OVERTIME PAY - National Guard technicians are not entitled to overtime pay. Compensatory time off will be granted for pre-approved overtime work to include travel time.

COMPENSATORY TIME - 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 or in irregularly scheduled work. Compensatory time may be authorized while traveling for time spent by an employee in a travel status away from the 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 or the time will be forfeited.

PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT - 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. Permanent employees are entitled to life, health and retirement benefits, participation in the Thrift Savings Plan, and earn annual, sick and military leave. The technician may be removed during this trial period if performance and/or conduct do not measure up to expected standards.

INDEFINITE EMPLOYMENT - Indefinite employment is temporary in nature that will normally last more than one year. Benefits are the same as a permanent technician with the exception of tenure. Indefinite technicians are in Tenure Group 3. Indefinite technicians may be separated after a 30-day written notice memorandum is issued by the HRO.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT - Technicians may be employed for short periods of time with a not to exceed (NTE) ending date. Temporary limited employees are in Tenure Group 0. Temporary employees do not receive the same entitlements as permanent or indefinite employees, but may qualify for certain benefits depending on their length of continuous service. Please contact the HRO for specific benefit details. A temporary employee may be separated at any time.

EMPLOYMENT TENURE GROUP - Tenure is the period of time you as an employee may reasonably expect to serve under your current appointment. It is granted and governed by the type of appointment under which you are currently serving. It is used to determine rank order in cases of reduction-in-force. There are four Excepted Service tenure groups: Tenure 0 (Temporary appointment), Tenure 1 (Permanent), Tenure 2 (Trial or Probationary Period), and Tenure 3 (Indefinite appointment). Usually the order of release would be employees with Tenure 0 before any others, then Tenure 3 employees before Tenure 2 employees, then Tenure 2 before Tenure 1.

TENURE GROUP 0 - If you are employed in a temporary status with a “Not to Exceed” date, you are placed in Tenure Group 0. As a Tenure Group 0 employee, you will not receive an advance written notice prior to your release from service. Also as a Tenure Group 0 employee, you do not have any appeal rights.

TENURE GROUP 1 - If you are employed in a permanent status, you are placed in Tenure Group 1. As a permanent employee, your appointment carries no restriction or condition such as conditional, indefinite, specific time limitation, or trial period.

TENURE GROUP 2 - If you are serving on a trial or probationary period, you are placed in Tenure Group 2. As a Tenure 2 employee, you must serve a 12-month trial period in which your job performance and conduct are monitored by your supervisor. Your supervisor will recommend your retention or non-retention before the end of your trial period. You can be released anytime during the trial or probationary period if your performance or conduct falls below the required expectations without the right to an appeal.

TENURE GROUP 3 - If you are employed as an indefinite employee, your appointment is normally expected to last more than one year. As an indefinite employee, you are placed in

Tenure Group 3. As such, you must receive a 30-day written notice prior to your separation/release.

Chapter 3

OFFICIAL PERSONNEL RECORDS

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

Supervisors are required to maintain an employee work-folder and NGB Form 904 or an automated employee brief. This folder may be reviewed at any time by the technician.

Technicians are furnished copies of all Standard Form 50s (Notification of Personnel Action). You are strongly encouraged to maintain these SF 50s together with other personal documents such as your job application and resume.

Chapter 4

PAY ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL INFORMATION - Technicians are paid bi-weekly via electronic funds transfer (EFT). Allotments may be deducted from your pay for the following purposes:

- Charitable institutions such as the Combined Federal Campaign
- Savings bonds
- Allotments to financial institutions
- Union dues

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. You may view your LES online with the Defense Finance “MY PAY” system. Check with the HRO, or your supervisor, on how to obtain access to MY PAY. If after reviewing your LES you find an error, or you have questions about the information, such as incorrect earnings, leave accumulation, taxes or other listings, you should contact the HRO immediately for assistance. MY PAY can be accessed at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>.

PREMIUM PAY - Premium pay is additional pay, when authorized in advance for holiday work.

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.

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.

PAY ADJUSTMENTS - Pay increases are granted upon receipt of revised pay schedules. Pay tables are published on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) web site at <http://opm.gov/oca/>.

WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES - Within-grade increases (WGI) are granted based on length of service and outstanding performance. Length of service waiting periods for within-grade increases are as follows:

FEDERAL WAGE SYSTEM EMPLOYEES - Temporary, indefinite and permanent Federal Wage System employees are eligible for a WGI the pay period following completion of the required waiting period provided performance is fully acceptable and no equivalent increase was received during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

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

GENERAL SCHEDULE EMPLOYEES - Only indefinite and permanent General Schedule employees are eligible for a WGI. A WGI 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 during the waiting period. Waiting periods to the following steps are:

- Steps 2, 3 and 4 - 52 calendar weeks of creditable service.
- Steps 5, 6 and 7 - 104 calendar weeks of creditable service.
- Steps 8, 9 and 10 - 156 calendar weeks of creditable service.

