



GIPSA *NEWS*



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GRAIN
INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS
ADMINISTRATION

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FGIS Matters....!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

On October 12, 2012, I had the pleasure of dedicating the newly renovated National Grain Center (NGC) in Kansas City, Missouri. Current and former employees joined representatives from our official inspection partners, commodity groups and the grain handling industry to dedicate our newly renovated laboratories and training facilities at the NGC. **Mary Coffey Alonzo**, Director of the Technology and Science Division (TSD) and I were joined by several former Directors of the TSD, **John Sharpe**, **Steve Tanner**, **Don Kendall**, **Les Malone**, and **Dave Funk** in celebrating this achievement that was the result of many years of vision and dedication. Project Manager **Bill Burden** was recognized as well for his work these past six years supporting the project and seeing it through to completion.



Current and former employees at the newly renovated National Grain Center. Front row from left to right: Dave Funk, Don Kendall, John Sharpe, Randall Jones, Steve Tanner, Les Malone, and Mary Alonzo

The NGC embodies the vision for a modern FGIS which embraces the idea of a cutting-edge Center of Excellence that provides efficient, quality service. The renovated and expanded center ensures that our hard working employees have the latest safety measures, technology and efficient workspaces available as they conduct advanced testing and set the gold standard for the tools, equipment and processes used for grain inspection and weighing.

For many years we have envisioned a leaner, more efficient FGIS organization. Creation of the NGC for centralization of services allowed that vision to occur. The synergy that has been gained with centralization will allow us to reap benefits for many years to come. At the NGC representatives of the Technology and Science Division work daily in collaboration with members of the Field Management Divi-

*Continued, see **FGIS Matters....!** on page 2.*

FGIS Matters...!, *from cover page*

sion, the Domestic Inspection Operations Office, the Quality Assurance and Compliance Division and Information Technology staff. It provides a hub in the grain heartland that allows us to bring together staff and stakeholders for training, education, and collaboration. The NGC is also visited by many international teams from across the world. When we think about those that we serve, the buyers of grain see a value in the certificate that goes along with the U.S. product being marketed. Visitors also gain confidence in the integrity of the science behind that certificate when they visit our facilities. The NGC is an example of the quality and integrity of our service through the pride we take in our workspace.

A cross-organizational team of employees at the NGC was formed to determine a design theme for the center. The team, which included **Anita Heckenbach, Mary Vick, Pat Jackson, Tandace Bell, Rangaswamy Chinnaswamy, Shane Rumsey, Matt Jung, and Ruth Goff** decided on a theme that recognizes the history of the work we all do and that celebrates the history of the agency and agriculture in general. As I toured the center and viewed the photographs and displays the team created I was reminded of what brings us all together – a love of agriculture and a commitment to USDA and to our stakeholders. Many of us have spent our whole lives in agriculture; we grew up on farms, we went on to further our education in agriculture, some of us went back to farms, but many of us decided to serve agriculture in other ways and joined USDA service organizations. I am proud to be a part of this organization that we call FGIS and support U.S. agricultural producers, farmers, handlers, and all of U.S. agriculture.

Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!

Names in the News

Retirements

Wanda Pittman, Agricultural Commodity Technician, retired on October 1, 2012, with 33 ½ years of federal service. Wanda currently resides in LaPlace, Louisiana, and has spent most of her life in the St. James and St. John Parishes of Louisiana where she attended and graduated from a local High School.

Wanda began her career with the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) in February 1979 as an Agricultural Commodity Aid, in the Litcher, Louisiana Field Office and advanced to her current position of an Agricultural Commodity Technician, in March 1997, in the New Orleans Field Office. She served most of that time period performing sampling, weighing, mycotoxin analyst, I.P. observer, dispatcher and other duties necessary for domestic and export services to the grain industry. Most recently, Wanda has provided valuable assistance with our field office training, employee physicals, orientation and other field based programs. In her retirement, Wanda plans to relax and enjoy spending time with family and friends.

