



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NEW EMPLOYEE/SUPERVISOR ORIENTATION HANDBOOK



NOTICE

This handbook is for informational purposes only; it is not a policy document. Information contained herein is presumed to be current and correct. Because information frequently changes, every effort is made to ensure its accuracy. Should you find any errors or outdated information, please notify your Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO) for corrections.

This handbook is not intended to and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.



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EMPLOYEE



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OVERVIEW OF THE ONBOARDING PROGRAM

Do not think of onboarding as something you will do only the first few days on the job. Think of it as a process you will begin today and complete in about a year. To help you understand the onboarding process, the following actions will take place during the year:

Onboarding Process

- ✓ All new employees should receive either a link or a copy of the *New Employee/Supervisor Orientation Handbook* upon accepting your position. This handbook will give you answers to many of the questions new employees ask about personnel and administrative matters. Think of this handbook as a reference guide. It is not a reference source to read all at one time, but instead as questions arise you can use it to locate answers, using the Table of Contents as your guide. This handbook is on the National Park Service (NPS) website www.nps.gov/orientation.
- ✓ As an introduction to the national park system you are encouraged to watch *The National Parks* by Ken Burns, a shorter version of the Ken Burns documentary, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, made for the NPS screening event in September 2009. The video will help familiarize you with the foundations and principles of the national park system. The NPS overview training, the first of the "NPS Fundamentals" series, is open to all employees, and will serve as your initial training for your career with the National Park Service. These courses will be listed on the NPS Fundamentals website. The first course will cover the history and structure of the National Park Service. You should complete this module at your earliest convenience.
- ✓ Along with the handbook, you will receive packages from your Servicing Human Resources Office and the Human Resources Operations Center (HROC) with forms for you to complete. If you need help with these forms, please contact the office that sent them to you. Please read this handbook, particularly chapter 3, and the [Ethics Guide for Department of the Interior Employees](#), which is found at the DOI Ethics Office website (<http://www.doi.gov/ethics/>).
- ✓ Beginning with your first day, you will begin an on-site orientation to your office. Your supervisor and peer assistance liaison (PAL) should work together to ensure that you receive a full orientation on local matters and office practices that may affect your productivity. The role of a peer assistance liaison may be new to you. The primary role of your peer assistance liaison is to help you feel comfortable in your new environment and to be available to help you to navigate and become acclimated to your new office or local environment. During the first meeting with your supervisor, your supervisor will explain more to you about your peer assistance liaison and the orientation plan that has been developed for you.
- ✓ Your orientation plan will cover a broad range of human resources, organizational, and historical matters. Items to be discussed are listed in the "Employee Checklist" on the [New Employee Resources](#) site (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?lv=4&prg=1302>). You and your supervisor will determine the depth that you need to cover each item depending on your work experience. Your supervisor will work closely with you to complete the items on the checklist. Review the plan and see if you have other needs that you would like to have addressed.



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- ✓ At many parks and offices, unions represent some or all employees. If a union represents you, the union will likely contact you to provide you with information during or after orientation about its role in representing you in decisions made by management and your right to join or not to join the union. Many parks and offices have agreements with unions to provide time for the union during orientation sessions to make presentations. Your supervisor should be able to provide you with a point of contact within the union for more specific information.
- ✓ Make [InsideNPS](http://www.inside.nps.gov) (www.inside.nps.gov) your home page on your computer and check it each day to find out what is going on throughout the National Park Service. You will also find many useful “Quick Links” to specific websites for NPS topics including human resources matters.
- ✓ During your first year, you and your supervisor should have numerous discussions on how you are adjusting to the work environment and performing on the job. There is an optional form, “Interview with the Supervisor and the Employee,” that your supervisor may use to facilitate the discussion. Both you and your supervisor should complete the form before beginning your discussion.
- ✓ At the end of the first year of the orientation process, you and your supervisor will review the orientation checklist to ensure all your questions are answered. You will receive a survey asking you to tell us about your orientation experience, please take a moment to complete the evaluation. It will provide valuable information on where we need to focus our efforts in creating a more welcoming and inclusive work environment.
- ✓ All the products developed for this program are posted to the [New Employee Orientation](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1153&lv=3) website (http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1153&lv=3). If the program is changed, it will be reflected on the website.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The National Park Service, a bureau of the Department of the Interior (DOI), is entrusted with administering approximately 84 million acres of land throughout nearly 400 national park system units in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam. The mission of the National Park Service is (1) to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations; and (2) to cooperate with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resources conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. This is accomplished through a deeply committed workforce of approximately 27,000 employees (both permanent and temporary), volunteers, concessioners, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, and private industries.

HISTORY¹

Any account of the National Park Service must begin with the parks that preceded and prompted its establishment.

The national park concept is generally credited to the artist George Catlin. On a trip to the Dakotas in 1832, he worried about the impact of America's westward expansion on American Indian civilization, wildlife, and wilderness.

They might be preserved by some great protecting policy of government . . . in a magnificent park . . . a nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty! (George Catlin)

Catlin's vision was partly realized in 1864, when Congress ceded Yosemite Valley to California for preservation as a state park. Eight years later, in 1872, Congress reserved the spectacular Yellowstone country in the Wyoming and Montana territories as a "public park or pleasuring ground" for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. With no state government in place to receive and manage it, Yellowstone remained in the custody of the U.S. Department of the Interior as a national park, the first area designated as a national park.

¹ Information obtained from the National Park Service History e-Library. For more information, visit <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/>.



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YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WINTER 1887

Congress followed the Yellowstone precedent with other national parks in the 1890s and early 1900s, including Sequoia, Yosemite (to which California returned Yosemite Valley), Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, and Glacier. The idealistic impulse to preserve nature was often joined by the pragmatic desire to promote tourism. Western railroads lobbied for many of the early parks and built grand rustic hotels in the park to boost passenger business.

The late 19th century also saw growing interest in preserving prehistoric American Indian ruins and artifacts on the public lands. Congress first moved to protect such a feature—Arizona’s Casa Grande Ruin—in 1889. In 1906, Mesa Verde National Park was established, and the Antiquities Act was passed, authorizing presidents to set aside historic and prehistoric structures and other objects of historic or scientific interest in federal custody as national monuments. Theodore Roosevelt used the act to proclaim 18 national monuments before the end of his presidency. The monuments included cultural features such as El Morro, New Mexico, site of prehistoric petroglyphs and historic inscriptions, and natural features such as Arizona’s Petrified Forest and Grand Canyon. Congress later converted many of these national monuments to national parks.

By 1916, the U.S. Department of the Interior was responsible for 14 national parks and 21 national monuments, but had no organization to manage them. Secretaries of the Interior had asked the U.S. Army to detail troops to Yellowstone and the California parks for this purpose. Military engineers and cavalymen developed park roads and buildings; enforced regulations against hunting, grazing, timber cutting, and vandalism; and assisted the visiting public. Civilian appointees served as superintendents of the other parks, while the monuments had limited custody. In the absence of an effective central administration, those in charge operated without coordinated supervision or policy guidance.

The parks were vulnerable to competing interests, including from within the conservation movement. Utilitarian conservationists, who favored regulated use rather than strict preservation of natural resources, advocated the construction of dams by public authorities for water supply, power, and irrigation purposes. When San Francisco sought to dam Yosemite’s Hetch Hetchy Valley for a reservoir after the turn of the century, the utilitarian and preservationist wings of the conservation



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movement clashed. In spite of the opposition of John Muir and other park supporters, in 1913, Congress approved the building of a dam, which historian John Ise later called “the worst disaster ever to come to any national park.”

Hetch Hetchy Valley highlighted the institutional weakness of the national park movement. While utilitarian conservation had become well represented in government by the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Reclamation Service (Bureau of Reclamation), no comparable bureau represented park preservation in Washington, D.C. Among those people who recognized the institutional weaknesses was Stephen T. Mather, a wealthy and well-connected Chicago businessman. When Mather complained to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane about park mismanagement, Secretary Lane invited Mather to Washington as his assistant on park matters. Crusading for a national parks bureau, Mather and his principal aide, Horace M. Albright, effectively blurred the distinction between utilitarian conservation and preservation by emphasizing the economic value of parks as tourist meccas. A vigorous public relations campaign led to supportive articles in *National Geographic*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and other popular magazines. Mather hired a publicist and obtained funds from 17 western railroad companies to produce *The National Parks Portfolio*, a lavishly illustrated publication sent to congressmen and other influential citizens.

Congress responded as desired, and on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved legislation—the NPS Organic Act of 1916, establishing the National Park Service within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The act made the bureau responsible for national parks, monuments, the Hot Springs Reservation in Arkansas (designated a national park in 1921), and other national parks and reservations of similar character established by Congress. In managing these areas, the National Park Service was directed to conserve the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of same in such manner and by such means as would leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations (16 USC 1).

Secretary Lane named Mather the first NPS director and Albright the NPS assistant director. In a policy letter approved by Secretary Lane in 1918, he elaborated on the bureau’s mission to conserve park resources and provide for their enjoyment. While reemphasizing the importance of preservation, it reflected Mather and Albright’s conviction that more visitors must be attracted and accommodated if the parks were to flourish. Automobiles, not permitted in Yellowstone until 1915, would be allowed throughout the national park system. Hotels would be provided by concessioners. Museums, publications, and other educational activities were encouraged as well. The policy letter also sought to guide the expansion of the national park system. It directed the study of new park projects, which emphasized scenery of supreme and distinctive quality or extraordinary or unique natural features that would be of national interest and importance. The national park system, as then constituted, should not be lowered in standard, dignity, and prestige by the inclusion of areas that express in less than the highest terms the particular class or kind of exhibit in which they represent.

Through the 1920s, the national park system was really a western park system. Only Acadia National Park in Maine was east of the Mississippi River. The West was home to America’s most spectacular natural scenery, and most land there was federally owned and thus subject to park or monument reservation without purchase. If the system was to benefit more people and maximize its support in Congress, it would have to expand eastward. In 1926, Congress authorized Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave national parks in the Appalachian region, but required that their lands be donated. With the help of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and other philanthropists, the states involved gradually acquired and turned over most of the land needed for these parks within the following decade.



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However, the National Park Service's greatest opportunity in the East lay in another realm, that of history and historic sites. Congress had directed the War Department to preserve a number of historic battlefields, forts, and memorials as national military parks and monuments, beginning in 1890 with Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park in Georgia and Tennessee. After succeeding Mather as director in 1929, Albright was instrumental in getting Congress to establish three new historical parks in the East under NPS administration. Colonial National Monument and Yorktown Battlefield in Virginia and Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey—the site of Revolutionary War encampments—edged the National Park Service into the War Department's domain.

Soon after Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, Albright accompanied the new president on a trip to Shenandoah National Park and mentioned his desire to acquire all the military parks. Roosevelt agreed and directed Albright to initiate an executive transfer order. Under the order, effective August 10, 1933, the National Park Service received not only parks and monuments managed by the War Department, but also the 15 national monuments managed by the U.S. Forest Service, as well as national capital parks, including the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, and the White House. The addition of nearly 50 historical areas in the East made the national park system and National Park Service a truly national bureau that was deeply involved with historic and natural preservation.

As President Roosevelt launched the New Deal, the National Park Service received another mission—depression relief. Under NPS supervision, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed thousands of young men in numerous conservation, rehabilitation, and construction projects in both national and state parks. The program had a lasting impact on the National Park Service. Many professionals hired under its auspices remained with the bureau as career employees, and regional offices established to coordinate CCC work within state parks evolved into a permanent regional system for park administration.

During the 1930s, the National Park Service became involved with areas intended primarily for mass recreation. Begun as depression relief projects, the Blue Ridge Parkway between Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains national parks and the Natchez Trace Parkway between Nashville, Tennessee, and Natchez, Mississippi, were designed for scenic recreational motoring. In 1936, under an agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service assumed responsibility for recreational development and activities at the vast reservoir, a result of the Hoover Dam. Lake Mead National Recreation Area, as it was later named, was the first of several reservoir areas in the national park system. In 1937, Congress authorized Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the first of several seashore and lakeshore areas.

Following Albright's leave from the National Park Service in 1933, he was succeeded by his associate director, Arno B. Cammerer, and then Newton B. Drury, who succeeded Cammerer in 1940. America's entry into World War II forced Secretary Drury to preside over a drastic reduction in NPS activity and defend the parks against pressures for consumptive uses under the pretext of national defense. For example, Sitka spruce in Olympic National Park was sought for airplane manufacturing. Ranchers and mining companies pressed to open other parks to grazing and prospecting. Purveyors of scrap drives sought historic cannons at battlefields and forts. Secretary Drury successfully resisted most demands, which eased as needed resources were found elsewhere.

The postwar era brought new pressures on the parks as the nation's energies were redirected to domestic pursuits. The Bureau of Reclamation plans to dam wilderness canyons in Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado and Utah ignited a conservation battle recalling that of the Hetch Hetchy Valley. The decision by Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman to support the project



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contributed to Director Drury's resignation in March 1951. However, this time the park preservationists won—Congress declined to approve building dams at Dinosaur National Monument.

Conrad L. Wirth, a landscape architect and planner who had once led the CCC program, became the NPS director in December 1951. Facing a national park system with a deteriorating infrastructure that had been saturated by the postwar travel boom, Director Wirth responded with Mission 66, a 10-year billion-dollar program to upgrade facilities, staffing, and resource management by the bureau's 50th anniversary in 1966. A hallmark of Mission 66 was the park visitor center, a multiuse facility with interpretive exhibits, audiovisual programs, and other public services. By 1960, 56 visitor centers were open or under construction in parks ranging from Antietam National Battlefield Site in Maryland to Zion National Park in Utah.

Mission 66 development, criticized by some as overdevelopment, nevertheless fell short of Director Wirth's goals, primarily because the NPS domain continually expanded and diverted funds and staff to new areas. Congress added more than 50 parks to the national park system during the 10-year period, from Virgin Islands National Park to Point Reyes National Seashore in California. Expansion continued apace under George B. Hartzog Jr., who had overseen the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis before succeeding Director Wirth in 1964. Under Director Hartzog's leadership through 1972, the National Park Service and national park system branched out in several new directions.

Natural resource management was restructured along ecological lines by a committee of scientists chaired by A. Starker Leopold, following its 1963 report, *The Leopold Report*.

As a primary goal, we would recommend that the biotic associations within each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man

A national park should represent a vignette of primitive America because environmental interpretation emphasizing ecological relationships and special environmental educational programs for schools reflect and promote environmental awareness.

Living history programs became popular attractions at many historical parks, ranging from frontier military demonstrations at Fort Davis National Historic Site in Texas to period farming at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Indiana. In addition, NPS historical activities expanded beyond the parks, responding to the destructive effects of urban renewal, highway construction, and other federal projects during the postwar era. Thus, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 authorized the U.S. Department of the Interior to maintain a comprehensive National Register of Historic Places. Listed properties, publicly and privately owned and locally and nationally significant, receive special consideration in federal project planning and federal grants and technical assistance to encourage their preservation.