***Note - Excess time in a personal (non-military related) Leave Without Pay status may result in a delay of the WGI. Contact the HRO for additional information.**

SEVERANCE PAY - Indefinite and permanent technicians who have been employed for at least 12 months may be eligible for severance pay if separated involuntarily provided they are

eligible for an immediate annuity and weren't separated for cause. The total amount of severance pay that can be paid to an employee is limited to 52 weeks. Check with the HRO to determine your eligibility.

Chapter 5

HOURS OF DUTY

The technician workweek varies depending on the unit of assignment. In general, you are required to work 80 hours in a two-week pay period. See your supervisor for your work schedule.

Chapter 6

ABSENCE AND LEAVE

ANNUAL LEAVE - As an employee of the Federal government, you are eligible for authorized absences from work without loss of pay for vacations, maternity/paternity and other emergency or personal situations. Except in emergencies, you must obtain your supervisor's advanced approval so your leave time and work responsibilities are coordinated to ensure orderly office operations and completion of assignments. Full-time Technicians accrue annual leave as follows:

Years of Service	Annual Leave per Pay Period
Less than 3 years	4 hours
3 years but less than 15 years	6 hours
15 years of more	8 hours

***Note - If you are serving on a temporary appointment, you are not entitled to accrue annual leave until your appointment is extended beyond the 90 days.**

A technician may carry over no more than 240 hours of annual leave to the next leave year. Technicians are required to schedule and are expected to utilize any leave over 240 hours. Annual leave in excess of 240 hours may be restored. Please contact the HRO Employee Relations Specialist representative for detailed information regarding Restoration of Annual Leave.

ADVANCEMENT OF ANNUAL LEAVE - Under certain circumstances, you may be granted annual leave hours before you have actually earned them. Annual leave can be advanced up to the amount you can be expected to accrue by the end of the leave year. If you are retiring or separating from federal service, the amount of annual leave you will earn prior to the

anticipated date of retirement or date of separation may be advanced. Requests for the advancement of annual leave must be initiated on an OPM Form 71 (Request for Leave) and approved through your immediate supervisor and forwarded to the HRO. Employees do not have an entitlement to advanced annual leave.

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, for bereavement purposes, or to care for an ill family member (please consult the HRO concerning using sick leave to care for a family member). It is the technician's responsibility to notify his/her supervisor as soon as possible regarding the necessity to use sick leave.

ADVANCEMENT OF SICK LEAVE - In certain circumstances, up to 240 hours of advanced sick leave may be advanced to a technician. When sick leave is advanced, it must be supported by medical documentation describing the illness or injury and the anticipated duration of the disability. Requests for the advancement of sick leave must be initiated on an OPM Form 71 (Request for Leave) and approved through your immediate supervisor and forwarded to the HRO. Employees do not have an entitlement to advanced sick leave.

INTERMITTENT USE OF LEAVE - In accordance with 5 CFR 353.208 (Use of Paid Leave During Uniformed Service), you are authorized, while on active duty or inactive duty training, to use annual leave or military leave intermittently with leave without pay each pay period. Please contact the HRO to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using intermittent leave.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA) - 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). This Act allows technicians to use up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12 month period for the birth and care of a child, making arrangements for adoption or foster care, the care of a spouse, son, daughter or parent with a serious health condition, or a serious health condition that makes the technician unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position. 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.

LEAVE TRANSFER PROGRAM - 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 available leave to be eligible for the leave transfer program. Technicians may not donate sick leave. Requests to become a donated leave recipient must be initiated and approved through your immediate supervisor and forwarded to the HRO. If you wish to donate leave contact your supervisor or the HRO.

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.

MILITARY LEAVE - Military leave is authorized for permanent and indefinite technicians. Eligible technicians are authorized 120 hours of Military Leave each fiscal year 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.

22 DAY LEAVE - Eligible technicians are authorized up to 22 days of 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 when mobilized under contingency orders. This is **NOT** a dual compensation benefit. You will receive the greater of your Civilian or Military pay. The appropriate pay section will accomplish collection of the lesser amount.

44 DAY LEAVE - Technicians are authorized 44 workdays of military leave in a calendar year for employees participating in operations outside the United States and its territories. Technicians are placed on active duty orders without pay and receive a retirement point for each day on active duty. The technician continues to receive his/her technician salary.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP) - Based upon your written request, you may, at the discretion of the supervisor, 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 your technician status and benefits pending actions of disability retirement or injury compensation claims. LWOP may be granted whether or not you have annual or sick leave to your credit. LWOP in excess of 30 days must be approved by the Human Resources Office and will be granted only in special circumstances.