Personnel

Brian Burk, Senior Auditor, was selected to serve as the Resident Agent Supervisor – RA North, Western Regional Office, Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP), effective September 9, 2012. Mr. Burk started with P&SP in March 1990 and worked out of the Omaha, Nebraska, office as an auditor until he was transferred to the Denver Regional Office in June 1992. Mr. Burk was promoted to the position of Senior Auditor in April 2000. From March 2001 through April 2002, Mr. Burk performed the duties of Acting Financial Unit Supervisor. Mr. Burk also performed the duties of Acting Resident Agent Supervisor from May 2005 through July 2005.

A native of Omaha, Nebraska, Burk holds a B.S.B.A. in Accounting with a minor in Management Information Systems from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Mr. Burk currently holds an active CPA certificate for the State of Colorado. Brian completed the Executive Potential Program in 2006.

The New Orleans Field Office (NOLA) would like to welcome seven new Intermittent Agricultural Commodity Technicians: **Joshua Dumont, Adriana Dantin, Alvin Sumler III, India Stewart, Briana Causey, James Jarosz, and Jason Delaney.** **Melvin Holmes** is also joining the NOLA Field office as an Agricultural Commodity Grader (ACG) Intermittent. Melvin recently retired from the oil industry where we spent most of his career after leaving the federal service as an ACG from the old Litcher, Louisiana Field Office in the early 1980's.

A Shout-Out Goes to...

- ⇒ An appreciative and grateful shout-out goes to all GIPSA employees who provided valuable assistance, participated in meetings, searched for, and provided records in response to FY 2012 Freedom of Information Act requests. GIPSA's FOIA program would not be successful if not for extraordinary team players and YOUR immeasurable efforts!
- ⇒ A special shout-out goes to **Terri Henry** for her valuable assistance in drafting GIPSA's Internal Control Program directive.
- ⇒ A hard-working shout-out goes to **John Rollins, Herple Ellis, Twala Fair,** and **Pamela Lake** of the Eastern Regional Office for their superb work in quickly locating and in providing voluminous documents in response to a FOIA request. Their awesome teamwork and dedication is truly appreciated.
- ⇒ A diligent shout-out goes to **Gary McBryde** of headquarters; **Ryan Montgomery** of the Western Regional Office; and to **Bryce Wilke, Stuart Frank, William Arce, Greg Andrews, Kevin Studer,** and **Ralph Bierlen** of the Midwestern Regional Office for their diligent work in locating and in providing numerous documents in response to a journalist's FOIA request.
- ⇒ A healthy shout-out goes to **Amber McDonald-Lake** for the monthly articles "For Your Health". Happiness is link to having good health. I have enjoyed reading the health articles because they give practical suggestions in the area of health, nutrition and posture. The article that I really benefit from was "Ten Tips to Improve Posture and Ergonomics" because most of our day is sitting and improper sitting can lead to health issues. Amber, thanks for the healthy reminder.
- ⇒ A delicious shout-out goes to all participants of the CFC DC Chili Cook-Off! Thanks to **Larry Mitchell, Amy Blechinger, Brett Offutt, Dexter Thomas, Stephanie Brown, Jennifer Hill,** and **Tyisha Luckey**. Congratulations to the winners **Ty** (cornbread) and **Brett** (chilli)!



Ty Luckey, Larry Mitchell, and Brett Offutt



Participants of the Spanish Lesson Fiesta celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month!

- ⇒ A Spanish shout-out goes to all participants of the DC Spanish Lesson Fiesta! *Muchas gracias* to **Bob Lijewski, John Giler, Alan Christian, Ruth Ortiz, Regina Ware, Carl Jackson, Byron Reilly, Mark Kemp, Sherri Murphy, Morgan Arvaneh, Tammi Lindsey, Candace Hildreth, Ty Luckey, Pat Ogunyale, Rita Hansberry, Angela Emrich, Ed Chi, Andrew Greenfield, Ana Alvarado,** and **Linda Alston** for bravely rolling your "R"s!

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help?

Then let your voice be heard. Call the Civil Rights Staff at 202-720-0216

Combined Federal Campaign: The MRO Dairies

Jeani Plautz, Des Moines, IA

Bike Ride

The Midwestern Regional Office (MRO) of Packers and Stockyards Program participated in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Fun Day held on Friday, September, 21. The afternoon started with registration at the Federal Court House Annex where cyclists and runners had access to the 26 mile bike trail to Cumming, Iowa. The day ended at 4 pm with all the riders back at the annex to draw for prizes.