Several new types of parks joined the system during Director Hartzog's leadership. Ozark National Scenic Riverways in Missouri, authorized by Congress in 1964, foreshadowed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, which led to the acquisition of other free-flowing rivers. On the Great Lakes, Pictured Rocks and Indiana Dunes became the first national lakeshores in 1966. The National Trails System Act of 1968 gave the National Park Service the responsibility for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, running about 2,000 miles from Maine to Georgia. Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City and Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, both established in



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1972, were precedents for other national recreation areas serving metropolitan Cleveland, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

During the bicentennial of the American Revolution in the mid-1970s, the two dozen historical parks commemorating the revolution benefited from another big development program. At Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, the National Park Service reconstructed the house where Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, installed elaborate exhibits at the site of Benjamin Franklin's house, and moved the Liberty Bell to a new pavilion outside Independence Hall. On July 4, 1976, President Gerald R. Ford, once a seasonal ranger at Yellowstone National Park, spoke at Independence Hall and signed legislation making Valley Forge a national historical park. Four years later, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 more than doubled the size of the national park system by adding over 47 million wilderness acres. The largest of the new areas, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park in Alaska, comprises more than 8.3 million acres, while the adjoining Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve comprises nearly 4.9 million acres. Together the park and preserve cover an area larger than New Hampshire and Vermont combined and contain the continent's greatest array of glaciers and peaks above 16,000 feet. The national preserve designation was applied to 10 of the new Alaska areas because they allowed certain activities, such as sport hunting and trapping, not permitted in national parks.

Russell E. Dickenson, a former park ranger and manager, became the NPS director in 1980. Because NPS funding and staffing had not kept pace with its growing responsibilities, Director Dickenson sought to slow national park system expansion. President Reagan and his administration and Congress who took office in 1981 were of like mind. Rather than creating more parks, they backed Director Dickenson's park restoration and improvement program, which allocated more than \$1 billion over five years to resources and facilities in existing parks.

William Penn Mott, Jr., a landscape architect who directed California's state parks when President Reagan served as California governor, succeeded Director Dickenson in 1985. Deeply interested in interpretation, Director Mott sought a more significant NPS role in educating the public about American history and environmental values. He also restored the National Park Service to an expansionist mindset, supporting additions such as the Great Basin National Park in Nevada and Steamtown National Historic Site, a railroad collection in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Steamtown, championed by Scranton's congressman for its local economic benefits, was a costly venture criticized as an example of pork barrel politics, but Director Mott maintained his stance that the site had educational potential.

James M. Ridenour, formerly head of Indiana Department of Natural Resources, served as director during President Bush's administration. Doubting the national significance of Steamtown and other proposed parks driven by economic development interests, Director Ridenour spoke out against the thinning of the national park system and sought to regain the initiative from Congress in charting its expansion. He worked to achieve greater NPS financial returns from park concessions. In 1990, the Richard King Mellon Foundation made the largest single park donation to date—\$10.5 million for additional lands at the Antietam, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, and Petersburg Civil War battlefields, Pecos National Historical Park, and Shenandoah National Park.

Roger G. Kennedy, who had directed the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, was chosen by President Clinton to serve as NPS director in 1993. As with Director Mott, Director Kennedy was especially concerned with expanding the educational role of the National Park Service and sought to enlarge its presence beyond the parks via the Internet. His tenure coincided with a governmentwide effort to restructure and downsize federal bureaucracy, which had recently



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accelerated. The National Park Service restructured its field operations and embarked on a course of reducing its Washington and regional office staffs by 40%.

In 1997, Robert Stanton became the first career NPS employee since Director Dickenson to head the National Park Service. Beginning as a ranger, Director Stanton had served as regional director of the National Capital Region. As the first African American to head the bureau, Director Stanton took particular interest in increasing the diversity of the National Park Service to better serve multicultural communities and visitors.

As of 2012, the national park system comprised 397 areas in nearly every state and U.S. possession. In addition to managing units as diverse and far-flung as Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and the Statue of Liberty National Monument, the National Park Service supports the preservation of natural and historic places and promotes outdoor recreation outside the national park system through a range of grant and technical assistance programs. Emphasis is placed on cooperation and partnerships with other government bodies, foundations, corporations, and other private parties to protect the parks and other significant properties and advance NPS programs. For additional information on these external programs, see NPS [Management Policies 2006](http://www.nps.gov/policy/MP2006.pdf) (<http://www.nps.gov/policy/MP2006.pdf>).

Public opinion surveys have consistently rated the National Park Service among the most popular federal agencies. The high regard in which the national parks and their custodians are held ensures support from philanthropists, corporations, and volunteers, which has been present from the beginning of the national park system movement and is vital to its prosperity.



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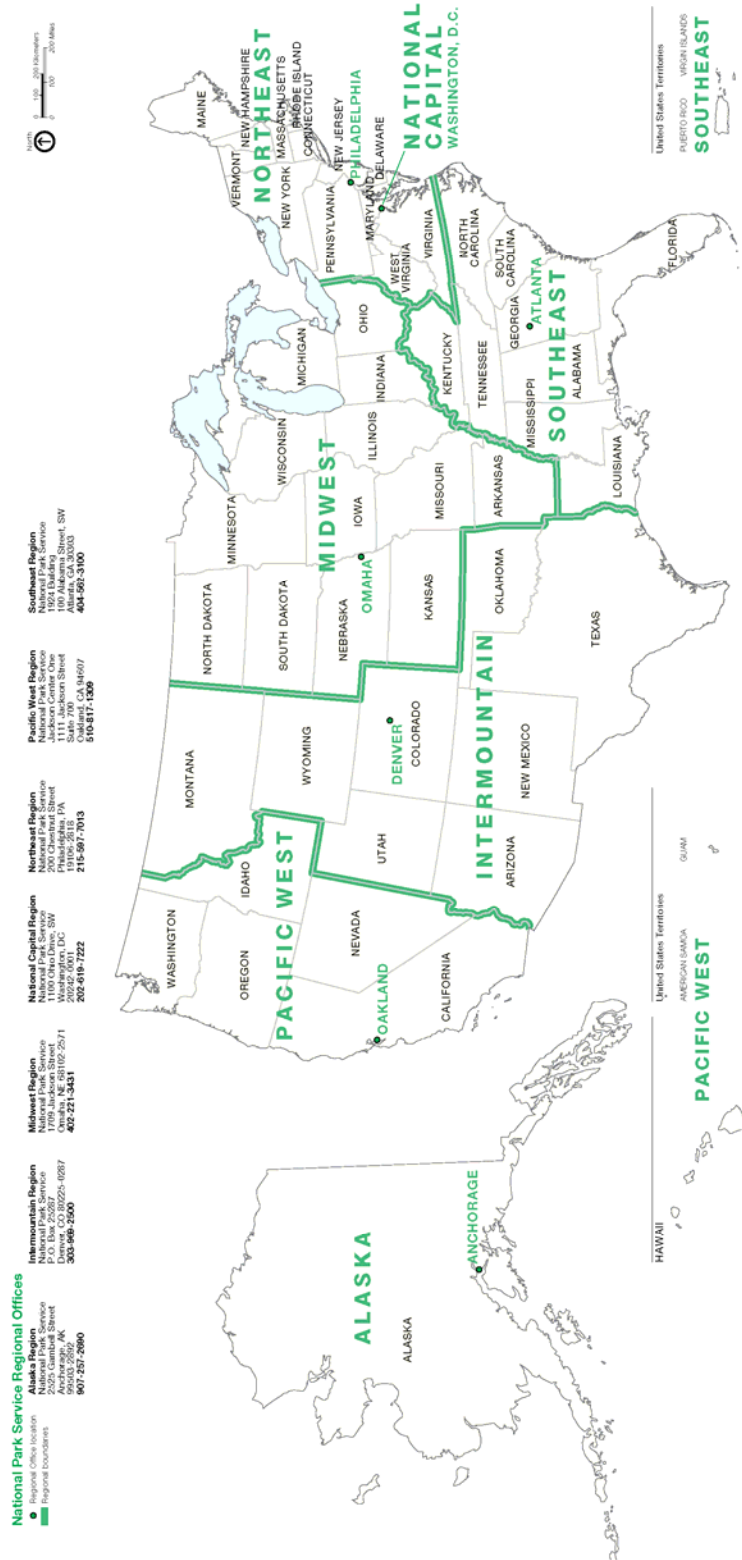
CHAPTER 2: HOW THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IS ORGANIZED

The National Park Service is administered from seven regional offices, shown in the following map. The NPS headquarters is in Washington, D.C., and is called the Washington Support Office (WASO). In addition to the regional offices, there are a number of centers, offices, and partners that support the National Park Service in achieving its mission.



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NPS REGIONAL OFFICES MAP



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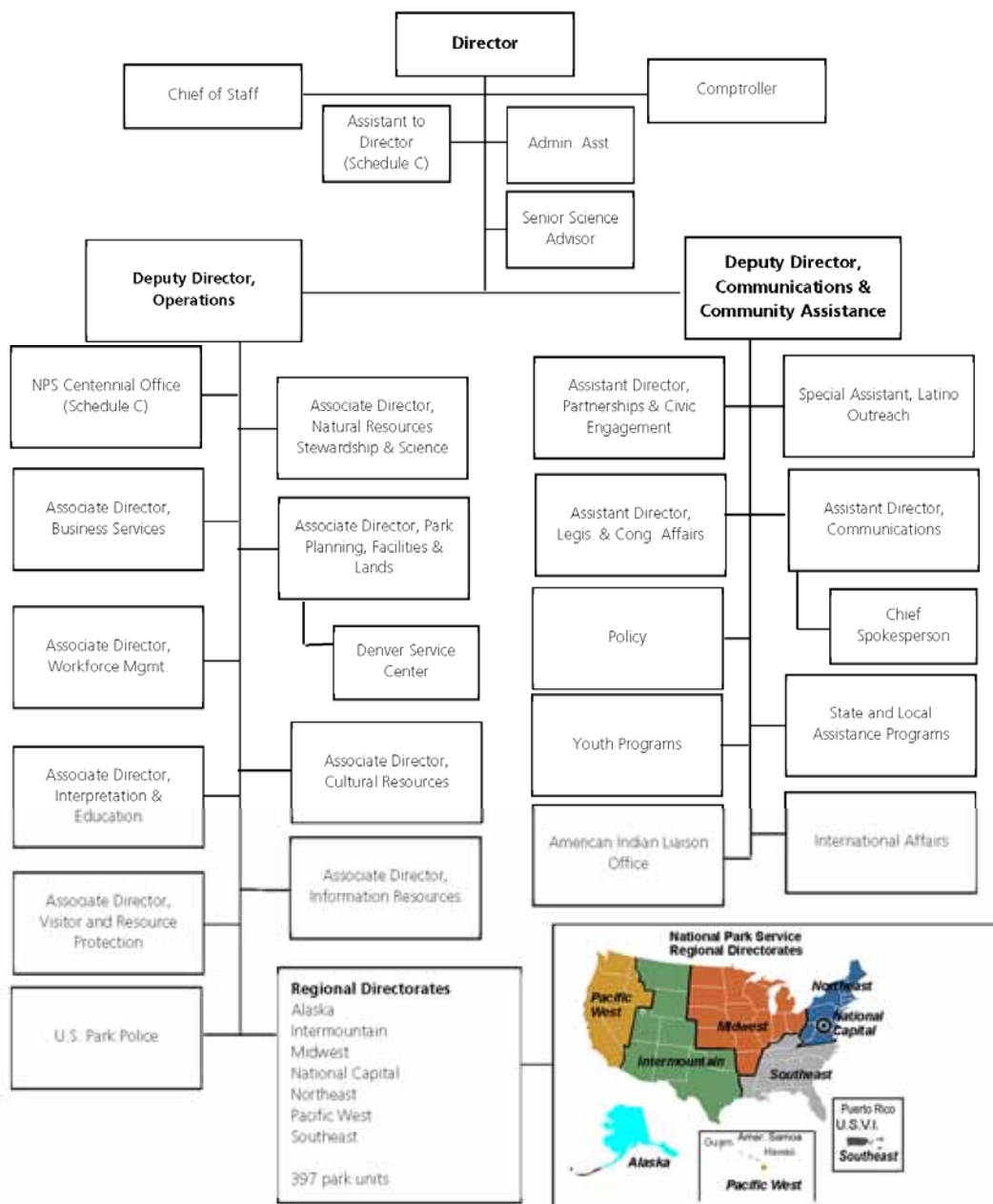
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HEADQUARTERS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The Washington Support Office (headquarters) provides administrative, policy, and overall direction to the National Park Service nationwide. As shown below, it is led by the director, deputy directors, and associate directors, respectively.

June 2012

National Park Service Organizational Chart

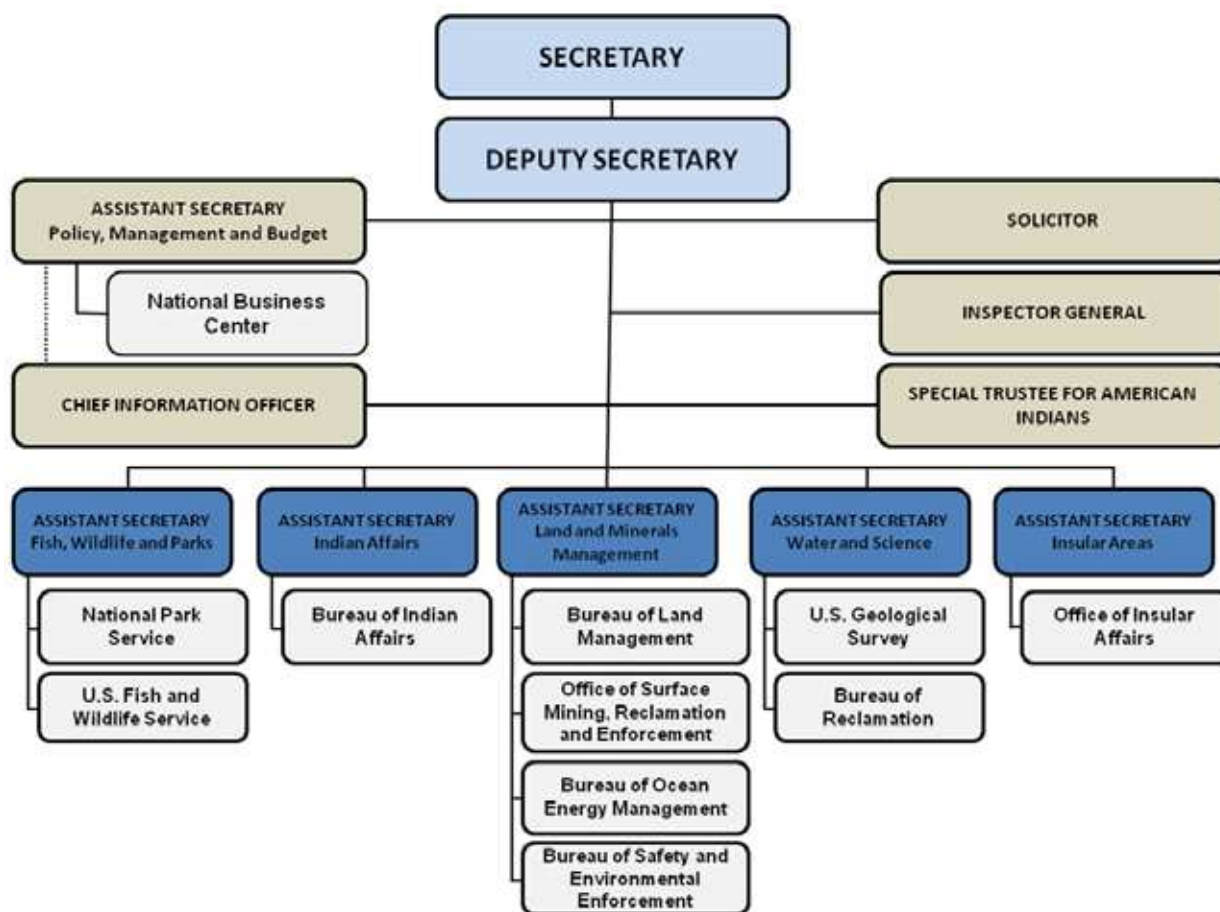


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The National Park Service is a bureau of the Department of the Interior. Within the Department of the Interior, there are eight other bureaus and two offices, each with their own mission. The director of the National Park Service reports to the assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the departmental level. The organizational chart below depicts the structure of the Department of the Interior and its various components. It is important that you understand our relationship with the Department of the Interior and other bureaus.