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 the federal, state or local government. If a technician serves as a witness in a non-official capacity on behalf of a private party, they must be in an appropriate leave status.

EXCUSED ABSENCES - An excused absence is absence from duty, administratively approved, without loss of pay and without charge to leave. This absence may be granted in limited circumstances that are directly related to the mission of, or involve activities officially sanctioned by the National Guard. Examples include voting, blood donation (NTE 4 hours), and certain conferences and conventions. Please contact the HRO for specific policy concerning excused absences.

5 DAYS EXCUSED ABSENCE FOR RETURNING ACTIVATED MILITARY EMPLOYEES - If you were activated for military service in connection with Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or any other military operation

subsequently established under Executive Order 13223, then you are entitled to 5 work days of excused absence without charge to leave. Please call the HRO for complete details.

ADVERSE WEATHER DISMISSALS - When The Adjutant General or delegated representative authorizes the closure of a facility because of weather conditions or emergency situations, your supervisor will advise you if you will be required to report to work, and or if you will be authorized to depart your duty location. Key essential personnel may be required to report for duty or remain on station.

ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE (AWOL) - If you are absent from work without authorized leave approved by your supervisor, you are Absent Without Leave (AWOL) and in a non-pay status. An AWOL charge may result in disciplinary action to include termination.

Chapter 7

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION - Performance plans consist of elements and standards. A job standard is defined for each element. You should receive a copy of your performance plan no later than 30 calendar days after placement in a position. Elements define what kind of work you will be expected to perform, and the standards describe how well you must perform to meet certain levels of expectation. The performance plan defines critical and non-critical elements for your job. A critical element is defined as a component of a position consisting of one or more duties and responsibilities that contribute towards accomplishing organizational goals. Unacceptable performance in any critical element will result in an unacceptable rating.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS - At least once a year, your supervisor will rate your performance on the job. You must have been working under the performance elements and standards for at least 120 calendar days to receive a rating.

PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK - Employees can expect formal performance feedback sessions from their supervisor at least semi-annually. These feedback sessions give the supervisor and employee an opportunity to discuss job performance during the rating period and may be used as supporting documentation for the final appraisal.

UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE - If at any time during the rating period a technician's performance is determined to be unacceptable in one or more critical elements, 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 opportunity (normally 60 to 90 calendar days) to show acceptable performance. 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.

APPEALS - Technicians may file an appeal if they are dissatisfied with their performance appraisal. The appeals process is defined in agency policy. Please contact the HRO for additional details.

Chapter 8

AWARDS

The Awards Program is designed to improve operations and services. Its purpose is to motivate increased 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. The Awards Program is defined in agency policy. Please contact the HRO for additional details.

CASH AWARD - Sustained Superior Performance (SSP), on-the-spot, or a one time special act or service may be recognized with a cash award. This is a single payment that does not change your rate of pay.

QUALITY STEP INCREASE - A Quality Step Increase (QSI) is recognition in the form of a one-step increase in a General Schedule technician's rate of basic pay. A QSI is available to technicians based on sustained high-quality performance expected to continue in the future.

TIME-OFF AWARD - This award grants an excused absence to a technician without charge to leave or loss of pay. Time-off awards are intended to increase productivity and creativity by rewarding contributions to the quality, efficiency, or economy of government operations. The amount of time off that may be awarded to part-time or intermittent technicians is based on the average number of hours worked.

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.

LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD - Technicians are awarded certificates and pins as they reach milestones in Federal Service (5-year increments after 10 years creditable service).

Chapter 9

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (FEGLI)

ELIGIBILITY - All permanent and indefinite technicians with regularly scheduled tours of duty are eligible to enroll in the FEGLI. 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 (QLE). Some examples of a QLE are marriage, divorce or the birth/adoption of a child. Temporary NTE 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.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY 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.

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. A copy of the Handbook can be found at <http://opm.gov/insure/life/>.

Chapter 10

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM (FEHB)

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. Health plans provide varying benefits at varying 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 QLE to enroll.

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. The program offers virtually immediate coverage by taking effect on the first day of the pay period that begins after the HRO receives your completed application.

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 less than 22 years of age (unless the child is determined to be disabled prior to their 18th birthday).

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.

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 the 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.

CHOICE OF PLANS AND OPTIONS

Fee-For-Service Plans - These plans reimburse you or the health care provider for covered services. If you enroll in one of these plans, you may choose your own physician, hospital, and other health care providers.