The idea for this fun and exciting bicycle ride originated from a comment made by **Gretchen VanWalbeek**, PSP Midwestern Regional Office, that it would be fun to have a bicycle ride for federal employees in September. From there the CFC committee jumped on board and the bike ride became a fund raiser for CFC. The fund raiser brought in more than \$350 from participants.

Gretchen's enthusiasm for the event motivated others into thinking how they could contribute. Federal employees from Ames and Des Moines volunteered to staff stops along the route. At the stops riders could pick up a snack and/or water and contribute a dollar or two to the fund raiser. Other individuals volunteered to bake goodies to be used as prizes while still others were inventive and made jewelry from old baseballs to be added to the treasure chest of prizes.

Everyone, cyclists, runners and volunteers, were very enthused about the CFC fund raiser and had many great ideas for next year's event. Volunteers and participants from the MRO included: **Greg Andrews**, **Bruce Gardner** and his daughter Kyla, **Gary May's** wife Kathy, **Kristi Pirtle**, **Jeani Plautz**, **Jekeia Robinson**, **Gretchen Van Walbeek** and her husband Cornie, and **Bryce Wilke**.



MRO cyclists with participants from other federal agencies.

Cookbook

Past and current employees including **Stuart Frank**, **Bruce Gardner**, **Gretchen VanWalbeek**, **Jeani Plautz**, **Kristi Pirtle**, **Agnes Flinn** and **Terry Taylor** contributed their favorite recipes to the CFC cookbook.

One of the very best recipes in the cookbook is an office favorite that Stuart has been bringing in for years. It is a recipe for sausage balls that every office needs for any "food day" and is the perfect way to start a food day.

Sausage Balls—recipe by Stuart Frank

- * 3 cups Bisquick baking mix
- * 1 lb. shredded cheddar cheese
- * 1 lb. hot sausage (e.g. Jimmy Dean)
- * Mix all the ingredients. Form into balls (golf ball size or smaller). Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.
- * You can save these in the refrigerator (prior to baking) for several days, and bake a few as you want them.

Is your mouth watering at the thought of all the favorite recipes available in the CFC cookbook? The Central Iowa Division – Northern Lights CFC still has books available. If you are interested in obtaining a \$10.00 cookbook you can email Jeani Plautz and she will make sure you receive it before the holidays.

Chili Cook-Off

The cookbook "sparked" the idea of a chili cook-off that was held at the Neil Smith Federal Building on Thursday, October 25. Many great chefs employed by the federal government participated and made their favorite chili. The lines were long but everyone was served and the votes were tallied to find the greatest chef in federal building. While our office didn't take the first prize, **Bruce Gardner** took 2nd place and **Gretchen VanWalbeek** took 3rd place. Congratulations to our wonderful chefs and their delicious chili. Our employees not only can make prize winning chili but also baked wonderful pies, cornbread, cookies, cupcakes, fudge, and "cake in a mug" and donated these items to the bake sale. Employees who participated in the chili cook off, worked serving chili and/or selling baked goods were: **Bruce Gardner**, **Gretchen VanWalbeek**, **Greg Andrews**, and my 4 year old grandson, Camron who also helped me bake cupcakes. Everybody had a great time!

Change Control Working Group: A Unique Opportunity!

Kari McPherson, Pierre, SD

The Packers and Stockyards Change Control Working Group (CCWG) appreciates all the great ideas and suggestions they receive in order to streamline work procedures. These ideas help promote efficiency within the Agency.

An excellent example of a Change Request (CR) that demonstrates efficiency was submitted by Philip Warren, Resident Agent WRO. Philip submitted CR #7361470, which outlined how to embed documents directly into the modules that are submitted into ECM. By embedding documents into a module that only relate to a particular review, it keeps the Packers and Stockyards Automated System less cluttered with documents. This helps agents by not having to search through as many documents when searching for pertinent documents such as applications, bonds, bond riders, and annual reports that need to be accessed frequently.