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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CHAPTER 3: ETHICS AND PERSONAL CONDUCT

As a federal employee you are held to standards of ethical behavior representative of a public servant. These ethical standards are found in the Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 CFR Part 2635) and Employees Responsibility and Conduct (5 CFR Part 735). Executive Order 12674, “Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees” as modified by Executive Order 12731, “Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees” sets forth the fundamental principles of ethical behavior:



- Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
- Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
- Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
- Employees shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are approved by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee’s agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee’s duties.
- Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
- Employees shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the government.
- Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
- Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
- Employees shall protect and conserve federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.



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- Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official government duties and responsibilities.
- Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
- Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those such as federal, state, or local taxes that are imposed by law.
- Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or handicap.
- Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards promulgated pursuant to this order.

New employees are required to complete initial ethics orientation training on DOI Learn within 90 days of starting work with the National Park Service. To complete this training, the employee must go to the DOI Learn website, search for the course “NPS New Employee Ethics Orientation” and watch the video. Executive Order 12674 and the contact information for ethics officials can be found on the [National Park Service Ethics Office](http://www.doi.gov/ethics/index.html) website (<http://www.doi.gov/ethics/index.html>). Certain employees are required by law to file a financial disclosure report within 30 days of their appointment. You will be notified if you are required to file this disclosure.

You should receive a copy of the booklet, *Ethics Guide for DOI Employees*, which summarizes important ethics laws and regulations. This booklet explains the standards of conduct on topics such as accepting gifts, outside work, gambling on government premises, political activities, and a variety of other topics that may concern a federal employee. As a federal employee, you are required to know and follow the ethics laws and regulations.

The director of the National Park Service is also the ethics counselor for the National Park Service. This person has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the ethics program to the ethics program manager who is also the deputy ethics counselor for the National Park Service. There are assistant ethics counselors in each region of the National Park Service. If you have any ethics questions or concerns, you should contact the assistant ethics counselor for your Servicing Human Resources Office. If you are unsure whom to contact, please call the deputy ethics counselor at (202) 354-1981 for assistance.



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CHAPTER 4: EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Office of Equal Opportunity Programs (OEOP) is in charge of and committed to ensuring a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. It also ensures that employees and/or applicants are fairly considered for job opportunities without regard to their race, religion, age, national origin, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, or reprisal. Discrimination and harassment on these bases is a prohibited personnel practice and a violation of the law protected by Title VII. Furthermore, the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Programs promotes equality of opportunity, diversity, inclusion, and respect and values employee contributions. The principles of diversity require acceptance of a broad range of values and practices with the overall goal to ensure we take full advantage of the differing viewpoints, ideas, and backgrounds that each of us brings to the table to make the best technical and management decisions for the National Park Service to accomplish its mission.



To meet these objectives, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs conducts and sponsors seminars and training on recognizing and preventing discrimination; reviews and develops bureau employment policies that reflect adherence to EEO principles; informs employees of their rights relating to equal employment opportunity; counsels employees and applicants who believe they have been discriminated against, making every attempt to informally resolve those concerns; and ensures prompt, fair, and impartial consideration of discrimination complaints.

Good inclusion and diversity practices help us identify and develop the best talent, create effective teams, achieve excellence, and realize mission success. Commitment to such practices is the foundation for building and maintaining a high quality workforce. We fully expect our leaders to demonstrate this commitment by aggressively eliminating barriers to success for all employees and seeking new and innovative ways to diversify our talent pool and be more inclusive.

DIVERSITY POLICY

The National Park Service is fully committed to utilizing the potential that embracing diversity brings and is determined to become a model of inclusion and diversity based on Executive Order 13583, “Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce.”

In our continuous pursuit of excellence, all personnel share responsibility for ensuring that the talents and contribution of each member are recognized, valued, and used in a manner that contributes to accomplishing the NPS mission. In an era when our flexibility, adaptability, and critical thinking are paramount to our readiness, a well-managed highly diverse workforce is imperative to achieving operational excellence. The Office of Equal Opportunity Programs uses full-



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time EEO professionals as well as EEO counselors and special emphasis program managers to help reach goals.

Employees and/or applicants who believe that they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or reprisal may initiate an EEO complaint that will be processed according to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations (29 CFR 1614) and should contact an NPS EEO counselor within 45 days of the perceived discriminatory act to meet the requirements of the regulation.

ROLE OF THE EEO COUNSELOR

The EEO counselor, a trained representative of the EEO program, counsels NPS employees and/or applicants who allege employment discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, or reprisal. EEO counselors promote zero tolerance of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature that are unwelcomed.

Counselors are required to maintain confidentiality of all issues relating to EEO concerns. They can serve as listeners who can help you deal with your concerns, as impartial fact finders, and as researchers for bureau EEO policies or procedures. EEO counselors are neutral; they are not your NPS legal representatives.

Allegations of discrimination will be addressed in a prompt, fair, and impartial manner. The NPS policy is to resolve any discrimination problems as soon as possible. The NPS encourages the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), most often the mediation process through the Conflict Resolution Office (CORE Plus), to resolve any conflict between employees at any stage of a disagreement.

The Office of Equal Opportunity Programs is headquartered in Washington, DC in a suite at the 1201 Eye Street location. Visit the [Office of Equal Opportunity](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=22&lv=2) website (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=22&lv=2>) for more information.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Reasonable accommodation is a logical change or adjustment to a job or worksite that makes it possible for qualified employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position in question. DOI bureaus/offices are required to make reasonable accommodation for a qualified individual with a disability unless it can be demonstrated that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operations of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Such a determination must be made on an individual basis. Alternatives will be explored to determine if the accommodation is most effective for both the individual with the disability and the bureau/office.

The DOI *Departmental Manual* (373 DM 15) specifies the purpose, authorities, policy, scope, definitions, responsibilities, guidelines, and other important information about reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities at <http://www.doi.gov/pmb/eo/policy.cfm>



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The two categories of reasonable accommodation are (1) modifications or adjustments to a job application process to permit an individual with a disability to be considered for a job, and (2) modifications or adjustments that enable employees with disabilities to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment. A request for accommodation is a verbal or written statement to the supervisor that identifies the employee's needs for an adjustment or a change at work or in the application process for a reason related to a medical condition. Accommodations should be made to physical or mental limitations identified to the supervisor. Work with an EEO representative if you need assistance on dealing with a reasonable accommodation situation.



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CHAPTER 5: YOUR APPOINTMENT

TYPES OF APPOINTMENTS

In most cases, you are selected for a position with the federal government through several types of appointments: career-conditional, career, time-limited (temporary or term), or excepted. Most new employees are given career-conditional appointments. The type of appointment you hold determines your eligibility for reinstatement into the federal service should you decide to leave.



Career-conditional Appointments

A career-conditional appointment is a permanent appointment that leads to career tenure after completion of three years of continuous service. Career-conditional employees are eligible for promotions and within-grade increases (WGIs) and benefits. Under career-conditional appointments, you must complete a one-year probationary period. Generally, career-conditional employees may not be promoted, reassigned, or transferred until three months after their initial appointment. If an employee does not complete the three-year period, a single break in service of more than 30 calendar days will require the employee to serve a new three-year period. (Periods of time in a nonpay status are not breaks in service and do not require the employee to begin a new three-year period. However, they may extend the service time needed for career tenure.)

Employees who do not have veteran preference and who leave their government jobs while under career-conditional appointments have reinstatement eligibility for three years from their date of separation. Therefore, without competing with other candidates, they may be reemployed to a position for which they qualify at the same grade or with no more promotional potential up to that of a position the employee previously held on a permanent basis under career or career-conditional appointment, even though the employee never reached the full performance level of the career ladder. Employees who have veteran preference and serve any period of time under their career-conditional appointment have reinstatement eligibility for life (if you leave federal service you may be reemployed without further competition to a position for which you are qualified at the same or lower grade level).

Career Appointments

Employees who have completed three years without a break in service under career-conditional appointments acquire career tenure and are converted to career appointments. If they leave the federal service as career employees, they have reinstatement eligibility for life.

Temporary Appointments

Temporary appointments are used to fill short-term employment needs of an organization. Temporary appointments are made for periods not to exceed one year, but may be extended up to two years. Temporary appointments may be terminated at any time upon written notice. General



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Schedule (GS) temporary employees are not eligible for promotions or within-grade increases. Wage Grade (WG) temporary employees are not eligible for promotions; however, they are eligible for within-grade increases. Service under a temporary appointment does not confer competitive status for career or career-conditional appointments. Under certain circumstances, temporary employees may be rehired for a subsequent appointment without further competition.

Term Appointments

Term appointments are normally used to fill temporary employment needs for a period of more than one year and may be extended in one-year increments not to exceed a total of four years. Term employees are eligible for within-grade increases, retirement coverage, and health and life insurance. The first year of a term position is considered a trial period. The employment of a term employee automatically ends at the expiration of the term appointment unless it has been ended earlier. Service under a term appointment does not confer competitive status for career or career-conditional appointments, or for reinstatement.

Excepted Appointments

Excepted appointments are used to fill positions that are exempt by law from the competitive system. Examples of employees under excepted appointments are student appointments, certain persons with disabilities, and positions filled by veterans under the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) authority. Excepted appointments can be either permanent or temporary.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Upon your initial appointment, you may be required to serve a probationary or trial period during your first year of service. Employees serving under excepted service appointments leading to permanent appointments must complete a one- or two-year trial period depending on the type of appointment. This period lets you demonstrate successful job performance. During this period, your supervisor will assess your conduct as well as work-related performance.

An employee who does not meet acceptable standards of conduct and performance may be removed at any time during the probationary or trial period. If you are separated during the probationary period for unsatisfactory conduct or performance, you have limited rights to appeal that decision. However, if you believe the separation action is discriminatory, you have the right to file a discrimination complaint through the EEO complaint process. For more information on what constitutes unlawful discrimination in personnel actions, see 42 CFR 2000e-16 and/or contact your local EEO program manager.

MERIT PROMOTION

When a vacancy occurs within the National Park Service, the selecting official may fill the position through the merit promotion procedures or other means within Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations. Under a merit promotion vacancy announcement, eligible candidates are identified in the announcement in the stated area of consideration or identified under “Who Can Apply.” Under the NPS Merit Promotion Plan, vacancy announcements are published and you as an interested employee may submit an application. Vacancy announcements give the job title, series,



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and grade; describe the duties; outline the qualification requirements; state other knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are required for the job; and provide application procedures including an assessment questionnaire, which is used to assess your knowledge, skill, or ability for the position. Candidates who are determined to be the best qualified are then referred to the selecting official for consideration. Selections for jobs are determined by merit without regards to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, or nondisqualifying handicap. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the NPS [Merit Promotion Plan](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=1&prg=14&cid=8372) (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=1&prg=14&cid=8372>) and clarify questions with your human resources specialist.

Qualification requirements for GS positions are described in the OPM [“Qualification Standards”](http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/index-Standards.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/index-Standards.asp>).

For more information on career and career-conditional appointments, probationary period, tenure, and competitive status consult 5 CFR Part 315.



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CHAPTER 6: YOUR PERFORMANCE

YOUR DUTIES

Shortly after you enter on duty, your supervisor will give you a copy of the position description for your job. This position description is the official record of your main duties, title, occupational series and code, and grade level. These factors are used to determine your pay. It is to your benefit to read it carefully and discuss any questions you may have about your position description with your supervisor to be sure that you both have the same understanding of the duties and responsibilities assigned to you.

Your supervisor will review your position description with you at least once a year to ensure it is accurate and complete. Your position description may not list each and every duty you are expected to perform, but it lists all regular and recurring responsibilities. Keep a copy of your position description and refer to it as needed. As you go along, make notes on your copy when your job changes so that you can discuss the changes with your supervisor.



EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PLAN

The DOI performance management policy is designed to document the expectations of individual and organizational performance, provide a meaningful process by which employees can be rewarded for noteworthy contributions to the organization and provide a mechanism to improve individual/organizational performance as necessary.

Your supervisor will explain your duties to you and discuss what is expected of you for satisfactory performance of your duties. Planning an employee's performance requirements includes establishing the critical elements and performance standards, which are documented in the Employee Performance Appraisal Plan. Critical elements (at least one, but not more than five) must be established for each employee at the start of each appraisal year, which begins on October 1 and ends September 30 the following year. A critical element is an assignment or responsibility of such



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importance that unsatisfactory performance in that element alone would result in a determination that the employee's overall performance is unsatisfactory. Through these elements, employees are held accountable for work assignments and responsibilities of their position.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards identify the performance threshold(s), requirement(s), or expectation(s) that must be met for each element at a particular level of performance. Benchmark performance standards may be used to describe general parameters of the standards, but they must be augmented by specific, measurable criteria such as quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or cost effectiveness for the "fully successful" level for each element. The employee should be able to understand how the results they are held responsible for are linked to the strategic and/or mission goals of the organization.