Pre-paid Plans - These are Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) that provide or arrange for health care by designated plan physicians, hospitals, and other providers in particular locations.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP) STATUS - A technician in Leave Without Pay status may continue FEHB coverage for a limited period. If the period of LWOP status is more than 30 days, you must contact the HRO prior to commencement for specific costs and length of coverage. See Chapter 12 for additional details concerning FEHB coverage while deployed.

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 misconduct). TCC can continue your 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 the HRO for additional information.

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.

Chapter 11

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PROGRAMS

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS (FSA) - This is a tax-favored program to set 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. You must enroll 60 days from your date of appointment or during an open season each year (mid-November through mid-December). Permissible changes are based on qualified status changes (marriage, children, employment, residence, dependents eligibility, etc). Individuals in LWOP-US status may also cancel coverage. The FSA is administered through a third party contractor. For additional information visit www.fsafeds.com.

HIGH DEDUCTIBLE HEALTH PLANS (HDHP), HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (HSA) and HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT ARRANGEMENTS (HRA) - A High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA) or a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) provides traditional medical coverage and a tax free way to help you build savings for future medical expenses. The HDHP/HSA or HRA gives you greater flexibility and discretion over how you use your health care benefits. For additional information visit <http://opm.gov/hsa/index.asp>.

FEDERAL LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE PROGRAM (FLTCIP) - The FLTCIP is insurance to cover care needed to perform daily activities if the employee is 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 administered through a third party contractor. For more information visit www.ltcfeds.com.

Chapter 12

UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT (USERRA)

GENERAL INFORMATION - Restoration rights are provided for National Guard technicians who leave technician employment to serve on active duty or on active duty for training in the Armed Forces. The Human Resources Office must be contacted prior to your entrance on active duty to schedule an out-processing briefing. Civilian Federal employees who are members of the Uniformed Services and are called to active duty (or volunteer for active duty or full-time National Guard duty) are entitled to the following rights and benefits:

PAY - While you are performing active military duty, you will receive compensation from the Armed Forces in accordance with the terms and conditions of your military enlistment or commission. You will not receive any compensation from your civilian-employing agency

unless you elect to use military leave and/or annual leave as described in the next two paragraphs below.

MILITARY LEAVE - If you perform active military duty, you may request paid military leave, as specified in 5 U.S.C. 6323(a). Under the law, an eligible full-time employee accrues 120 hours of military leave each fiscal year. A fact sheet on military leave can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/military.HTM> and a Frequently Asked Question on Military Leave at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/LEAVE/HTML/MILQA.asp>.

ANNUAL LEAVE - While on active military duty, you may request the use of accrued and accumulated annual leave (under 5 U.S.C. 6303 and 6304), and such requests must be granted by the agency. In addition, requests for advanced annual leave may be granted at the agency's discretion. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/ANNUAL.HTM> for additional information on annual leave.

If you use annual leave, you will receive compensation from your civilian position for all hours charged to annual leave in addition to your military pay for the same period. When you enter into active military duty, you may choose to either have your annual leave remain to your credit until you return to your civilian position, or receive a lump-sum payment for all accrued and accumulated annual leave. See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/lumpsum.htm> for additional information on lump-sum payments for annual leave.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY (LWOP-US) - The USERRA generally requires an agency to place an employee entering an active military duty period on LWOP unless you choose to be placed on military leave or annual leave, as appropriate, or you request to be separated.

HEALTH BENEFITS - If you are placed in a LWOP status or separated while on military duty for more than 30 days and your duty is in support of a contingency operation, you may retain your FEHB coverage for up to 18 months from the date the absence to serve on military duty begins. For further information on FEHB coverage see <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/eligibility/reservists.asp> and Frequently Asked Questions About FEHB for Federal Civilian Employees Called to Active Duty Service at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/qa/reservists.asp>. Please ensure that you contact the HRO before your military duty begins to discuss the specific options concerning your FEHB.

LIFE INSURANCE - If you are placed in a LWOP status while on military duty, you may retain your FEGLI coverage free of charge for up to 12 months. At the end of 12 months in a LWOP status, the coverage terminates and you will obtain a free 31-day extension of coverage and have the right to convert to a nongroup policy. For more information on life insurance benefits see <http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/calledup.asp> and <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm>.

RETIREMENT - An employee who is placed in a LWOP status while performing active military duty continues to be covered by their applicable Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Death benefits will be paid as if you were still in the civilian position. If you become disabled for your civilian position during

the LWOP and have the minimum amount of civilian service necessary for disability benefits (5 years for CSRS, 18 months for FERS), you will become entitled to disability benefits under the retirement law. Upon eventual retirement from civilian service, the period of military service is creditable under either CSRS or FERS, subject to the rules for crediting military service.