The CCWG approved CR #7361470 and it was sent forward to PMT for consideration. PMT agreed with the CCWG's recommendation and asked Philip to provide training for all employees. In the meantime, if P&SP employees have questions about embedding documents, Philip offered to let people contact him directly.

Thank you Philip for your great submission to the CCWG!

got change?

Fill out your change request form available at *inGIPSA* and email it to FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov



Sunbelt AG Expo 2012

Cary Ainsworth, Atlanta, GA



Nilsa Ramos Taylor and Cary Ainsworth managing the P&SP booth.

On October 16-18, in Moultrie, Georgia, the 35th annual Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition, North America's Premier Farm Show was held. The Sunbelt Ag Expo is the largest farm show in the world. There are over 1,200 commercial exhibitors in a 100 acre venue featuring their latest goods and services, cutting edge technology and labor-saving devices. The Sunbelt Ag Expo has a 600-acre working research farm that is used for harvesting and tillage demonstrations for all visitors to see.

Cary Ainsworth, Marketing Specialist, and Nilsa Ramos Taylor, Resident Agent, set up and managed the Packers and Stockyards booth. Handouts providing information about the P&S program were handed out to visitors. Questions concerning P&SP were answered to better explain the rules and accessibility of P&SP. This year, the Expo provided wireless internet service for free which was very beneficial. We were able to show visitors the

website, and instruct them on finding information concerning the P&SP program, and programs of other USDA agencies. Interested visitors and students asked about working for P&SP. We discussed employment opportunities with USDA and informed them of the website to search for federal jobs.

This year's Expo was successful as more people were informed of what P&SP actually does. We met many members of the industry as well as registrants during these three days. In addition, farmers and ranchers with various concerns stopped by to see how P&SP could assist them. The Ag Expo was an educational eye opener to many and a must-see for those who are involved in the agricultural industry.

Native American Indian Awareness Trivia

November is the National Native American Heritage Month! Help us celebrate by completing the following trivia and submitting your answers to **Dawn Cowan** by November 9. The first person to submit all correct answers will receive a prize!



1. Which of the following is not one of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma?
 - a. Seminole
 - b. Chickasaw
 - c. Choctaw
 - d. Sycamore
 - e. Cherokee
2. Modern America grew out of colonial America. Native Americans helped in exploration, development, and cultivation of this continent. Essentially, who were the pupils in the American Indian Schools during this period?
 - a. Cajuns
 - b. European pioneers
 - c. Appolonians
 - d. Peyote Road Men
 - e. Plastic Medicine Men
3. Which is not a tribe of the upper-Midwest?
 - a. Oneida
 - b. Kickapoo
 - c. Ojibwa
 - d. Hopi
 - e. Chippewa
4. The American Indian Hall of Fame is located in:
 - a. Anadarko, OK
 - b. Browning, MT
 - c. Washington, DC
 - d. Bismark, ND
 - e. Dodge City, KS
5. Who was named the "Greatest Athlete of the First Half-Century"?
 - a. Billy Mills
 - b. Jim Thorpe
 - c. Bo Jackson
 - d. Alwyn Morris
 - e. Joe American Horse
6. A "snag" is:
 - a. A difficult problem at home or work
 - b. A Fox
 - c. Having your fishing hook caught on an object
 - d. A companion
7. Of all the crises faced by Native Americans today, which of the following is making the most impact on the problems overall?
 - a. Otitis media
 - b. Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - c. American Indian Education
 - d. MTV
8. The most sympathetic Hollywood actor to the American Indian cause today is:
 - a. Ronald Reagan
 - b. Kevin Costner
 - c. Harrison Ford
 - d. Arsenio Hall
 - e. Marlon Brando
9. American Indians were the last to be granted legal citizenship in the United States. What year did this occur?
 - a. 1954
 - b. 1901
 - c. 1843
 - d. 1924
 - e. 1985
10. February 28-May 8, 1973, members of the American Indian Movement led by Dennis Banks and Russell Means occupied what South Dakota town to call attention to the government's poor treatment of American Indians?
 - a. Vermillion
 - b. Rapid City
 - c. Wounded Knee
 - d. Brookings

Source: *The University of Wisconsin, Whitewater Campus Calendar*



The Navajo Code Talkers: the Code that was Never Broken

Department of the Navy via Dawn Cowan, Washington, DC

Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima: the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all Marine divisions, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language—a code that the Japanese never broke.