These benchmark performance standards are defined as

- **Exceptional:** Particularly excellent performance in all aspects of the position that is of such high quality that organizational goals have been achieved that would not have been otherwise. (5 points)
- **Superior:** Unusually good performance that exceeds expectations in critical areas and exhibits a sustained support of organizational goals. (4 points)
- **Fully Successful:** Good, sound performance that meets organizational goals. Employee effectively applies technical skills and organizational knowledge to get the job done. (3 points)
- **Minimally Successful:** The Department of the Interior has not developed a benchmark standard for the minimally successful level. However, managers and supervisors should develop a minimally successful standard at the development and issuance of the performance plan and/or at the time it is determined that an employee has not achieved fully successful performance. (2 points)
- **Unsatisfactory:** Quality and/or quantity of work are not adequate for the position. Work product does not meet the minimum requirements identified for minimally successful performance. (0 points)

These performance standards may be augmented by additional standards for specific critical elements.

If you have questions about your critical elements and performance standards, discuss them with your supervisor immediately. Do not wait until you have been formally rated against them.

APPRAISAL PERIOD

The appraisal process has two important goals: (1) to increase individual productivity by giving employees the information they need to do their jobs effectively, and (2) to improve organizational



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productivity by promoting communication between employees and supervisors about job-related matters so that more efficient methods of operation can be developed. Appraisals should fairly reflect an employee's overall performance.

Under the NPS appraisal system, the appraisal period begins October 1 and ends September 30 the following calendar year. The minimum period on which an appraisal may be based is 90 calendar days. Your supervisor will conduct a progress review with you approximately midway through the rating period. This is an opportunity to check on your progress, review your position description, identify any training needs or improvements, or revise your critical elements and/or performance standards.

It is important to note that minimally successful or unsatisfactory performance will result in denial of a within-grade increase. An unsatisfactory performance may be the basis for reduction in grade or removal from your job and the federal service.

FEEDBACK

Your supervisor wants you to succeed. Use your supervisor to help you learn your job. One good way to do this is to ask for feedback. Feedback is information that helps you know if you are learning your job. Employees who seek feedback from their supervisors learn their jobs more quickly and with fewer wrong turns than employees who shy away from feedback. Employees who seek feedback spend less time redoing work and submit work with fewer mistakes. As a result, they improve their work performance.

Receiving and using feedback is one of the most important keys to learning your job. As you do your work, ask for feedback from your supervisor to confirm you are on track. In the beginning, you may feel uncomfortable asking for feedback; however, you will soon feel more comfortable because you will be mastering your job and the feedback you get will become more positive.



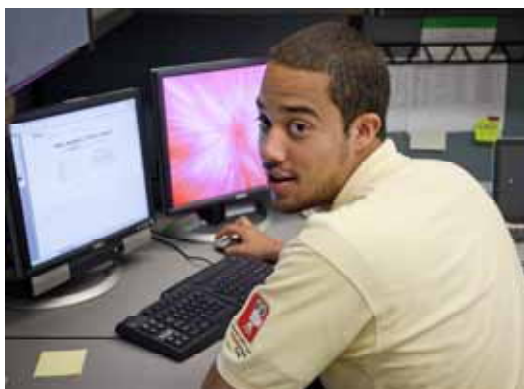
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CHAPTER 7: YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The National Park Service has always given employees opportunities to develop or improve their skills so that they can perform at their highest potential and advance according to their abilities. Although training and development opportunities may increase an employee's opportunity for advancement, the National Park Service believes that career development involves more than formal training. It involves matching an employee's interests and potential with opportunities for career progression within the organization. To meet this objective, you need information about the following:

- jobs within the National Park Service
- the variety of work performed
- the qualifications and experience required
- how to complete the NPS Fundamentals orientation training and other introductory training listed on the NPS Fundamentals website



Career information in this section can help you assess your career options or potential on the basis of your knowledge, skills, and abilities or the knowledge, skills, and abilities you wish to acquire. Work closely with supervisors, your Servicing Human Resources Office, and career development professionals. Use the materials and ideas given here so that you can search out realistic opportunities for your career advancement. Career development is a shared responsibility of the employee, but the National Park Service recognizes its responsibility to provide good information and preclude the setting of unrealistic goals and expectations.

DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

One way to design your career development is by establishing an individual development plan (IDP). An individual development plan is a written plan or schedule that sets forth, with some specificity, goals and actions that will aid in your overall career development. (See your supervisor for a sample



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individual development plan or visit the Workplace Enrichment website (<http://inside.nps.gov/we>) under “Documents and Resources Listing”). Individual development plans are a method of systematically planning for training and development experience to enhance the skills and knowledge you may need for career growth.

Your individual development plan should be designed to meet developmental objectives for either improving your current performance or preparing you for positions of greater responsibility. Rather than haphazardly chancing time and money on what may or may not be useful learning experiences, the individual development plan allows both you and your supervisor to set developmental objectives and plan experiences that will support those objectives. The individual development plan is not a binding contract, but rather a flexible ongoing development plan that should be updated as often as needed.

Responsibility for initiating, maintaining, and administering the individual development plan is shared jointly by you and your supervisor. If your needs for training and developmental assignments are not being met, you may need to take the initiative. No one has a greater stake in or a greater responsibility for your career than you.

Your supervisor is a significant information resource, coach, and counselor in the IDP process. Therefore, both you and your supervisor should assess your developmental needs by your career goals, the organization’s needs, and realistic career opportunities within the organization.

Use your individual development plan to plan training and developmental experiences (details, special projects, on-the-job training, classes or courses you could take as an employee or on your own). Your individual development plan can change year-to-year. Its main purpose is to help you set reasonable goals, assess your strengths, and chart development activities and training.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

As an employee you must be alert and responsive to your training and developmental needs. You, along with your supervisor, must pursue training opportunities that are related to your job and that interest you. A wide variety of training opportunities are offered, many of which may be paid for by the National Park Service if training is specifically related to the duties of your position. Check with your supervisor for further information on training that may be helpful to your career.



The National Park Service recognizes that employees are its most important resource, and it is committed to helping employees develop both professionally and personally. To achieve this goal, the National Park Service gives employees orientation (NPS Fundamentals), technical, and leadership training at suitable junctures in their careers.

It is NPS policy to give you the skills and knowledge necessary to enable you to perform at an optimum level in accomplishing the NPS mission. The National Park Service has the Horace Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon National Park; Stephen D. Mather Training Center in Harpers



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Ferry, West Virginia; and Historic Preservation Training Center in Frederick, Maryland, which offer a variety of training opportunities. Courses offered by these facilities can be found on the [Learning and Development Programs](http://www.nps.gov/training/index.htm) homepage (<http://www.nps.gov/training/index.htm>). Other training facilities throughout government may also offer courses to meet your needs.

- USDA Graduate School
- Office of Personnel Management training
- Department of the Interior learning centers
- National Conservation Training Center
- College and university courses
- Private sector courses
- Other government training courses
- Professional organization training
- On-the-job training

Many offices offer educational grants or awards to help employees prepare for career changes. The amount of the grants or awards and selecting criteria varies between offices, so you should check with your Servicing Human Resources Office to see if your office participates in the program.

FUNDAMENTALS

The NPS Fundamentals program, which is sponsored by the Workforce Management Learning and Development Office, is designed for all new permanent employees to develop an overall foundational understanding of the agency and its workforce, leadership, and values. The program includes both residential and online courses, which are to be completed within the first two years of service as a permanent employee. The two residential courses include a weeklong course in Washington, D.C. and a two-weeklong course in Grand Canyon, Arizona, both of which require official travel and use of a government charge card. Before and between the residential courses are required online components that require the use of a computer and work time to complete. For more information on the program, go to www.nps.gov/training/fund.



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CHAPTER 8: PAY, LEAVE, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

PAY INFORMATION

There are 26 paydays a year, occurring every 2 weeks. Your first payday will be 12 days after the close of the pay period in which you start work.



DIRECT DEPOSIT

The Department of the Interior requires that all new employees arrange for direct deposit of their net pay to a financial institution within 30 days of first reporting to work. A Direct Deposit Sign-up Form, SF1199A, should have been provided to you by the Human Resources Operations Center (HROC), before your entrance on duty. Be sure that you complete this form and return it at the latest by your first day of work. You may request a waiver of the direct deposit requirement if you believe that unusual circumstances should exclude you from participating in the program. Submit requests for a waiver of this requirement in writing to your Servicing Human Resources Office. If later you want to change where your check is deposited, you may change it using Employee Express www.employeeexpress.gov.

LEAVE AND EARNINGS STATEMENT

Each pay period you may access electronically through the Employee Express portal your Leave and Earnings Statement. This statement shows your gross pay for the period, the amount of each kind of deduction, your net pay, your current year gross earnings to date, and other important information. The statement also shows the amount of annual and sick leave earned, taken, and available and any other type of leave that you may have used. Each employee is responsible for reviewing the Leave and Earnings Statement to ensure data are correct. Visit the website www.employeeexpress.gov for more information. To learn how to read your Leave and Earnings Statement see appendix A.

HOW IS YOUR PAY SET?

Proper pay setting requires applying principles of good management and complying with laws and regulations. Your salary (either annual or hourly) is based on the classified grade of your position, your length of service in that grade, the pay system for your position, and the geographical locality of your duty station.



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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PAY SYSTEMS

The following are the most common pay systems for federal employees:

- *General Schedule (GS)*—covers the majority of federal white-collar employees. It is used to pay federal employees in professional, administrative, technical, clerical, and other types of positions that commonly work in an office environment.
- *Federal Wage System (FWS)*—covers most federal blue-collar employees. It is used to pay employees who work in trades, crafts, and skilled and unskilled labor positions.
- *United States Park Police (USPP)*—covers officers and members of the United States Park Police.
- *Senior Executive Service (SES)*—covers most senior level managerial, supervisory, and other policymaking jobs through the executive level.
- *Executive Level System*—covers members of the Cabinet, deputy secretaries, undersecretaries, and others in equivalent kinds of positions.

GENERAL SCHEDULE EMPLOYEES

Pay for a general schedule (GS) employee is part of the Classification Act System and is determined by Congress. The GS system is divided into 15 grades, each grade having 10 steps. Your grade level depends on the particular job you are in; employees generally are placed in step 1 when they are initially hired. Most pay rates are uniform throughout the federal government. For example, all GS-5, step 1 positions, receive the same basic pay regardless of geographical location. However, locality adjustments are made among different geographic locations.

The locality adjustments to pay are based on the geographic location of your duty station; these adjustments began in 1994 and have resulted in less uniformity of GS pay from area to area. These adjustments also mean greater equity with private industry. Schedules are posted on the OPM website at [Salaries and Wages](http://www.opm.gov/oca/12tables/index.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/12tables/index.asp>).

In addition to the standard General Pay Schedule, special pay rates have been established by the Office of Personnel Management to aid in recruiting for designated positions. These positions may require special skills or may be positions that are particularly difficult to fill.

The nationwide GS pay schedule is revised annually in response to the Employment Cost Index (ECI) minus 0.5%. This annual pay adjustment is effective January 1 each year, unless otherwise determined by Congress. Changes in fiscal policy may modify or completely transform these provisions.

FEDERAL WAGE SYSTEM (WG, WL, WS JOBS)

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the lead agency responsible for conducting Federal Wage System wage surveys and issuing wage schedules (pay scales). These surveys cover many trade, craft, and labor positions. Federal Wage System employees are paid on an hourly basis. These positions are paid prevailing rates for similar jobs within their geographic area. Under the Federal Wage System, pay is at the same rate for all federal agencies in a geographic area and is comparable to similar



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positions in private industry in the same area. Therefore, a carpenter in Santa Fe, New Mexico, may be paid less than a carpenter in Sacramento, California, even though both may be performing the same duties requiring the same degree of skill.

The Federal Wage System also has 15 grades. Each of these grades has five steps. Employees are normally placed in step 1 when they are hired.

UNITED STATES PARK POLICE (USPP)

The basic compensation for officers and members of the United States Park Police in the SP pay plan is the same as the rates of pay for officers and members of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department in corresponding or similar classes. This pay plan is adjusted by a corresponding amount when the GS pay system is annually adjusted by Congress. A USPP officer or member who is promoted or transferred to a higher salary will receive pay based on their total creditable service, which includes any police service in pay status with the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division, United States Park Police, or Metropolitan Police Department. Locality adjustments to pay are based on the geographic locations of the officer's duty station.

There are some USPP positions that are designated as technical pay positions. The Secretary of the Interior establishes and determines the positions in salary classes 1, 2, and 4.

DEDUCTIONS FROM YOUR PAY

Your pay after deductions have been withheld is your net (take-home) pay. Some deductions are required by law and others are authorized by you. Common deductions include the following:

- **Taxes**—federal and state taxes are withheld from your gross pay. The amount withheld is determined by your income and the information you provide on the W-4 form you complete before your entrance on duty. At the end of each calendar year, you will receive a W-2 statement of your earnings and the amount of taxes withheld for use in preparing your income tax returns.
- **Retirement**—career-conditional, career, term, or excepted nontemporary employees are subject to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974. A percentage of your base pay is deducted and deposited to your retirement account. New employees are covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).
- **Social Security**—FERS, term, and temporary employees are subject to the Social Security Act of 1935 and deductions are made according to the prevailing law.



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- **Medicare**—all wages are taxed for Medicare.
- **Life Insurance**—eligible employees who elect to be covered under Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) will have premium costs deducted through automatic payroll deductions.
- **Health Benefits**—eligible employees who are enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program will have premium costs deducted through automatic payroll deductions.
- **Savings Bonds**—If you choose to purchase U.S Savings Bonds through payroll deductions, the amount deducted depends upon the size and number you wish to purchase in a given period of time. At your request, the purchase of bonds may be changed or canceled at any time.
- **Combined Federal Campaign**—the Combined Federal Campaign is an annual voluntary program that allows employees to contribute to the charity or charities of their choice. You may make regular contributions to the Combined Federal Campaign through the payroll deduction plan.
- **Union Dues**—members of unions that have been granted exclusive recognition rights and have negotiated dues withholding agreements with an organization may elect to have monthly dues deducted from paychecks. You may sign up to have dues taken out of your check at any time; however, discontinuance of automatic dues deduction may occur only during a specified time frame each year (for more information, review your union contract or contact your Servicing Human Resources Office).
- **Thrift Savings Plan**—The thrift savings plan is a tax-deferred retirement savings and investment plan that offers the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans. If you are a new employee, you will have 3% of your pay automatically deducted, unless you have elected not to do so. Employees may choose to contribute to a traditional thrift savings plan and/or to a Roth thrift savings plan.

WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES (STEP INCREASES)

Each GS-1 through GS-15 position has 10 pay steps. You may receive step increases within your grade level. Eligibility for these step increases is based on time-in-grade and satisfactory performance. Step increases are not automatic but require certification from your supervisor that your job performance is meeting an acceptable level of competence. Under normal circumstances, the minimum waiting periods for step increases for GS employees are as follows:

	Step Minimum Waiting Period
Step 2, 3, and 4	52 calendar weeks
Step 5, 6, and 7	104 calendar weeks
Step 8, 9, and 10	156 calendar weeks



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Federal Wage System employees, including those on temporary appointments, are eligible for within-grade step increases. These periodic pay raises are affected as long as work performance is at a satisfactory level and the waiting period has been met. The waiting period for WG employees is as follows:

Step Minimum Waiting Period	
Step 2	26 calendar weeks
Step 3	78 calendar weeks
Step 4 and 5	104 calendar weeks

USPP employees, in grades SP-01 through SP-11 positions are eligible for within-grade step increases. Each grade has 14 steps. These periodic pay raises are not automatic; they require that your supervisor certify your performance is at a satisfactory or better level and you must have completed the waiting period based on years of service. Under normal circumstances, the minimum waiting periods for step increases for SP employees are as follows:

Step Minimum Waiting Period	
Steps 2 and 3	52 calendar weeks of active service
Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9	104 calendar weeks of active service
Step 10	156 calendar weeks of active service
Steps 11, 12, and 13	208 calendar weeks of active service

PREMIUM PAY

Under certain conditions, you can receive additional pay above your base salary. These conditions include

- **Overtime**

Overtime may be paid to full-time, part-time, and intermittent employees for work in excess of 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week. This must be work that has been officially ordered and approved in advance by the supervisor and performed by the employee. Leave with pay during an employee's tour of duty will not negate the employee's right to overtime work in excess of 8 hours in one day. There are exceptions to this rule for those employees who may be on alternate work schedules. Overtime pay is based on the type of appointment. Contact your supervisor or Servicing Human Resources Office to determine rate of pay.

- **Sunday Pay**

If you work on a Sunday as part of your regularly scheduled tour of duty, you will receive an additional 25% of your basic rate for each hour of work not exceeding 8 hours. Sunday pay is not paid for overtime or occasional Sunday work.



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- **Holidays**

The following holidays are observed in the federal service:

New Year's Day	January 1
Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday	Third Monday in January
George Washington's Birthday	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Veterans Day	November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25

When your regular tour of duty falls on a holiday, you will be paid at your regular pay rate if you were in a pay status either the day before or the day after the holiday. If you are required to work on a holiday, you will receive 8 hours of holiday pay and 8 hours of regular pay.

- **Compensatory Time**

Compensatory time is time off from duty in lieu of paid overtime work performed. Compensatory time for travel may also be earned (for more information, go to www.opm.gov/oca). Employees who are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act whose rate of basic pay exceeds a GS-10 may be required to take compensatory time off in lieu of paid overtime. GS and wage (hourly) employees who are nonexempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act will receive payment for authorized overtime, unless they request compensatory time off in lieu of payment for overtime worked. Your exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act is determined by your position and will be noted on your position description and notification of personnel action.

Employees must use any compensatory time accrued by the 26th pay period after the pay period in which it was earned. If not, exempt employees will forfeit the compensatory time. Nonexempt employees will be paid for the expiring compensatory time as overtime pay.

- **Credit Hours**

Credit hours are hours that an employee elects to work, with supervisory approval, in excess of the employee's basic work requirement under a flexible work schedule.

Credit hours are to be earned when work is available and the circumstances support continuing work (i.e., meeting deadlines, reducing backlogs, increasing productivity and efficiency). The following requirements apply:

- Credit hours must be earned during the basic workday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and outside of core time.
- Employees must complete their daily basic work requirement before they can earn credit hours.
- Credit hours must be earned and used in no less than 15-minute increments. Other requirements may also apply. Check with your supervisor for those requirements.
- An employee may not accumulate and carryover more than 24 credit hours.



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LEAVE BENEFITS

All federal government employees except employees on intermittent work schedules earn leave, including annual leave, sick leave, and other leave types. All periods of absence from work must be covered by one of the several types of approved leave.

Annual Leave

Annual leave is provided for each NPS employee who has an established tour of duty or work schedule and whose appointment is for 90 days or longer. Full-time employees earn annual leave each pay period in increments of 4, 6, or 8 hours, depending upon the total years of federal service. Both creditable civilian and military service are used in determining time increments for leave purposes. The rates of annual leave accrual are as follows:

Years of Creditable Federal Service	Pay Period Accrual	Total Annual Accrual
Less than 3 years	4 hours	13 days
3 to 15 years	6 hours	20 days
15 years or more	8 hours	26 days

Normally you may not carry over to the next year, more than 30 days (240 hours) of annual leave. Earned annual leave exceeding 240 hours must be used by the end of the leave year or it will be lost. Annual leave may be granted when requested with consideration to the effect of your absence on the assigned workload. Your request for annual leave must be submitted to and approved by your immediate supervisor in advance except in an emergency. If an emergency requires you to remain away from work without prior approval, you must notify your supervisor as soon as possible on the first day of your absence.

The minimum charge for use of annual leave is 15 minutes. Should you leave federal service, you will be paid a lump sum for any unused annual leave, at your current hourly rate of pay. Part-time employees earn leave based on the number of hours worked. Part-time employees with less than three years of service earn one hour of annual leave for each 20 hours in a pay status. Those with three but less than 15 years of service earn 1 hour of annual leave for each 13 hours in a pay status. Those with 15 or more years of service earn 1 hour of annual leave for each 10 hours in a pay status.

Sick Leave

Full-time employees earn 13 days of sick leave each year, at the rate of 4 hours per pay period (every 2 weeks). Employees who work on part-time basis with an established tour of duty earn sick leave at the rate of 1 hour for each 20 hours of duty. Credit may not exceed 4 hours of sick leave for 80 hours of duty in any pay period. There is no limit on the amount of sick leave you may accumulate. Use of sick leave is charged in increments of 15 minutes.

Sick leave may be used for the following purposes:

When you are unable to work because of sickness or injury, or when you have a medical, dental, or, optical appointment. Some limitations apply; please check with your supervisor or your administrative officer if you have any questions. You may also contact your Servicing Human Resources Office.



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These simple rules must be followed in using sick leave (but review your local policies):

- Use sick leave as little as possible and only for the proper reasons. Sick leave cannot be used to supplement annual leave.
- If you are too sick to work, notify your supervisor in accordance with local policy.
- Ask your supervisor in advance when you want to use sick leave for medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatment.
- Submit a medical certificate signed by your medical practitioner for periods of sick leave that last for more than three days or if requested by your supervisor for any other sick leave.

If you violate any of these rules, your leave may be charged to absent without leave (AWOL), rather than sick leave. Abuse of your sick leave may be cause for disciplinary action.

In case of serious disability or ailment, you may have to use all of your earned sick leave. Should this happen, at the discretion of your supervisor or manager, up to 240 hours (30 days) may be advanced if under permanent appointment or up to the amount of sick leave that you would earn during the remaining period of the appointment if under a time limited appointment. A request for an advancement of sick leave must be accompanied by medical certification.

Leave without Pay

Leave without pay (LWOP) may be granted under certain conditions when your annual leave or sick leave is exhausted and without undue interruption to the work of the National Park Service. Your request for leave without pay must be for personal reasons, illness, or for other reasons that are in the interest of the government such as educational purposes.

Administrative Leave

This is an administrative determination whereby your absence from work will not cause you to lose pay or to be charged annual leave. Administrative leave may include time involved in taking civil service examinations or physical examinations for entering military service, donating blood, participating in civil defense training, or experiencing adverse environmental conditions or emergency conditions such as bad weather.

Absence without Leave

The absence of an employee who does not secure approval of annual leave, sick leave, or leave without pay is recorded as absent without leave. The employee receives no pay for the period of unauthorized absence. Absent without leave may also result in disciplinary action.



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Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), most federal employees are entitled to 12 workweeks (480 hours) of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following purposes:

- the birth of a son or daughter of the employee and the care of such son or daughter;
- the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- the care of spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition; or
- a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position.

Sick leave may be substituted for leave without pay.

Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act

Employees may use up to 104 hours of sick leave, each year, to care for a family member who is incapacitated or who is receiving medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment, or to arrange for or attend the funeral of a family member.

Eligible family members differ between the two entitlements. Please check with your Servicing Human Resources Office for information and assistance.

It is important to note that if some of the 104 hours available for bereavement or other care of family members have been used; those hours must be deducted from the 480 hours available under the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Funeral Leave

Attendance at funerals is generally a private matter, and your absence from work must be charged to annual leave or to sick leave under the Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act. There are two exceptions when there is no charge to an employee's leave account: (1) an employee may have up to three days of funeral leave for the funeral or memorial service of an immediate relative whose death results from military service in a combat zone; (2) a military veteran may be excused from duty for up to 4 hours to serve as a pall bearer or guard of honor at the funeral of a member or veteran of the armed services; or (3) federal law enforcement officers or firefighters can be excused from duty to attend the funeral of a fellow law enforcement officer or firefighter.

Court Leave

Employees are eligible for court leave when called to serve on a jury or as a witness in a judicial proceeding in which the federal, state, or local government is a party. Employees will be placed on administrative leave while serving in this capacity. If you are a witness on behalf of a private party, you must request annual leave or leave without pay. Any pay received for serving on a jury must be turned over to the Finance Office for disposition unless you request to be placed on annual leave. If placed on approved annual leave, you may retain the pay received from serving on a jury. Immediately inform your supervisor if you are summoned for jury duty or as a witness in a judicial proceeding.



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Military Leave

Employees are entitled to time off at full pay for certain types of active or inactive duty in the National Guard or as a reserve of the armed forces. Employees accrue 15 days of military leave each fiscal year and may carry over 15 days from a prior fiscal year. Military leave depends on the type of appointment and work schedule of the employee. Advance notice of military orders is required so that your supervisor may make appropriate work adjustments. Contact your Servicing Human Resources Office for more information.

Workers' Compensation

If, as a federal employee, you sustain injuries, including occupational disease, as a result of your employment with the federal government, you may be entitled to monetary compensation, medical care and assistance (attendant's allowances), vocational rehabilitation, and employment retention rights. For more information, contact your Servicing Human Resources Office or your park Office of Workers' Compensation Program (OWCP) coordinator.

Voting

As a general rule, where the polls are not open at least 3 hours before or after your regular work hours, you may be permitted to report to work 3 hours after the polls open or leave work 3 hours before they close, whichever requires the less amount of time off. Coordinate the time away from your duty station with your supervisor.

Federal Leave Share Program

Employees who have a medical emergency and have exhausted all of their sick, compensatory time, and annual leave may request to become leave recipients under the federal leave share program. This program enables employees to donate their annual leave to designated leave recipients.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION PROGRAM

NPS policy is to encourage all employees to exceed performance requirements, participate actively in the common task of improving efficiency and economy of government operations, and submit ideas for improvements. The current awards program recognizes employees individually or in a group. Some of the awards are for activities such as achieving organizational results; providing quality customer service; displaying exemplary behavior, dedication, innovation, or team cooperation; fostering partnerships; promoting diversity; ensuring safety in the workplace; or demonstrating sustained exceptional performance. Most employees are eligible for these awards with some exceptions. Candidates for these awards are generally nominated by the employee's supervisor, but peers can also submit nominations. The types of awards used most often in the National Park Service include the following:

Performance Awards

Employees may be given a cash or time off award based on their performance rating. The rating must be at a level 4 or 5 and supported by the final rating of record (performance appraisal). For more



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information on awards, visit [Workplace Enrichment, Recognition and Awards](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=2&prg=124&id=10096) (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=2&prg=124&id=10096>).

Quality Step Increases

A quality step increase (QSI) is a performance-based award and is a pay increase that provides faster than normal progression through the steps for permanent GS employees. To be eligible for a quality step increase, employees must achieve an overall rating of exceptional (level 5) on their employee performance appraisal plan (EPAP) and display exceptional performance that is expected to continue.

Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) Awards

STAR awards are cash or time-off awards based on a specific achievement or contribution. It may also be given for exceptional accomplishments over a period of time. The STAR award may be given individually or to a group. The amount of the award should be commensurate with the value of the individual or team accomplishment, considering the overall benefit to the government. STAR awards are also paid through the normal payroll process.

Ideas and Suggestions

You are encouraged to suggest improvements in methods, procedures, service to the public, and employee morale. Suggestions may be within or outside of your job responsibilities. Submit suggestions in writing to your supervisor. If adopted, suggestions may earn a monetary award.

Service-level Awards

The National Park Service sponsors a wide range of honorary (nonmonetary) awards to recognize achievements in specific areas. Nominations for all NPS service-level awards will be solicited in two semiannual awards calls—one in December and one in June.

To view a listing of which awards are covered by the December and June calls, as well as additional information about the NPS Awards Program review and new award nomination procedures, visit [Workplace Enrichment, Recognition and Awards](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=2&prg=124&id=10096) (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=2&prg=124&id=10096>).

Other Awards

Honor awards are made for distinguished, valorous, meritorious, and commendable service. Length of service emblems are awarded by the Department of the Interior for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 years of employment.

Nonmonetary awards may be given instead of or in combination with monetary awards for any of the reasons given above. For more detailed information on any of the award types, see the *Department of the Interior Human Resources Management Handbook*, “Awards and Recognition Program,” available online at <http://www.doi.gov/hrm/guidance/awdrec.pdf>.



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CHAPTER 9: INSURANCE, HEALTH AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Employees joining the National Park Service should explore opportunities for obtaining health, life, and retirement benefits offered to the federal workforce. As a new federal employee, your eligibility varies depending on your type of appointment. You will be contacted by staff from the Human Resources Operations Center located in Colorado regarding these benefits. If you have any questions, you may contact the Human Resources Operations Center at 1-877-642-4743 or visit [Human Resources Operations Center](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1042&lv=3) (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1042&lv=3>).



HEALTH BENEFITS

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program can help you and your families meet your health care needs. Federal employees enjoy the widest selection of health plans in the country. The FEHB program offers you an opportunity to join certain health plans with better rates and better protection than you might acquire individually. You cannot be denied coverage because of a preexisting condition under the FEHB program. The FEHB program offers federal employees more than six nationwide fee-for-service plans (PPO) and numerous state-specific HMO plans. Each year federal employees have the opportunity to change plans, cancel, or enroll in the FEHB program during the annual open season, which occurs in late autumn.

New employees have 60 days from their appointment date to sign up for the FEHB program. To find out more information on the FEHB program, research health insurance plans, and compare premiums, please visit [Federal Employees Health Benefits Program](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/index.asp>).

HIGH DEDUCTIBLE HEALTH PLAN AND HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT

The FEHB program in addition to its traditional health insurance plans, offers high deductible health plans (HDHP) with health savings accounts (HSA). These plans provide traditional medical coverage and a tax-free way to help you build savings for future medical expenses. The high deductible health plans with health savings accounts gives you greater flexibility and discretion over how you use your health care benefits. To learn more about high deductible health plans with health savings accounts, visit [High Deductible Health Plans with Health Savings Accounts](http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/hsa/intro.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/hsa/intro.asp>).

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT

The Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSAFEDS) program offers three different flexible spending accounts: (1) a health care flexible spending account, (2) a limited expense health care flexible



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spending account, and (3) a dependent care flexible spending account. The FSAFEDS program is an employee benefit program that allows you to set aside money on a pretax basis for certain health care and dependent care expenses.