If you separate to enter active military duty, you generally will receive retirement credit for the period of separation when you exercise restoration rights to your civilian position. If you do not exercise your restoration right, but later re-enter Federal civilian service, the military service may be credited under the retirement system, subject to the rules governing credit for military service.

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP) - No contributions can be made into your TSP Account, either by the agency or by you, for any time in a LWOP status or for a period of separation. If you are subsequently reemployed in, or restored to, a position covered by FERS or CSRS pursuant to 38 U.S.C. Chapter 43, you may make up missed contributions. FERS employees are entitled to receive retroactive Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and, if you make up your own contributions then you will receive, retroactive Agency Matching Contributions.

Also, if FERS employees separate and their Agency Automatic (1 percent) Contributions and associated earnings are forfeited because you did not meet the TSP vesting requirement, you are entitled to have these funds restored to your accounts after you are reemployed. In addition, if you separate and your accounts are disbursed as automatic cash outs, you may return to the TSP an amount equal to the full amount of the payment after you are reemployed. For additional information see the TSP Fact Sheet - "Benefits that Apply to Members of the Military Who Return to Federal Civilian Service" at <http://www.tsp.gov/forms/index-factsheets.html>. Please ensure that you contact the HRO before your military duty begins to discuss the specific options concerning your TSP.

RETURN TO CIVILIAN DUTY - If you entered a period of active military duty (voluntarily or involuntarily) from any position, including a temporary position, you have full job protection, provided you apply for reemployment (return to duty or restoration) within the following time limits:

(A) If you served less than 31 days, you must return to work at the beginning of the next scheduled workday following your release from service and the expiration of 8 hours after a time for safe transportation to your residence.

(B) If you served more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, you must apply for reemployment within 14 days of release by the military.

(C) If you served more than 180 days, you have 90 days to apply for reemployment.

Employees who served 90 days or less must be restored to the position for which qualified that they would have attained had their employment not been interrupted. Employees

who served more than 91 days have essentially the same rights, except the agency has the option of placing an employee in a position for which qualified of like seniority, status, and pay.

Upon return or restoration, you generally are entitled to be treated as though you had never left for purposes of rights and benefits based upon length of service. This means you must be considered for career ladder promotions, and the time spent in the military will be credited for seniority, successive within-grade increases, probation, career tenure, annual leave accrual rate, and severance pay. If you were on a temporary appointment, you must serve out the remaining time, if any, left on the appointment. (The military activation period does not extend the civilian appointment).

If you are performing active military duty, you are protected from reduction in force (RIF) and may not be discharged from employment for a period of 1 year following separation (6 months in the case of a Reservist called to active duty under 10 U.S.C. 12304 for more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, or ordered to an initial period of active duty for training of not less than 12 consecutive weeks), except for poor performance or conduct or for suitability reasons.

APPEAL RIGHTS - National Guard technicians do not have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board a denial of reemployment rights by the Adjutant General. Technicians may file complaints with the appropriate district court in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 4323 (USERRA).

*You should contact the HRO for other USERRA rights not listed here.

Chapter 13

INJURY COMPENSATION

GENERAL INFORMATION - The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides compensation benefits for a permanent/temporary disability due to personal injury or disease sustained in the performance of duty. The Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP) administers FECA. OWCP provides grant income to employees who are unable to work due to injuries sustained on the job.

INJURED AT WORK - If injured at work, you must contact your supervisor immediately. Your supervisor will initiate the forms required to document your injury and submit your claim. No matter how small the injury may seem to you, it is important 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.

FALSE CLAIMS - If a technician files a false claim, he/she is subject to prosecution and if found guilty, could be fined or imprisoned. It is everyone's responsibility to report OWCP cases involving fraud, waste and abuse.

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

Chapter 14

RETIREMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION - The National Guard Technician Program consists of two retirement systems:

- Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)
- Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS)

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 provide the technician a measure of income protection in case of disability. Both retirement systems will provide for your family in case of death and 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 % is for the FERS retirement fund.

Please review The CSRS and FERS Handbook, Chapter 40, for it provides information on various time frames for planning your retirement. The handbook is located at www.opm.gov/asd/htm/hod.htm.

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:

Voluntary CSRS Retirement

- Age 62 with 5 years service, or
- Age 60 with 20 years service, or
- Age 55 with 30 years service

Involuntary CSRS Retirement - Involuntary Retirements occur if a technician loses military membership for reasons NOT related to misconduct or non-performance. When this occurs, and 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.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (FERS) - The FERS retirement is a three-tiered program including FERS, Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan. The rule of thumb 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".