Why Navajo?

The idea to use Navajo for secure communications came from Philip Johnston, the son of a missionary to the Navajos and one of the few non-Navajos who spoke their language fluently. Johnston, reared on the Navajo reservation, was a World War I veteran who knew of the military's search for a code that would withstand all attempts to decipher it. He also knew that Native American languages—notably Choctaw—had been used in World War I to encode messages.

Johnston believed Navajo answered the military requirement for an undecipherable code because Navajo is an unwritten language of extreme complexity. Its syntax and tonal qualities, not to mention dialects, make it unintelligible to anyone without extensive exposure and training. It has no alphabet or symbols, and is spoken only on the Navajo lands of the American Southwest.

Creating a Code

Early in 1942, Johnston met with Major General Clayton B. Vogel, the commanding general of Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet, and his staff to convince them of the Navajo language's value as code. Johnston staged tests under simulated combat conditions, demonstrating that Navajos could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line English message in 20 seconds. Convinced, Vogel recommended to the commandant of the Marine Corps that the Marines recruit 200 Navajos.

In 1942, there were about 50,000 Navajo tribe members. As of 1945, about 540 Navajos served as Marines. From 375 to 420 of those trained as code talkers; the rest served in other capacities.

In May 1942, the first 29 Navajo recruits attended boot camp. Then, at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, this first group created the Navajo code. They developed a dictionary and numerous words for military terms. The dictionary and all code words had to be

memorized during training. Once a Navajo code talker completed his training, he was sent to a Marine unit deployed in the Pacific theater.

The Navajo Code Talker's Dictionary

When a Navajo code talker received a message, what he heard was a string of seemingly unrelated Navajo words. The code talker first had to translate each Navajo word into its English equivalent. Then he used only the first letter of the English equivalent in spelling. Thus, the Navajo words "wol-la-chee" (ant), "be-la-sana" (apple) and "tse-nill" (axe) all stood for the letter "a." One way to say the word "Navy" in Navajo code would be "tsah (needle) wol-la-chee (ant) ah-keh-di-glini (victor) tsah-ah-dzoh" (yucca).

Not all words had to be spelled out letter by letter. The developers of the original code assigned Navajo words to represent about 450 frequently used military terms that did not exist in the Navajo language. Several examples: "besh-lo" (iron fish) meant "submarine," "dah-he-tih-hi" (hummingbird) meant "fighter plane" and "debeh-li-zine" (black street) meant "squad".



President George W. Bush honored Navajo Code Talkers in July 2001.

Success in the Pacific

Praise for their skill, speed and accuracy accrued throughout the war. At Iwo Jima, Major Howard Connor, 5th Marine Division signal officer, declared, "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima."

Connor had six Navajo code talkers working around the clock during the first two days of the battle. Those six sent and received more than 800 messages, all without error.

The Japanese, who were skilled code breakers, remained baffled by the Navajo language. The Japanese chief of intelligence, Lieutenant General Seizo Arisue, said that while they were able to decipher the codes used by the U.S. Army and Army Air Corps, they never cracked the code used by the Marines.

Leadership and Career Planning: Overlooked Resources

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

In looking at your career and skills needed to succeed, have you wondered what management is thinking about and how you fit in. There are resources available in GIPSA. These help can you understand the agency and provide a bigger picture of where the organization is going and how leadership and technical skills are applied.

- ◆ Get the Big Picture; Review the GIPSA Strategic Plan and the Human Capital Plan on inGIPSA.

⇒The GIPSA Strategic Plan provides Information on GIPSA's Mission ; Vision ; Core Values; and Strategic Goals. These include: Strategic Goal 1, Promote Fair and Competitive Marketing of Livestock, Meat, and Poultry; Strategic Goal 2, Facilitate the marketing of U.S. grain and related agricultural products; Strategic Goal 3, Be a model civil rights organization and promote Cultural Transformation.