New employees who wish to enroll in this program must do so within 60 days after they become eligible, but before October 1 of the calendar year. Current enrollees must remember to enroll each year to continue participating in FSAFEDS as enrollment **does not** carry forward year to year. The FSAFEDS program offers the same annual open season as the FEHB program. To find out more information on the federal flexible spending account program and to enroll, visit www.fsafeds.com.

DENTAL AND VISION INSURANCE

The Federal Dental and Vision Program (FEDVIP) is a separate and supplemental plan to the FEHB program. It provides dental and vision coverage through a variety of insurers. Federal employees can choose among four nationwide and three regional dental plans, and three nationwide vision plans. New employees have 60 days from their appointment date to sign up for dental or vision insurance. The FEDVIP program offers the same annual open season as the FEHB program. To find out more information on the Federal Dental and Vision Program and to enroll, visit www.benefeds.com.

LIFE INSURANCE

The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program offers you an opportunity to sign up for life insurance without having to take a physical. If you are eligible for the FEGLI program, unless you sign a waiver, you are automatically enrolled for the basic life insurance upon entrance on duty.

The FEGLI program offers basic life insurance coverage and three types of optional life insurance coverage. Basic coverage is equal to your current annual salary, rounded up to the next highest thousand plus an additional \$2,000. For example, if your annual salary is \$51,500 your basic life insurance coverage is worth \$54,000. The optional coverage is based on multiples of your salary and can be worth as much as five times your annual salary. The FEGLI program also offers minimal optional coverage on both your spouse and dependent children. The FEGLI program is a group term life insurance program and does not build cash value.

New employees have 60 days from their appointment date to sign up for the FEGLI program. To find out more information on the FEGLI program, visit [Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance](http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/index.asp>).

To better understand the cost of the FEGLI coverage you are considering to elect, you can use the online FEGLI calculator (www.opm.gov/calculator/worksheet.asp). The FEGLI calculator allows you to determine the face value of various combinations of FEGLI coverage, calculate premiums for the various combinations of coverage, and find out how choosing different options can change the amount of life insurance and the premium withholdings.



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LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) provides long-term care insurance to assist in paying for costs of care when enrollees need help with activities they perform every day or if enrollees have a severe cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's disease.

Long-term care insurance is a smart way to protect your income and assets and remain financially independent should you need long-term care services at home, in a nursing home or assisted living facility, or in other settings. Most health insurance programs, including the FEHB program, TRICARE, and TRICARE for Life, provide little or no coverage for long-term care.

Long-term care is care that you may need for the rest of your life. This care can span years and can be expensive depending on the type of care you need and location where that care is received. Long-term care insurance is one way of helping to pay for these expenses.

The John Hancock Life & Health Insurance Company is the provider for the FLTCIP group policy. The federal government has worked closely with the company to ensure this insurance coverage offers the kind of benefits and features that are valuable to members of the federal family today and in the future. The long-term care insurance program is a comprehensive plan and you will find that with this program you can choose to receive care at home, in an assisted living facility, in a nursing home, or in other settings. Additional features include respite care, bed reservations, portability, caregiver training, guaranteed renewable, waiver of premium, inflation protection options, and others.

New employees have 60 days to sign up for the long-term care insurance program using the Abbreviated Underwriting application form. Current NPS employees who are eligible for the long-term care insurance program may enroll at any time using the Full Underwriting application process. In addition to employees, current spouses, adult children, parents, parents-in-law, and stepparents are also eligible for coverage.

To find out more information on The Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program and to enroll, visit their website at www.ltcfeds.com

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Retirement benefits are among the most important benefits of federal employment. It is never too early to start planning for your retirement. Most federal employees will be in one of two retirement systems. The Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) originally covered employees first employed prior to 1987. The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) is the retirement system covering employees first employed after 1987 and those who voluntarily switched from the Civil Service Retirement System.

Federal Employees Retirement System

The Federal Employees Retirement System is a three-tiered retirement plan consisting of the FERS pension, social security benefits, and the thrift savings plan.



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The FERS pension portion of your retirement system is a defined benefit plan, which means you will be eligible for a pension from the federal government that will be based on years of service, age requirements, and salary history. You must work at least five years with the federal government before you are eligible for a FERS pension, and for every year you work, you will be eligible for at least 1% of your High-3 Average Salary History. Automatic deductions based on a percentage of your basic pay will be used to fund your FERS pension. To find out more about the Federal Employment Retirement System, visit [FERS Retirement](http://www.opm.gov/retire/pre/fers/index.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/retire/pre/fers/index.asp>).

The social security portion of your retirement system is an additional retirement benefit that you may apply for as early as age 62. Your benefit amount is based on your earnings averaged over most of your working career. Higher lifetime earnings result in higher benefits. Your social security benefit amount also is affected by your age at the time you start receiving benefits. If you start your social security benefits at age 62, your benefit will be lower than if you wait until your full retirement age. Most people need 40 credits (10 years of work) to qualify for social security retirement benefits.

As a federal employee, you pay full social security taxes equal to 6.2% of your salary. To find out more about social security, visit www.ssa.gov.

Thrift Savings Plan

The thrift savings plan (TSP) is a defined contribution plan and a long-term savings plan that allows for the employee to take control of how much and where your money is being invested. It offers federal civilian employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans. The thrift savings plan has both a traditional contribution option (pretax contributions) and Roth contribution option (after tax contributions) for all federal employees.

Traditional Contributions

These contributions are before-tax contributions. Before-tax contributions, allows you to reduce the amount of income tax you pay annually. Your investment earnings will also grow tax-deferred; this allows you to delay paying taxes on your TSP account earnings until you start to withdraw from your TSP account. Traditional (pre-tax) contributions, which lower your current taxable income, give you a tax break today. They grow tax-deferred in your account, but when you withdraw your money, you pay taxes on both the contributions and their earnings.

Roth Contributions

Roth contributions are taken out of your paycheck after your income is taxed. When you withdraw funds from your Roth account, you will receive your Roth contributions tax-free because you have already paid taxes on the contributions. You will not pay taxes on any investment earnings, as long as you are at least age 59½ (or disabled) and your withdrawal is made at least five years after the beginning of the year in which you made your first Roth contribution. The TSP Roth feature will give participants flexibility in the tax treatment of their contributions now and in the future. Both CSRS and FERS employees are eligible to participate in the thrift savings plan and they each have the same IRS elective deferral limits, the same types of funds to invest in, and the same withdrawal options.



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If you are a FERS employee, you receive matching contributions on the first 5% of pay that you contribute each pay period. The first 3% of pay that you contribute will be matched dollar-for-dollar; the next 2% will be matched at 50 cents per dollar. Contributions above 5% will not be matched. If you stop making regular employee contributions, your matching contributions will also stop. Matching contributions are not taken out of your pay. Matching contribution monies will be placed in your TSP account by the bureau.

The thrift savings plan offers the choice of investing by percentage of salary or by dollar amount per pay period. Once an employee is enrolled, they may change contributions and reallocate funds using the TSP website. The employee has the option of investing in five available funds, or in a choice of “L” (lifecycle) funds. Lifecycle funds, use professionally determined investment mixes that are tailored to meet investment objectives based on various time horizons.

If you were recently hired, your agency automatically enrolled you in the TSP at a 3% contribution rate. Three percent of your basic pay is deducted from your paycheck each pay period and deposited in your TSP account, unless you have made an election to change or stop your contributions. If you had a 401(k) from a previous employer or an eligible IRA, you may be eligible to roll money over from those accounts into your TSP account.

Regardless of your retirement system, participating in the thrift savings plan can significantly increase your retirement income and starting early is important. Contributing early gives the money in your account more time to increase in value by compounding of earnings. To learn more about the thrift savings plan, visit www.tsp.gov.



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CHART OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Type of Appointment	FEHB FEGLI FSA FEDVIP LTC	CSRS FERS	TSP	Social Security	Leave Sick / Annual
Career/ Career-Conditional	YES	YES	YES	YES FERS/CSRS offset	YES
Term	YES	YES (FERS only)	YES	YES	YES
VRA/ Veterans Authority	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Student Permanent	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Student Temp	NO**	NO	NO	YES	YES
Temp/ NTE 1 Year	NO**	NO	NO	YES	YES
Seasonal Temp/ NTE One Year	NO**	NO	NO	YES	YES
Career Seasonal/ Subject to Furlough	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

**Eligible for the FEHB program after completing one year of continuous service; employee pays both the employee share and government share of the FEHB premium.

To better understand your federal benefits, call the Human Resources Operations Center—Employee Benefits Branch at 1-877-642-4743.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential counseling program that offers assessment, short-term counseling, and referral services to help employees deal with a wide range of drug, alcohol, family, marital, work-related, money, mental health problems, or any situation that causes stress or worry. The employee assistance program is intended to help employees with problems so they can lead happier lives and be productive workers.



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The employee assistance program is confidential. EAP records and conversations between an EAP counselor and an employee are private. They do not become part of the official personnel record. Release of EAP records is generally prohibited without the employee's written permission.

The employee assistance program may be used by all NPS employees. Any employee may enter EAP counseling at any time. The employee assistance program may also be used by an employee's immediate family, which is defined as spouse and parents thereof, dependent parents, and children including adopted children, stepchildren, and foster children, as well as any other dependents residing within the employee's home.

Please visit the [HROC Employee Notices](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=3&prg=1042&id=9841) website (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=3&prg=1042&id=9841>) for more information.

OTHER BENEFITS

Child Care

The NPS Child Care Subsidy Program has been created to assist NPS employees with child care costs by providing payments directly to licensed child care centers, licensed home day care providers, or accredited centers. For families with infants, toddlers, and school-age children, child care can be challenging, whether it is finding programs, paying for care, juggling multiple and conflicting school schedules, or managing before school and afterschool issues. For more information, visit the [Child Care Subsidy](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1011&lv=3) website (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=1011&lv=3>).

Transportation Benefits

All DOI employees who incur qualifying transportation expenses and are not receiving federally subsidized workplace parking benefits from the U.S. Department of the Interior or any other federal agency, are eligible to participate in this program. If you incur qualifying transportation expenses commuting to and from work, you will be eligible to receive a transit pass or monthly/annual pass to cover these expenses. The maximum amount is up to \$125.00 per month, and the transit passes are purchased by bureaus and offices using their appropriated funds. Ask your transportation coordinator for more information or visit the [Transportation Benefits](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custompages.cfm?prg=124&id=9822&lv=2&pgid=3968) website (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custompages.cfm?prg=124&id=9822&lv=2&pgid=3968>).

For more information on other benefits, please visit the [Workplace Enrichment](http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=124&lv=2) website (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?prg=124&lv=2>).



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CHAPTER 10: HANDLING BUREAU INFORMATION AND RECORDS

As a NPS employee, you will handle an array of information and records. Thus, you should become familiar with some of the laws and regulations on how government employees must handle data. The following sections on information collection, the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act, and the Federal Records Act explain requirements for handling information and records. Why do you need to know these legal requirements about information? You may be collecting information from the public through questionnaires, gathering resource monitoring or survey data in the field, creating correspondence, developing a database on your computer, designing a website, performing system management for a database that may contain information on individuals and other sensitive information, or deciding to delete email messages from your computer.



THE PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

As a government employee, you may have to work with or handle records or information about individuals. Generally, such records will require special handling and safeguarding because they are subject to the requirements of the Privacy Act. The Privacy Act establishes special requirements for collecting, creating, maintaining, and distributing records that can be retrieved by the name of an individual or other identifier (whether in paper or electronic form). These are called Privacy Act Systems of Records.

When information is collected from the public, the form used must have a privacy notice stating the purpose and uses of the information collected and if the information is going to be filed by the person's name or by another identifier. The Office of Management and Budget must approve this form. When you develop a record system (or change an existing one) that includes information that can be retrieved by a person's name or other identifier, you must notify the public of such a system in the *Federal Register*. The subject of a Privacy Act System of Records can ask to see, correct, and appeal the information in that record. These disclosure restrictions are subject to civil and criminal penalties. For more information, see 43 CFR 2.56 or contact your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Privacy Act coordinator.

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is meant to ensure that the public has access to information that is maintained by the government. The Freedom of Information Act also recognizes that the government must safeguard certain information that falls under one of the nine FOIA exemptions. Some of the requirements of the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 ensure access to government information maintained in all formats (e.g., email, backup tapes), and makes more information available to the public electronically. For more information on the DOI FOIA policy, visit [The Freedom of Information Act Program](http://www.doi.gov/foia/) website (<http://www.doi.gov/foia/>).



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If you receive a request from the public for information, you will need to determine if the material requested is public or nonpublic information. Even if a request does not cite the Freedom of Information Act, you should still consider whether it is protected under the act or the Privacy Act (see the following section). Consult your FOIA coordinator for more information.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Federal records are not exclusively paper documents. They may exist as electronic data stored on magnetic tape or CDs, email messages, photographs, slides, films, videos, maps, charts, graphs, and micrographic materials.

You will handle many different types of government records during your government career. You are responsible for

- maintaining records that you receive or generate according to the NPS filing system or sending them to your office records manager for safekeeping
- maintaining any sensitive information safely and according to NPS policy and assigning a filing code or case file number to documents that you generate
- destroying or removing records from your office only if authorized to do so by the [NPS Records Disposition Schedule](http://www.doi.gov/foia/) (<http://www.doi.gov/foia/>)

Records can neither be destroyed before their scheduled date nor removed from the agency's custody. Federal records are, after all, the sole property of the government. Employees who are leaving the National Park Service must be careful not to take any federal records at the time of departure. Remember, the premature destruction or alienation of records is a serious violation of the Federal Records Act, punishable by fine and a jail sentence. Each office has a designated records manager who can help you with records management matters.

Once again, for more information on the handling of official records and documents, contact the bureau records officer or your office FOIA or records coordinators.



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CHAPTER 11: OTHER THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

This chapter includes other things you need to know about working with the National Park Service that are outside of the primary categories of activity covered in previous chapters. Remember to see your supervisor for help in finding sources of information on any of the following subjects or other areas of interest for your duties.

EMPLOYEE COMMITTEES

Offices often have standing committees such as safety, computer, wellness, and welfare. Check with your supervisor for information on committees in your office.

YOUR RECORDS

An electronic official personnel file (eOPF) has been created for you. It is maintained by the Human Resources Operations Center. You should receive a password to access your file. The file contains important documents pertaining to your employment, such as copies of notification of personnel action (SF 50), insurance election papers, and TSP documents. You will be able to access your official personnel file at <https://eopf.nbc.gov/doi/>, using a government computer. To access your eOPF account, please utilize the eOPF self-service ID and password retrieval method. This feature consists of

- Part 1: Obtain your eOPF ID
- Part 2: Obtain your eOPF temporary password
- Part 3: First Time eOPF Login Process

It is important that you review your eOPF information regularly for accuracy and ensure that all important documents are there. If there are any discrepancies, you should contact the Human Resources Operations Center.