Voluntary FERS Retirement

- Age 62 with 5 years of service, or
- Age 60 with 20 years of service, or
- *Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) with 30 years of service, or
- *MRA with 10 years of service (reduction of 5% per year for each year under age 62).
- *Your MRA is dependent on your birth year.

Involuntary FERS Retirement

To qualify for an involuntary annuity you must be:

- Age 50 with 20 years of service, or
- Any age with 25 years of service

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. You may also be eligible to receive a Special Retirement Supplement until you reach age 62 when you become eligible for Social Security benefits. Retirees may be eligible for the Priority Placement Program and should contact the HRO for additional information.

WITHDRAWALS UPON SEPARATION - If you decide to leave technician service prior to retirement age, you can withdraw the entire amount 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. 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.

PRIOR FEDERAL SERVICE TIME - 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.

MILITARY DEPOSIT SERVICE - All honorable active duty military service is potentially creditable. CSRS technicians employed October 01, 1982 or later and FERS Technicians will not receive credit for their military service unless a deposit is made.

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

CSRS - a deposit of 7% of military taxable earnings is required to receive credit for civilian retirement purpose.

Technicians covered by CSRS **prior** to October 1, 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.

INTEREST ACCRUAL DATE - No interest is charged if the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) receives the deposit prior to your third anniversary 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.

Chapter 15

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN (TSP)

GENERAL INFORMATION - The Thrift Savings Plan is a retirement savings plan for FERS and CSRS employees. FERS technicians must consider the TSP as a major component of their retirement and are strongly encouraged to maximize this benefit. Because your TSP account is a tax-deferred account, you cannot withdraw it until you leave federal service except in instances of extreme hardship or upon reaching age 59 1/2. An advantage of the TSP is that you pay no taxes on contributions or earnings until you withdraw your account.

You are normally eligible to participate in the TSP beginning the first day of the pay period following receipt of your TSP election form (TSP-1) by the HRO. For FERS technicians the government automatically contributes the equivalent of 1% of your salary to your TSP account beginning the first pay period during the second open season 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 up to 3% of your salary, and will contribute 50 cents on the dollar for the next 2%. Government contributions stop at 5%. 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.

WITHDRAWAL FROM YOUR TSP ACCOUNT - The purpose of the TSP is to provide you with a source of income for your retirement. It is not a savings account that can be withdrawn at any time. If you think you may need your money in the near future, or if you do not have other funds saved for emergencies, you will want to consider your other needs carefully before deciding how much to contribute to the TSP. However, while you are still employed by the Federal Government, the TSP loan program can provide you access to funds you have contributed to your account. In addition, participants who are age 59 1/2 or older can make a one-time withdrawal from their TSP accounts while they are in Federal service. For more information on withdrawals and on loans visit TSP website at www.tsp.gov or contact the HRO. You may withdraw from your TSP account upon separation from federal service. However, if you withdraw funds from your TSP account, you may be subject to an early withdrawal penalty and the funds received will be considered taxable income.

Chapter 16

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

All National Guard technicians are subject to the basic political activity restrictions of the 1993 Hatch Act. Some guidelines under this law are:

WHAT THE TECHNICIANS MAY DO (BUT NOT IN UNIFORM!)

- Technicians may participate in non-partisan activities and in public affairs so long as participation does not affect the efficiency or integrity of the National Guard.
- Technicians may participate in the activities of a political party.
- Technicians may serve as delegates to a party convention and attend nominating caucuses.
- Technicians may display articles associated with political parties, circulate nominating petitions, canvass for votes and manage partisan campaigns.
- Technicians may display bumper stickers on private automobiles even though they are parked in government parking lots.
- Technicians may register to vote, act as poll watchers, election judges or provide other election assistance to partisan elections.
- Technicians may run as candidates in non-partisan campaigns or as independents.
- Technicians may contribute to partisan campaigns on non-duty time.
- Technicians may attend fundraisers, give speeches, stuff envelopes and organize mail or conduct telephone solicitations.

WHAT TECHNICIANS MAY NOT DO

- Technicians may not participate in political activities while on duty or wearing a uniform, badge, insignia, or other similar item that identifies the National Guard or the technician's position.
- Technicians may not participate in political activities while on duty.
- Technicians may not allow their official title to be used in conjunction with political fundraising activities.
- Technicians may not solicit subordinates to contribute time, money or services for any activity.
- Technicians may not participate in political activities while in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties by an individual employed by the Federal Government.
- Technicians may not participate in political activities 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.
- Technicians may not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election.

There are exceptions for non-partisan elections. Check with the HRO for additional guidance.