⇒The GIPSA Strategic Human Capital Plan 2011-2015 outlines: 1) Workforce – Overview and Analysis; 2) Workforce Gaps; 3) Cultural Transformation; and 4) Workforce Strategies. By reviewing this document you can be aware of changes and opportunities available in GIPSA.

⇒Both are located at: <https://ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/planning.aspx>. To understand these documents you do not need to be a management strategic planner or in human resources. Also, Consider the Budget Process located at: <https://ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/budget.aspx>

- ◆ Understanding how leadership or a skill area is applied. A series of FGIS interviews are located at: <https://ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/kmretire.aspx>.

Conducting interviews: Interview or talk to a leader in a position you are interested in about how they see their personal leadership or skill journey. Leadership journeys are usually very specific experiences based on professional and personal situations and may include technical skills.

Questions to ask are:

- ⇒ Name of Leader:
- ⇒ Title:
- ⇒ Background:
- ⇒ Organization:
- ⇒ Location:
- ⇒ Interview Date:
- ⇒ *What was his/her path to success?*
- ⇒ What do you consider to be good characteristics of a good leader?
- ⇒ What advice would you give on recognizing opportunities and avoiding mistakes?
- ⇒ What tactics do you use to maintain good morale in a unit?
- ⇒ How do you foster creativity and innovation?
- ⇒ How do you handle challenges?
- ⇒ How important is continual learning and what recommendations might you have for reading, etc.?
- ⇒ What advice do you have for my leadership journey?
- ⇒ As the interviewer, what insights did you gain from this interview?

If you are interested in a particular career or job informational interviewing can be a helpful tool on understanding how to get the technical skills. Consider asking some of the questions from an article from About.com, Questions to Ask During an Information Interview, by Alison Doyle, About.com Guide at: <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/infointerviews/a/infointervquest.htm>

- ◆ As always, communication both oral and written skills help a lot whether you are developing leadership or technical skills. Due to scheduling issues the writing webinar will be scheduled in November. Stay tuned.



Tell a Veteran Thank You!

Dawn Cowan, Washington, DC

Veterans Day is an annual opportunity for communities and families to honor all of the members of the Armed Forces. Honor those who have fallen in combat as well as those who are actively serving and formerly served. On this Veterans Day, I would like to wish all of our veterans a very Happy Veterans Day! Thank you for serving your country with pride!

Here are some great ways to commemorate veterans this holiday:



- ⇒ Take a Veteran out to eat, whether it is a fast-food chain or a fine dining establishment. Tell them why you are bringing them out to eat.
- ⇒ Are you a knitter or crocheter? Make a scarf or lap blanket and donate them at a local -VFW for a veteran in need.
- ⇒ Listen to their stories with interest.
- ⇒ Call and visit a local nursing home or VA Hospital. Find out what you can do to help. If you bake, call and find out if you can bring in something special. Bring a book to read to a veteran.
- ⇒ Military-member at the same restaurant as you? Send them a drink or pay for their dessert or meal.
- ⇒ Is there a disabled veteran in your neighborhood? Help with the raking of his/her leaves or shoveling his/her driveway.
- ⇒ Call them. A grandparent, uncle, aunt, mother, father. Take the time to call them, especially if they live far away, and find out how they are doing.
- ⇒ Nearly 40 percent of our veteran population is 65 or older, give a veteran your phone number and ask them to call if they need help around the house. Make a note to call them this winter to see what they need.
- ⇒ Greet them on their special day with a smile and a thank you.
- ⇒ Remember Veterans during other holidays, especially those without family. Send a Thanksgiving card, Christmas card or Valentines card, to either a Vet that you know or through a VA Hospital or VFW.
- ⇒ Did a veteran in your neighborhood just come back from a deployment? Send them a card of 'Thanks'.
- ⇒ Offer to pick-up their bill (at a restaurant, bowling, ice cream stand, etc.).
- ⇒ Wear an American flag on your clothing. It's a small way to say, "I am proud of my country."
- ⇒ Spot a DoD sticker on a car in the parking lot? Leave a note of Thanks.
- ⇒ Pass out small flags around your neighborhood in honor of Veterans Day.
- ⇒ Give them a big smile as you walk by, sometimes that is all that is needed.
- ⇒ Go to your local VFW ask if you can make a donation, either by money or donation of your time. If you have a family member that serves in the armed forces you could make a donation in their honor.
- ⇒ If you meet a veteran on this Veteran's Day, or any day, just say thanks. They served you, and this nation, well.
- ⇒ To truly honor our veterans make the best of the opportunity the sacrifices of our fighting men and women have provided. Love your country with passion, and do what you can to make it a better place.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