Your appointment to the Department of the Interior will be officially recorded on a form, *Notification of Personnel Action* (SF 50) and filed in your official personnel file. This document indicates the type of appointment you hold and other general information concerning your employment status. You will receive SF 50s periodically throughout your federal employment to document changes in pay, position, or appointment status.

HOMELAND SECURITY PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE-12

Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 (HSPD-12), “Policy for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors” defined a common identification standard for



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federal employees, contractors, and affiliates throughout the federal government that is called the personal identity verification (PIV) card. The PIV card is required for all persons who have access to federal facilities and/or systems for a period of 180 days or more. The Department of the Interior introduced the DOI-Access card to meet federal requirements for use of the PIV card.

The DOI-Access card is already in use throughout the Department of the Interior as a flash pass for visual security verification. Many facilities have already introduced facility access whereby the card provides entry upon being scanned. The card can be used for logon to DOI systems, and many applications are starting to require the use of the card. The card also provides digital signature capabilities.

The card will also enhance the ability of the government to address emergency response scenarios. In the event of an emergency, the card can be used to track personnel and resources to ensure that personnel are on location where they can be best utilized to address the crisis.

For more information on the USAccess program, visit www.fedidcard.gov.

SAFETY

The National Park Service is committed to the safety and health of each NPS employee. To provide consistent guidance to all employees, a comprehensive collection of safety and health materials has been produced and is compiled in the [National Park Service Occupational Safety and Health Program, Reference Manual 50B](http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders/DOrder50B.html) (<http://www.nps.gov/refdesk/DOrders/DOrder50B.html>). Discuss the standards that are applicable to your workplace and operations with your supervisor prior to starting work.

If at any time, you notice an unsafe condition or practice in your office, work site, or park that could affect another employee or a visitor, it is imperative you immediately report it to your supervisor, safety and health manager, or collateral duty safety officer. While others may have become complacent and accepting of an unsafe situation or condition, your fresh perspective and willingness to raise the issue may prevent a co-worker or visitor from suffering an injury or worse.

If you are injured while at work or have a vehicle accident while working or in official travel status, notify your supervisor immediately. The injury or vehicle accident will need to be reported in the Safety Management Information System (SMIS) to initiate workers' compensation claims and benefits (if applicable) and for safety reporting purposes. Your supervisor can assist you with accessing the system and the information you need to record is minimal. Inputting this information into the safety management information system must occur as soon as possible after the injury or accident occurs.

Each office is required to maintain a current occupant emergency plan that establishes procedures for safeguarding lives and property during emergencies, including fire evacuations and shelter in place. Please contact your occupant emergency coordinator for a copy of the plan and for instruction on what to do in the event of an emergency. Waiting until an emergency occurs to be concerned is the worst option.

NPS operational leadership empowers employees to be assertive about their safety and the safety of their team and encourages them to participate in the decision-making and risk management process. As a component of the NPS safety system, a goal of NPS operational leadership is to assist the NPS



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workforce in achieving a higher level of professional excellence by creating and fostering a culture of safety that seeks out and values input from employees who are the best equipped to make risk management decisions within the organization.

DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

[Executive Order 12564, “Drug-free Federal Workplace”](http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12564.html) (<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12564.html>) made it a condition of employment for all federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off duty. The Department of the Interior has implemented a comprehensive program that includes extensive awareness and educational opportunities for all employees, as well as drug testing, counseling, discipline of users, and provisions for rehabilitation of employees who use drugs off duty.

Drug testing may occur under these circumstances:

- applicant testing for designated positions
- random testing of sensitive employees in testing designated positions
- reasonable suspicion testing
- accident or unsafe practice testing
- voluntary testing
- testing as a follow up to counseling or rehabilitation

UNIFORMS

The National Park Service has always stood for the highest standard of public service. The NPS uniform is a tool to help employees perform their duties more effectively by permitting visitors to easily recognize on-duty employees.

The uniform program plays a critical role in the “total image concept,” which applies to all employees and the park image, including individual physical fitness, personal grooming, demeanor, employee attitude, and how it serves its intended purpose. The majority of the uniformed personnel are employees who have high public visibility during most of the workday. The park superintendent or head of office is responsible for determining who will wear the uniform, which type of uniform will be worn, and which area options are included. Employees who are required to wear the uniform receive a uniform allowance to help defray the initial purchase and maintenance and replacement costs of the uniform. Additional information on the uniform program may be obtained from the uniform coordinator at the park or office.

TOUR OF DUTY (WORK SCHEDULE)

A variety of tour of duty options are used in NPS work sites. You may have the option of electing to participate in different work schedules and flexitime arrangements. Management reserves the right to establish a regular, fixed workweek or shift operations according to regulations as the work of the



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organization dictates. Discuss your tour of duty options with your supervisor. Your supervisor and/or the administrative officer will have guidelines on the various options.

TELEWORK

The government makes many strides to allow employees to balance work and home life. Telework is an innovative management tool that provides employees with the opportunity to perform their duties at alternative work sites during an agreed portion of their workweek. Telework is not an employee entitlement. Some duties may make employees ineligible to telework. Refer to the *Telework Handbook* and other resources provided on the [Telework](#) site (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/waso.cfm?lv=3&prg=1072>) to help you determine if you are eligible for the telework program.

EMPLOYEE EXPRESS

You can change a variety of discretionary personnel and payroll transactions automatically without going through the Human Resources Operations Center and without completing any paperwork. Employee Express is a 24-7 automated system that will help you make personnel and payroll changes and review your current information. This is a good tool to help you manage your pay and benefits. This service is provided by Office of Personnel Management. For more information contact the help desk at 912-757-3030 or send a message via email to eexbhelp@opm.gov. You may access employee express from any computer at www.employeeexpress.gov. You will need a password to access this website. You can go to the above-mentioned website to request the password.

GOVERNMENT OWNED EQUIPMENT

Government owned equipment such as vehicles, computers, and so forth can be used for job-related purposes and are not for private use. Use of the email and Internet is limited and strictly regulated. Meet with your supervisor to discuss how these tools can be appropriately used and familiarize yourself with local and governmentwide policies.

MOTOR VEHICLE USE AND CARE

Government vehicles are to be used exclusively for official government business by government employees. Demonstrated competence and your supervisor's authorization are required before you can operate a government vehicle. Use of government vehicles also applies to vehicles an employee may rent on the behalf of the government for work-related travel. Consult your local policies for more information.

PROCUREMENT

Procurement or acquisition is the government buying of products or services from another government agency, contractor, private business, nonprofit organization, or state agency. If you are



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issued a government charge card, you will be required to take training that will provide you with information on the rules and regulations regarding charge card purchases. Even though the government charge card can be used to make most purchases, check with your supervisor to discuss how goods and services are purchased in your office or work site.



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SUPERVISOR



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The supervisor is the most important player for the success of any onboarding program. Indeed, one of the primary roles of the supervisor is to ensure that new employees are acclimated to the National Park Service; understand formal rules, procedures, and unwritten norms; perform according to expectations; and feel that they are full participants in the organization. Because supervisors have direct contact with new employees on a recurrent basis and possess expertise in the functional area, you are best positioned to share knowledge both general and technical about the NPS, assess training needs, establish expectations to ensure incremental growth, and address expected and unexpected problems. In sum, supervisors drive the onboarding process.

WHAT IS ONBOARDING?

The National Park Service is committed to helping new employees succeed within the agency and be proud to be a part of the organization. NPS onboarding programs will provide all new employees with a consistent and welcoming introduction to the National Park Service. Onboarding, therefore, is not orientation, but rather an ongoing process of acclimation by which new employees ultimately maximize their contribution and productivity. At the same time, a successful onboarding program provides new hires with the resources to become fully productive and engaged. Unlike the traditional new employee orientation, onboarding is not a one-time event nor is it mainly focused on completing forms or learning about benefits.

Onboarding has important benefits for the organization. Research has shown that onboarding improves employee performance, engagement, retention, and accelerates time-to-productivity. Moreover, 90% of new employees decide whether they will stay at an organization during their first six months on the job.² For this and many other reasons, workforce concerns have been a prominent component of the [President's Management Agenda \(PMA\)](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/budget/fy2002/mgmt.pdf) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/budget/fy2002/mgmt.pdf>) and [OPM End-to-End Hiring Roadmap](http://www.opm.gov/StaffingPortal/EndToEndRoadmap.asp) (<http://www.opm.gov/StaffingPortal/EndToEndRoadmap.asp>), both calling upon agencies to develop strategic solutions to complex organizational challenges.

In sum, successful employee onboarding is an ongoing process that helps the new person become a valuable part of the organization. Simply giving information to new employees does not help them become an integral part of the organization. The process of orientation belongs at every level of the organization, but begins with the supervisor. Along with the role of the supervisor, the orientation may also include the role of a sponsor or peer assistance liaison. The peer assistance liaison is a person who helps the new employee transition smoothly into the organization.

An effective onboarding process should encourage and support new employees to take responsibility for the following:

- communicating their information needs
- learning about the organization
- building relationships
- using all available tools and resources
- being open to feedback

² L. Thompson, "Onboarding: Maximizing Productivity and Retention," *PM Boulevard*, June 2007.



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CHAPTER 2: WHY ORIENT EMPLOYEES?

SUSTAIN MOTIVATION

Most new employees are enthusiastic and motivated when they begin their new jobs. Effective orientation can help sustain this motivation.

Remember . . . early enthusiasm can be sustained if new employees feel

- welcomed and included by others
- their work is meaningful and fulfilling
- appreciated and important
- competent to perform the job



IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

The quality of the orientation is related to both short-term and long-term employee productivity. Researchers have found that an investment in orientation can result in faster learning rates, higher work output, fewer costly mistakes, and lower absenteeism.

Remember . . . to improve productivity new employees must feel

- onboarding is meaningful
- onboarding meets individual needs
- onboarding is valued by their supervisor

REDUCED TURNOVER

The Merit Systems Protection Board estimates that of the federal employees who leave their jobs, 25% to 30% leave within their first year. Other studies estimate that as many as 60% of the new hires leave their jobs in less than 12 months. Exit interviews have found that common reasons for leaving an organization within the first year include the following:

- not feeling welcomed
- not being valued
- not fitting in



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Millions of dollars are lost when organizations fail to help newcomers become part of the organization.

VALUING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Providing effective onboarding communicates that the National Park Service values each new employee. Valuing each employee is the first step in promoting workforce diversity. Onboarding can help ensure that all new employees have an equal chance to succeed. Employees are more likely to succeed if they understand their responsibilities and rights; and the work environment is welcoming and inclusive from day 1.



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CHAPTER 3: WHO NEEDS ONBOARDING?

People entering the workforce are not the only ones who need onboarding. Onboarding benefits all employees who are changing jobs, organizations, or work units. The orientation package should be tailored to the individual needs of the employees. Typical workers are expected to change jobs at least three to five times during their careers. Knowing the background and work experience of your new employees will help you ensure their unique needs are addressed during orientation and throughout the onboarding process.

Onboarding is not only for permanent full-time employees. Interns, part-time workers, volunteers, and anyone who is working for the National Park Service should receive at least an orientation.



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CHAPTER 4: FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING IMPRESSIONS

First impressions are lasting impressions. Think back—do you remember your first day on the job? The most lasting impressions about an organization are formed early, within the first few months.

Most new employees are nervous about beginning a new job. The **Welcome Phase** should be used to reduce employee anxieties so that employees can begin to learn. It is easier to learn about your new job and organization when you are feeling confident about your career choice.

The **Welcome Phase** of the orientation should include the following:

1. Preparing the Employee's Work Space

- Remove the former employee's personal items.
- Make sure the work space is clean and organized.
- Check to see if all equipment is working properly.

2. Preparing the Peer Assistance Liaison/Sponsor

- Select a peer assistance liaison for the new employee.
- Meet with the peer assistance liaison and discuss their role.
- Set up a meeting to introduce the new employee to the peer assistance liaison.
- Invite the peer assistance liaison to lunch with you and the new employee.

3. Putting the New Employee at Ease

- Greet the new employee.
- Give the employee an overview of the orientation process and schedule.
- Introduce the new employee to others.
- Ask questions to find out how the new employee is doing.
- Invite the new employee and the peer assistance liaison to lunch.
- Introduce the new employee to the peer assistance liaison.



CHAPTER 5: THE “JOINING UP” PROCESS

The “joining up” process consists of making the transition from being an outsider to being a committed member of the National Park Service. New employees are interested in the whole of the organization and where and how they fit into it. New employee interviews have found that the panoramic view of the organization is as important to them as is information about their jobs, departments, and other organizational information. New employees need to see the big picture early in the onboarding process.

As a manager your job is to ensure employees

- establish relationships with supervisors, coworkers, and customers
- feel confident in their job performance
- understand and have a sense of belonging in the culture
- develop an appreciation of all disciplines required to ensure the health of the National Park Service and support its mission
- learn about organizational history
- develop an understanding of organizational vision, mission, goals, and values (see appendixes)
- understand organizational structure and personnel

To facilitate the new employee’s transition into the agency, the following examples may be of assistance:

- field trips, reading assignments, videos, promoting the NPS mission, discussing how an employee’s specific job affects the NPS mission

TIPS . . .

- Do not overwhelm the new employee with too much information at one time.
- Give the employee written information, including brochures about the organization, mission statements, organizational charts, lists of key personnel, and strategic plans.
- Review sections of the *New Employee Handbook* to give the employee an overview of the bureau.
- Arrange for new employees to conduct information interviews with key personnel to collect information about the organization.
- Encourage new employees to take other actions to learn about the organization on their own.
- Make sure that new employees understand where they fit into the big picture.



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CHAPTER 6: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The organization is responsible for new employees to make a commitment, the organization and its leadership must be dedicated to valuing human resources.

Committed organizations

- communicate clear information about the organization and its future
- hold supervisors accountable for orienting and developing new employees
- support the onboarding process
- ensure that every employee is valued

Supervisors have the ultimate responsibility for orienting new employees. The success of new employees may depend on how well supervisors carry out this responsibility.

Effective supervisors

- are accessible
- pass along their skills as well as wisdom about how to be successful
- hold employees accountable for their own development
- provide ongoing performance feedback
- inform employees of their rights and responsibilities
- foster career advancement
- give employees challenging assignments based on skill level
- help employees adjust to the community
- encourage employees to complete individual development plans (IDPs)
- ensure employees are oriented fully by attending the NPS Fundamentals program
- select and coordinate with a peer assistance liaison for the new employee

Peer assistance liaisons are a valuable asset for supervisors in helping to assist new employees through a smooth transition into the organization (see [Orientation: PAL Guidelines](https://www.nps.gov/ori/pal-guidelines)) (<http://inside.nps.gov/waso/custommenu.cfm?lv=4&prg=1303&id=10741>).

Effective PALs

- assist employees in navigating the organization
- promote a positive image



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- build confidence
- advise, but don't judge
- assist in meeting employee needs
- are accessible
- coordinate and collaborate with supervisors and other employees
- work as a team

The new employee is defined as new to the organization or as an employee transferring to a new location. New employees have shared responsibilities for their own development and learning.