Chapter 17

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

All technicians are required to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity and to conduct business in an ethical manner. You are required to perform your assigned duties conscientiously and 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. You will receive an annual Standards of Conduct briefing from your supervisor. It is not the intent of this publication to list every restriction or requirement imposed by law, regulation or other proper authorities. Some of the prohibited acts that can result in disciplinary action are:

- Using a government vehicle without authorization or for other than official purposes
- Misusing official and/or classified information
- Gambling and betting on duty
- Misusing government property such as, supplies, personal computers, telephones, or fax equipment
- Using a government-issued travel card for personal use or not satisfying your indebtedness
- Refusing to testify or cooperate in an administrative investigation
- Accepting gifts and favors from subordinates or customers
- Filing fraudulent claims
- Using illegal drugs, alcohol or intoxicants while on duty
- Misusing government postage/mail
- Making false statements
- Engaging in illegal political activity
- Using obscene or vulgar language
- Accepting outside employment that conflicts with your technician duties or discredits the National Guard

Your actions must never discredit the National Guard, whether you are on or off duty.

Chapter 18

DISCIPLINE AND ADVERSE ACTION

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS - A disciplinary action may be an action from an oral admonishment to a letter of reprimand. An oral admonishment lets you know you must stop certain behavior or conduct. 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 of reprimand is temporarily maintained in the technician's Official Personnel Folder in the Human Resources Office for a period determined by the supervisor. This period is usually for one to three years. Letters of reprimand may be grieved through the negotiated grievance procedure for bargaining unit technicians and through the agency grievance procedure for non-bargaining unit technicians.

ADVERSE ACTIONS - There are three types of adverse actions:

- Suspension from work without pay
- Change to lower grade
- Removal from the technician program

Considerable due process measures exist 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.

APPEAL AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES - There are specific appeal and grievance procedures outlined in agency policy and labor-management contracts. Copies can be obtained from the HRO.

Chapter 19

VOLUNTARY SEPARATION FROM THE TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

This is a voluntary action and written notice should be given to your supervisor at the earliest possible date. Resignations should be in writing, preferably on a signed Request for Personnel Action (SF 52) to include your reason for resigning and your forwarding address. Contact the HRO prior to your separation for information regarding your benefits.

Chapter 20

LIFE EVENTS

CHANGE IN FAMILY STATUS - It is imperative if you have any change in family status such as marriage, birth/adoption of a child, divorce, or death of a family member, to contact the HRO for assistance and updating your personnel records.

SURVIVOR BENEFITS - Death often occurs when least expected. You should have your personal affairs in order and keep your family informed regarding your benefits and entitlements. In the event of your death, a representative from the HRO will assist your family in filing a death claim.

DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY - You do not need to prepare a designation of beneficiary form unless you wish to designate your beneficiaries other than “by-law”. If you do designate beneficiaries, you must keep your designations current because once a designation has been made, it overrides a will or any other legal document. Benefits paid are:

- Unpaid wages
- Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance
- Thrift Savings
- Retirement annuity or refund of contributions

Chapter 21

CLASSIFICATION

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 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 HRO and are available for your review.

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 occur as a result of a classification appeal:

1. The position can be upgraded
2. The position can retain the present grade level
3. The 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.

Chapter 22

MERIT PROMOTION AND PLACEMENT

Promotions in the National Guard Technician Program are based on a system of merit. Vacant positions are announced with the required experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) stated in the vacancy announcement. Applications are invited from all interested eligible applicants. Basic qualifications are determined and applicants are then evaluated according to the degree to which they meet each of the KSA's and other merit requirements. A list of qualified applicants is then presented to the Selecting Official for selection.

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

Chapter 23

REDUCTION-IN-FORCE

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 Congress, the President, 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. Whatever the source, officials of the agency must decide what parts and programs to reduce and how to distribute the remaining resources.

Before a RIF is conducted, the agency must describe the organizational and geographic limits within which employees will compete for retention of their jobs. This is called the competitive area. The second limit is by grade and occupation. This is called the competitive level. Each competitive level consists of all positions in a competitive area in the same grade and series and similar enough in duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules and working conditions so the incumbent of one position could successfully perform the critical elements of any other position in the length of time it would take to orient any new but fully qualified employee.

The names of all employees in a competitive level are listed on a retention register in the order of their relative standing. Relative standing is determined by management and agency policy. RIF regulations are very complex. The information provided in this handbook is intended to give you only the most basic understanding. Consult the HRO for complete RIF regulations.

Chapter 24

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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 training is a responsibility of the government and training is necessary and desirable. Once you are employed, you will receive the 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 DD Form 1556 (Training Application).