(800) 222-0364

(888) 262-7848 (TTY)

<http://www.FOH4You.com>

Confidential toll-free number 24 hours a day/7 days a week

Occupational Health and Safety Tips that Help the Office Worker

Amber McDonald-Lake, Washington, DC

Reprinted from Squidoo.com

Office workers... who are they? Their work is intellectual and seems very comfortable at first glance. But with a deeper look it is easy to realize that this is a deceiving impression. Office workers spend the whole day sitting at a table in a static pose, using artificial lighting and swallow the dust from the numerous cabinets and bookcases. And this goes on for years. And of course, this has its impact on our health.



The mark of our generation is the increase in numbers of office workers - in addition to accountants, engineers, economists, clerks and HR workers, the white-collar employees of big, medium and small-size

businesses along with the organizations servicing these businesses such as advertising agencies, outsourcing and insurance companies have joined the ranks of intellectual workers. And let's not forget about banks, IT laboratories and a wide range of other organizations. As the result, 50 percent of all the working men and women in all developed countries are the so-called office workers. Due to such a vast number of office workers there is a special range of occupational disorders, and according to statistics 35 percent of all people working in the offices suffer from them. In addition to the increased number of people working in the office, the nature of the work itself has changed for the worse with the added load of working on a computer all day as well as the unstandardized workday not limited to eight hours.

Overall low mobility

An average office worker after taking an elevator from his apartment, gets in the car, and then goes straight to his work desk, at which he or she spends 8-10 hours without motion.

What to do? Use every minute of the day before and after work and as well as on the weekends to get up and move. Taking a walk, jogging on the weekend, giving up the car and walking from the house to the bus stop or subway station instead, fitness club, morning exercises - all of these will work!

Long static posture

Often, being preoccupied, a person does not pay attention to the pose in which they sit, and as a rule, it is beyond any criticism - the shoulders are warped, the neck is bent, the back is curved. As a result, the person gets a headache, the muscles get inflamed, the overstrained neck and back muscles develop edemas, osteochondrosis (orthopedic disease of the joint) progresses along with the related degenerative malfunctions in spinal bones and joints. Even if a person sits straight, there still will be some consequences. The slow blood flow to the extremities (the back femoral arteries get pinched) leads to the malfunctions of lower extremities tissues, diseases of the blood vessels, Malia (muscle pain due to the overuse or overstretching of the muscles), and inflammation of the joints. Next, the whole blood circulation system suffers, thrombosis (formation of blood clots inside blood vessels) may start developing, which if neglected may lead to a heart attack or a stroke.



What to do? Interrupt the sitting down with any movements, even if you are really swamped. You will always be busy, but we are talking about your health here! It can be some easy exercises 2 times a day or a mini-stretching session every hour (bend and unbend the body, wave your hands, do 10 sit-ups, slowly rotate your head and so on). It is very important to always change your posture, never slouch when you sit, do not press your head into your shoulders and do not warp your back. Follow the example of a pianist, note how they always keep their back and neck straight, their hands are relaxed and softly lowered on the fingerboard.



The strain on the eyes

Among all the eye strains the doctors invariably single out the flickering computer monitor. The majority of the active PC users already wear dipodic glasses. The radiation from the computer monitor can lead to development of all known eye diseases, starting from myopia (or shortsightedness) and going up to retina malfunctions and astigmatism (or blurred vision).

Continued, see Safety Tips...! on page 11.