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CHAPTER 7: THE BASICS—LEARNING THE ROPES

New employees need to have a good foundation before they become productive. They need to learn how the organization operates. This next phase of onboarding covers the rules of the game, important procedures, who has what resources, how to be paid, and where to go for help.

The basics of orientation should include the following types of information as found in the employee section of the *New Employee Handbook*:

- employee rights and responsibilities
- probationary period
- key policies (e.g., ethics, diversity, sexual harassment, EEO)
- work schedule and hours
- pay and leave administration
- benefits
- performance management system
- incentives and awards
- training and development opportunities
- safety and security
- employee programs—wellness, employee assistance programs, child care, elder care
- internal communication (e.g., critical phone numbers, phone systems, email, bulletin boards, newsletters)
- local amenities (libraries, schools, houses of worship)



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TIPS . . .

- Be sure your new employee has a copy of the most current *Federal Employees Almanac*, which contains all of the basics.
- Explain how to use agency handbooks, manuals, and other correspondence.
- Conduct a tour to show new employees all important areas.
- Demonstrate how to use the telephone system and other office equipment.
- Give new employees a checklist so they can keep track of whether they have learned all of the required basics.
- Encourage new employees to ask questions and to take responsibility for learning the information on the checklist.
- Remind new employees that the PAL/sponsor can help you when you are not available.



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CHAPTER 8: THE WORK ENVIRONMENT: THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Did you move when you were young? Do you remember what it was like to be the “new kid on the block”? It is hard to concentrate on learning a new job when you feel isolated, alone, or not part of the group.

There are many unwritten rules that new employees discover only after they have broken them. Succeeding is related to how well employees learn to deal with the informal as well as formal work environment.

Supervisors must ensure that no one is excluded from becoming a part of the work environment. The goal is not to change new employees to fit into the current mold, but to give new employees a full understanding of the work environment. Once they gain this understanding, they are better able to contribute.

The **Work Environment** of onboarding should include the following:

- Providing current employees with information, including
 - positions held by new employees
 - work assignments of new employees
 - the effect new employees will have on the workload
- Matching expectations with new employees
 - be sure the employee performance plan is in place
 - ask new employees to share their expectations
 - clarify expectations
 - responsibilities
 - job/tasks/description
 - priorities
 - performance and conduct standards
 - communication styles and procedures
 - decision-making authority
 - personal introductions to team members
- Sharing the informal rules with new employees
 - explain the techniques that you have used to make the system work
 - point out potential land mines
 - be open to questions



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- Providing support
 - provide resources that may help with family and community adjustments
 - assign and work closely with the peer assistance liaison

TIPS . . .

- Exchange expectations with new employees several times during the first months; expectations often change over time.
- Select a peer assistance liaison/sponsor who is helpful, has good judgment and communication skills, is trustworthy, will give the new employee a positive image of the office and NPS, and has good interpersonal skills.



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CHAPTER 9: THE FIRST WORK ASSIGNMENT—TESTING THE WATER

The **first work assignment** is critical. It should be challenging, but within reasonable expectations. It is important to have meaningful work ready for new employees. New employees get frustrated when they are given busy work to fill their time. At the other extreme, new employees may be expected to pick up where the previous person left off (and catch up on the work that has been piling up since that person's departure). Throwing new employees in over their heads to either sink or swim is not constructive; indeed, it can be detrimental to their acclimation process. New employees need to be able to test the water and to gain confidence.



The **first work assignment** of onboarding should include the following:

- Providing needed knowledge and skills training
 - Make sure new employees understand standard procedures used to complete assigned tasks.
 - Determine if new employees have the skills to complete the assigned tasks.
 - Give new employees the techniques for solving potential problems before they arise.
- Communicating work assignments clearly
 - Select work assignments that new employees can complete successfully.
 - Give examples showing the correct way to complete assignments.
 - Ask new employees to explain how they intend to approach the assignment.
 - Set and clearly state due dates.
- Monitoring Work in Progress and Providing Feedback
 - Review work progress early and often.
 - Give guidance as needed.
 - Reinforce progress as well as excellence.

TIPS . . .

- Consider using a structured on-the-job training process or apprenticeship. Remember that the first work assignment is a continuation of the onboarding process.
- Give new employees job aids and other tools to help them learn as they are working.



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CHAPTER 10: THE LONG RUN: IT'S ONLY JUST BEGUN

Onboarding does not end with the completing of the first assignment. Successful onboarding includes ongoing support through the first year on the job.

- Conduct follow-up meetings with new employees.
- Review the match between expectations and recent experiences.
- Continue to discuss the formal and informal work environments.
- Make sure that family and community adjustments are working smoothly.
- Determine other training needs and discuss career goals.
- Determine if employees feel like an integral part of the team.

Looking Toward the Future

- Provide opportunities for continued development.
- Have employees share in the responsibility for their own development.
- Use all agency resources in developing career plans for each employee.



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CHAPTER 11: EMPLOYEE RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Use the following list to ensure new employees are informed of their **rights and responsibilities**:

- **Training and Career Development**—Inform new employees about training and development opportunities to help them succeed at their new jobs or to prepare them for future jobs. Make sure to explain how to take advantage of these opportunities.
- **Leave**—It takes a while for new employees to accumulate leave. Review the leave options that employees can use if they have a medical or family emergency.
- **Benefits**—Review the health insurance, life insurance, retirement, and other federal employee benefits. The Human Resource Operation Center is responsible for providing all employees information on benefits and retirement. If the employee has benefits or retirement questions they can contact the Human Resources Operations Center at (877) 642-4743 or <http://hrhelp.nps.gov>.
- **Flexibility**—Flexibility in work schedules, days off, and place of work may be important to new employees. Take time to explain the alternative work schedule program, telework arrangements, and space-sharing options.
- **Assistance Programs**—Let new employees know about the Employee Assistance Program or other such programs.
- **Performance**—Explain to new employees that it is critical that they meet performance standards. Stress the importance of asking for help and guidance if they do not understand how to perform their jobs.
- **Conduct**—Review the conduct and ethics guidelines that employees must follow.
- **Adverse Actions**—Review the grounds for performance-based or conduct-based adverse actions and explain that employees have the right to receive written notification, review related materials, be represented, make an oral or written response, and appeal or grieve the agency’s decision. Explain that the first year for new federal employees is considered a probationary or trial period. Note that during their first year employees have limited rights if they are separated involuntarily.
- **Fair Treatment**—Inform new employees that it is illegal to be discriminated against for race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, age, or a disabling condition. Explain that an agency may not take action against them for whistleblowing or for exercising a grievance or appeal right. Cover the steps employees should take if they feel that they have been discriminated against or if they have been sexually harassed.



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APPENDIX A: LEAVE AND EARNINGS STATEMENT

HOW TO READ YOUR LEAVE AND EARNINGS STATEMENT











This is a guide to help you understand your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). The Leave and Earnings Statement is a comprehensive statement of your leave and earnings showing entitlements, deductions, allotments, leave information, tax withholding information, thrift savings plan (TSP) and benefits paid by the National Park Service. You can access your statement 24 hours a day, seven days a week at www.employeeexpress.gov

Your pay and leave information is important! You should always review your leave and earnings statement for unexpected changes or errors each pay period. If you believe your pay is not correct or if you have any questions, call the Customer Support Center at 303-969-7732, 1-800-662-4324, or 888-FOR-1NBC (1-888-367-1622).

GO GREEN!

Save a tree and request a paperless copy of your LES!

Visit the Employee Express website and choose “Earnings and Leave HardCopy On/Off” from the main menu on the left. Choosing this function immediately cancels the delivery of your LES via snail mail and enables you to review your statement online.

	Data Element Name	Description
	Agency	The agency for which an employee works
	For Pay Period Ending	The current pay period ending date; the federal calendar is divided into 2-week sections called pay periods; there are typically 26 pay periods each year
	Net Pay	A total of all earnings (current pay period and any adjustments) less all deductions (current pay period and any adjustments)
	Pay Period	The pay period for which an employee is being paid
	Pay Date	The day you receive your net check
	Name	The employee's name as it is stored in the Federal Personnel Payroll System (FPPS)
	Pay Plan/Grade/Step	An employee's current pay plan, grade, and step
	Annual Salary	Current annual salary
	Hourly Rate	Current hourly pay rate
	Home Address	Employee's home address for mailing end of year W-2



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1	Pay Check Mailing Address	Address to location where your check is mailed; if your check is direct deposited to your bank, no mailing address will appear
1	Basic Information SSN Cumulative Retirement Agency Organization Code Financial Institution Service Comp Date Dept. ID Pay Begin Date Agency FLSA Class TSP (amt/pct)	The last four digits of an employee’s social security number Total retirement deductions collected by your payroll provider (If employee has not changed agencies) Current organization for which an employee works Name of employee’s bank An actual or constructed date used to determine benefits that are based on how long a person has been in federal service; it is also used to determine the rate at which an employee accrues annual leave Current department for which an employee works Date current pay period began Current agency employee works for Fair Labor Standards Act: A nonexempt employee is covered by the overtime provisions of this act. The amount/percentage the employee is contributing to their thrift saving plan account
1	Your Pay Consists Of	Your current pay period and year-to-date totals for your gross pay, total deductions, and net pay
1	Tax Information	Your current federal and state marital status, exemptions, and additional withholdings; displays your current state tax identifier and your year-to-date wages
1	Earnings	Displays the type of pay (regular, leave, etc.), hourly rate paid, any adjustments for prior pay periods, number of hours paid during the current pay period, and gross wages for the current pay period
1	Deductions FERS/CSRS Retirement Medicare Tax State Tax FEGLI—Regular OASDI Tax Federal Taxes Health Benefits—Pretax Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)	Includes all current pay period deduction amounts or percentages and the type of deductions that are being deducted from your current gross pay; also displays year-to-date deduction amounts Withholding contributions to your Federal Employees Retirement System, Civil Service Retirement System Reflects Medicare withholding State taxes withheld from your salary Amount withheld for basic life insurance Old Age, Survivor and Disability Insurance—Social Security Federal taxes withheld from your salary Withholding for your TSP contributions
1	Benefits Paid by Gov’t	Displays the contribution type and amount contributed by your employing agency for the current pay period and year to date



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1	Leave	<p>The number of leave hours available to you at the beginning of the current pay period (Begin Bal Current) and at the beginning of the current leave year (Begin Bal Lv Yr)</p> <p>The type of leave hours earned and used in the current pay period and the total hours earned and used year-to-date; displays the type of leave and the number of leave hours available at the end of the current pay period (Ending Bal)</p>
1	Annual Leave Projected Yr End Bal Max Carry Over Use or Lose Balance	<p>Annual leave accrual category, based on service computation date</p> <p>Annual leave that will accrue from the current pay period through the end of the year</p> <p>The maximum amount of hours allowed to be carried over into the new leave year</p> <p>The amount of hours that will be lost at the end of the leave year if not used by the employee</p>
2	Remarks	<p>Provides general information that will be useful to the agency or the employee, such as advance notice of compensatory time expiration, personnel actions or payroll adjustments</p> <p>Contact information for payroll assistance</p>

Department of the Interior EARNINGS AND LEAVE STATEMENT 1			For Pay Period Ending 04/21/2012 2	Net Pay \$960.50 3			
			Pay Period # 17 4	Pay Date 05/01/2012 5			
Name STALLONE, SYLVESTER 6	Pay Plan/Grade/Step GS 07 05 7	Annual Salary \$44,616.00 8	Hourly Rate \$21.38 9				
Home Address 7007 LOTSAMUNEE WAY LAUREL CANYON CA 90046-0068 1	Pay Check Mailing Address 1						
Basic Information SSN XXX-XX-1294 Service Comp Date 06/12/1993 Agency NPS Cumulative Retirement Agency \$3733 Dept ID IN FSLA Class NON-EXEMPT Organization Code 2714 Pay Begin Date 04/08/2012 TSP (amt/pct) 10% Financial Institution AMER HERITAGE FCU 1							
Your Pay Consists of Gross 29739.00 Total Deductions 14,264.11 Net Pay 960.50 1	Current 1813.00 852.57 960.50	YTD	Tax Information Wages Federal 23,995.56 State – CA 23,995.56 1	Marital Status S S	Exemptions 2 0	Additional Withholding 0.00 0.00	Current Wages YTD



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EARNINGS							
TYPE	RATE	ADJUSTED	ADJ HOURS	HOURS	CURRENT	YTD	
Regular	21.38			80.00		1710.00	
1							
DEDUCTIONS							
TYPE	MISC	AJUSTED	CURRENT	YTD	TYPE	MISC	AJUSTED
FERS/CSRS Retirement	.8		13.68	215.80	OASDI Tax	4.2	3.72
1800.75							
Deduction					Federal Taxes		
2907.14							158.37
Medicare Tax	1.45	0.87	24.83	421.14	Health Benefits-Pretax	474	40.89
695.13							
State Tax 1/CO			38.83	724.71	Charity Contribution		30.00
500.00							
FEGLI - Regular			7.05	112.35	Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)		342.08
1,048.86							
Thrift Savings Plan Loan			309.41	0.00			
1							
BENEFITS PAID BY GOVT							
TYPE		CURRENT	YTD	TYPE		CURRENT	
FEGLI		3.53	56.19	FEHB			122.69
2085.73							
FERS/CSRS		191.56	3021.70	Medicare			25.70
421.14							
OASDI		109.88	1800.75	TSP Basic			17.10
269.78							
TSP Matching		68.42	1079.18				
1							
LEAVE							
TYPE	Begin	Begin	Earned	Earned	Used	Used	Adv
Ending	Bal	Bal Lv	Current	YTD	Current	YTD	
Bal	Current	Yr					
Annual	57.15	17.15	6.00	90.00		44.00	
63.15							
Sick	54.45	25.00	4.00	60.00		26.15	
58.45							
Comp	16.00		3.00		16.00		
3.00							
1							
Annual Leave							
Category:	8	Projected Yr End Bal:	0.00	Max Carry Over:	240.00	Use or Lose Balance:	
1							
REMARKS							
PLEASE REVIEW YOUR LES PROMPTLY AND THOROUGHLY. IF YOU THINK YOUR PAY IS IN ERROR, NOTIFY YOUR PAYROLL CONTACT IMMEDIATELY. OVERPAYMENTS MAY CAUSE TAX IMPLICATIONS IF NOT REPAID THIS YEAR. REMARKS/MESSAGES: PAY/LEAVE QUESTIONS? CALL PAYROLL HOTLINE (303) 969-7732; FROM HOME 1-800-662-4324. EMPLOYEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR VERIFICATION OF PAY, DEDUCTIONS, AND LEAVE.							
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THIS REPORT CONTAINS INFORMATION SUBJECT TO THE PRIVACY ACT OF 1974, AS AMENDED



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NEW EMPLOYEE/SUPERVISOR ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