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.

Chapter 25

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

In the National Guard Technician Program, employees of individual units may elect to form or join a labor organization. They may also decide to refrain from such activity. If a labor union has been recognized as the exclusive representative at a unit's location, the bargaining unit (labor union) consists of all technicians who are not supervisors, confidential management assistants, investigators, auditors, and in some cases, personnelists. Technicians may represent the labor union and present its views to management or Congress without penalty or reprisal.

The Adjutant General and the labor union(s) have a collective bargaining agreement (labor contract) which is available through the HRO or local labor union representatives. A list of labor union stewards should be posted on bulletin boards at each work location. You can obtain applications to join the labor union from any steward or labor union official. Nothing requires a technician to become or remain a member of a labor union.

Chapter 26

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO)

It is National Guard 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 condoned. Management officials will take immediate and appropriate action to correct any occurrence of discrimination or sexual harassment.

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

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.

Should you have questions concerning the Equal Employment Opportunity Program or the complaint process, please contact the State Equal Employment Manager within the HRO.

Chapter 27

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program is a referral program that assists any technician who has behavioral problems that affect work performance. This assistance is provided through discrete and confidential referral of technicians to appropriate treatment specialists. Some problems commonly dealt with through the EAP include, alcohol and drug abuse, behavioral disorders, excessive stress from adverse family situations, financial difficulty, legal entanglement or other personal problems that interfere with job performance or health.

While your supervisor or manager is never to be in the role of your diagnostician or counselor, he or she may suggest you consider the EAP when less than satisfactory job performance or conduct exists. Factors that may indicate the need for referral include, assignment failures, excessive absenteeism or tardiness, unexcused absences, deteriorating personal appearance, altercation with fellow technicians, prolonged lunch hours, frequent disappearances, poor judgment or attitude, moodiness or anxiety. **Participation in the EAP will be in strict confidence and will not jeopardize your job. Records relating to treatment will not be placed in any work folder without your permission.**

Also remember, our agency can be very helpful to you and your family in coping with the stress and disruption associated with your call to active military duty. If you are affected by deployment, you should notify the State Family Readiness Program or Wing Family Program to learn what programs are available to you and your family.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE - The use of illegal drugs and excessive use of alcohol are incompatible with membership in the National Guard. Use of illegal drugs and

excessive use of alcohol adversely affect our every day job performance, combat readiness, health, safety and morale. If you have a problem with alcohol or drugs, please contact your local EAP counselor for professional assistance.

Chapter 28

MISCELLANEOUS

PHYSICAL FITNESS - Technicians may be granted authorized absences 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. Participation in a physical fitness program is a privilege, and may be curtailed by your supervisor if abused or as necessary for mission accomplishment.

SMOKING POLICY - The National Guard smoking policy prohibits smoking in all National Guard buildings and work areas. This includes, but is not limited to, private offices, hallways, auditoriums, conference rooms, restrooms and supply rooms. Smoking is also prohibited in government vehicles. Smoking is allowed only in designated smoking areas.

SAFETY/HEALTH - It is the goal of the National Guard to provide you and your fellow employees a safe workplace. Safety equipment is provided and must be utilized as required. Unsafe conditions must be immediately reported to your supervisor or the Safety Office.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWOL	Absence With Out Leave
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CSRS	Civil Service Retirement System
DFAS	Defense Finance and Accounting System
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EDP	Environmental Differential Pay
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFT	Electronic Funds Transfer
FECA	Federal Employees' Compensation Act
FEGLI	Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance
FEHB	Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program
FERS	Federal Employees' Retirement System
FLTCIP	Federal Long Term Care Insurance Plan
FMLA	Family and Medical Leave Act
FSA	Flexible Spending Account
GS	General Schedule
HDHP	High Deductible Health Plan
HDP	Hazardous Duty Pay
HMO	Health Maintenance Organization
HRA	Health Reimbursement Arrangement
HRO	Human Resources Office
HSA	Health Saving Account
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IDT	Inactive Duty Training
KSA	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
LES	Leave and Earnings Statement
LWOP	Leave Without Pay
LWOP-US	Leave Without Pay (Military)
MRA	Minimum Retirement Age
NTE	Not To Exceed
NDS	Non Duty Status
OPF	Official Personnel Folder
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OWCP	Office of Workers' Compensation Program
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
QLE	Quality Life Event
QSI	Quality Step Increase
RIF	Reduction-in-Force
SSP	Sustained Superior Performance
TCC	Temporary Continuation of Coverage
TDY	Temporary Duty
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
USC	United States Code
USERRA	Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
WG	Wage Grade (Hourly Pay)
WGI	Within-Grade Increase