Safety Tips, from page 10

What to do? You have to do special eye exercises, for example change the focus from nearby to a distant object, closing the eye for two minutes, moving the eye in circle in both directions. Every two hours you should relax your eyes by looking out the window at the most distant point you can. If you are sitting right across from the window put a sticker on the glass and switch from looking at it to looking at the horizon and back to the sticker. You can use the special stereoscopic pictures which are developed to alternate the focus and defocus of the eyes. Here's a book that does an excellent job: [A Village Lost and Found](#)

The tension in the hands

This especially concerns the right hand due to the long-term work with the mouse. Another strain on the hands is typing on the keyboard. It is especially dangerous if both a keyboard and a mouse are placed at the edge of the table because the table is piled up with various junk. The lack of support for the elbow and hands leads to arthritis of the wrist joints as well as carpal tunnel syndrome, when the nerve stems going through the muscular, fibrous or bone channels (tunnels) are strongly compressed due to the pathological changes in these structures. This disorder is accompanied with strong pain and requires serious treatment.



What to do? Do not wait until the wrists start aching and getting numb, do everything in your power to prevent this disease. For example, clean up the mess on your table and put the keyboard and mouse in such a way that your wrist and elbow make one line parallel to the table surface and your shoulder is at a 90 degrees angle to it. Nowadays the office desks are equipped with a special sliding shelf for a keyboard. Its role is to provide the right placement of your hands. There are special armrests and pillows that support the elbow and wrist, ask your manager to get those for you. There are good exercises for your fingers and palms - clench and unclench your wrists, rotate your wrists in different directions, "shake off water" off your hands, and so on. Although this tool is designed to increase the strength in your grip, we found that it is an excellent way to release the tension in your hands, you will certainly find this as well: Gripmaster Hand Exerciser Red, Medium Tension (7-Pounds per Finger).

Bad air

An abundance of papers, horizontal surfaces such as chairs, shelves, and bookcases, the carpeting on the floor - all of these contribute to the concentration of dust in the air of the closed off space. The office equipment attracts dust and when the cooling systems (built-in fans) kick in, it throws it back into the air. Air conditioners in the turned off mode accumulate a huge number of viruses, bacteria and fungi on their filters. You turn on the air conditioner thinking that you are improving the air circulation but instead start breathing this cocktail in with your full strength. Besides, due to the abundance of various equipment there is an increased level of radiation in every office. And by the way, viruses and bacteria love to settle down on keyboards, mice, and phone receivers.

What to do? Literally, roll up your sleeves and clean up your working area with special wet wipes. This can help reduce the level of dust, viruses and bacteria concentration in the air and on all the surfaces, and hence spare your respiratory system at least a little bit. As far as radiation, inquire about the latest modifications of the computer monitors, these monitors are protected with tin dioxide and do not represent any known danger.



Difficult communication

In any office personal conflicts both hidden and manifested arise. Taking into account the stressful work conditions, this harmfully affects the nervous system and state of mind. You can develop migraines, insomnia, chronic fatigue syndrome, asthenic syndrome (condition, in which the body has lost strength), depression and other conditions.

What to do? First of all, learn to not react to stimuli like disagreeable colleagues. After all, they are just strangers to you. Imagine that they are your accidental fellow travelers on a train, so is it worth it to take offense and get irritated? Next, try to position yourself correctly and do not work the unnecessary extra hours. Salary and careers are important; no question about that, but what good is money if you don't have the health?

Source: [Squidoo.com](#)

Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- ◆ FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 251, Suspension of Romer FluoroQuant Aflatoxin Test Kit for Sorghum, dated September 28, 2012
- ◆ MRP Directive 4500.1, "Recruitment and Retention Incentives", dated October 3, 2012
- ◆ FGIS Program Notice 13-01, "Reconditioning Options for Aflatoxin Contaminated Lots" dated October 22, 2012

GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business.

Please send your suggestions or ideas to GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045. It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method of transmission.

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Idelisse Rodríguez
USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3649
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3649
Phone (202) 720-5688
FAX (202) 690-2173
Idelisse.Rodriguez@usda.gov



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USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3649
Management and Budget Services
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3649
Phone (202) 720-5688