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OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 410

RIN 3206-AF99

Training

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Correcting amendment.

SUMMARY: This document contains a correction to final regulations which were published in the *Federal Register*, Tuesday, December 17, 1996, (61 FR 66189). The regulations related to the requirements for training Government employees subject to chapter 41 of title 5 of the United States Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Judith Lombard, 202-606-2431, EMAIL jmlombard@opm.gov, or FAX 202-606-2394.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The regulations subject to this correction affect the training of Federal employees. Because a word is missing, the subsection on requirements for continued service agreements, § 410.309(b)(2), contains an inaccurate statement. The correction adds the missing word.

Need for Correction

As published in the *Federal Register*, Tuesday, December 17, 1996, (61 FR 66189), the final regulations contain an error which may prove to be misleading and needs to be corrected.

List of Subjects in 5 CFR Part 410

Education, Government employees.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Janice R. Lachance,
Director.

Accordingly, 5 CFR part 410 is corrected by making the following correcting amendment:

PART 410—TRAINING

1. The authority citation for 5 CFR part 410 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 4101, *et seq.*; E.O. 11348, 3 CFR, 1967 Comp., p. 275.

§ 410.309 [Corrected]

2. In § 410.309 paragraph (b)(2), in the first sentence, after the word "after," add the word "training".

[FR Doc. 98-34395 Filed 12-30-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-01-P

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 532

RIN 3206-AI48

Prevailing Rate Systems; Lead Agency Responsibility

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is issuing a final rule that will change the lead agency responsibility for certain Federal Wage System (FWS) appropriated fund wage areas from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the Department of Defense (DOD). VA requested that OPM designate DOD as the lead agency in all of the wage areas where VA currently has lead agency responsibility. This change will make DOD the lead agency in all FWS wage areas and will make more efficient use of the resources devoted by agencies to determining FWS pay rates.

DATES: This final rule is effective on January 1, 1999, except that VA will retain lead agency responsibility for the Roanoke, Virginia, wage area until the next wage schedule for that wage area is established on January 17, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Hopkins at (202) 606-2848, or send an email message to jdhopkin@opm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On November 2, 1998, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published a proposed rule (63 FR 58659) to transfer lead agency responsibility for the New Haven-Hartford, Connecticut; Miami, Florida; Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida; Champaign-Urbana, Illinois; Chicago, Illinois; Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, Iowa; Des Moines, Iowa; Augusta, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Southwestern Michigan; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; New York, New York; Rochester, New York; Asheville, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Cincinnati, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Southwestern Oregon; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Eastern Tennessee; Houston-Galveston-Texas City, Texas; Roanoke, Virginia; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, FWS wage areas from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the Department of Defense (DOD).

The proposed rule provided a 30-day period for public comment, during which OPM received one comment from a labor organization, which requested that OPM pursue enactment of appropriations legislation that would specifically designate funds for VA to conduct local FWS wage surveys. However, the commenter recognized that under present conditions there is no acceptable alternative but to make the proposed changes in lead agency responsibility effective. The possibility of requesting that Congress appropriate funds to VA specifically for conducting FWS wage surveys was raised and considered by the members of FPRAC. However, the Committee did not adopt this suggestion (which is outside the scope of our regulatory authority) as part of its recommendation to OPM.

Under 5 U.S.C. 5343(a)(2), OPM is responsible for designating lead agencies in Federal Wage System (FWS) wage areas. Lead agencies are responsible for conducting surveys of private sector employers to establish wage schedules for FWS employees based on local prevailing rates. The Department of Defense (DOD) is the lead agency in 110 FWS wage areas, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the lead agency in 23 FWS wage areas. VA is currently the lead agency in the New Haven-Hartford, Connecticut; Miami, Florida; Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida; Champaign-Urbana, Illinois; Chicago, Illinois; Cedar Rapids-Iowa

City, Iowa; Des Moines, Iowa; Augusta, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Southwestern Michigan; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; New York, New York; Rochester, New York; Asheville, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Cincinnati, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Southwestern Oregon; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Eastern Tennessee; Houston-Galveston-Texas City, Texas; Roanoke, Virginia; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, FWS wage areas.

VA requested that OPM designate DOD as the lead agency in the wage areas where VA is currently designated as the lead agency. Since the establishment of the FWS in 1972, VA has played a key role in the administration of the pay program for FWS employees. However, during the past few years, VA has experienced reductions in overall employment in the human resources management areas both in field and headquarters activities. At the headquarters level, two out of three experienced specialists assigned to oversee FWS wage surveys are no longer available to work in that area because of retirements and reassignments. VA believes a consolidation of the FWS survey function within one agency will be more efficient and will provide a level of consistency in the survey process that will strengthen the FWS program nationwide. DOD expressed its willingness and indicated its ability to assume lead agency responsibility in the wage areas where VA is currently assigned lead agency responsibility.

The proposed change was reviewed by the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee (FPRAC), the national labor-management committee responsible for advising OPM on matters that affect the pay of FWS employees. The management members of FPRAC proposed this change because diminishing staff resources within VA headquarters make it very difficult for VA to accomplish its wage survey work in an effective manner, and because DOD expressed its ability and willingness to assume lead agency responsibility in all FWS wage areas. After considering all possible alternatives, the Committee recommended approval of the change in lead agency by majority vote. All Committee members voted for the proposal except for the National Federation of Federal Employees, which abstained. The remaining labor members of FPRAC supported the proposed change with reservations, stating that although no reasonable alternative exists, they are concerned about the placement of Governmentwide FWS wage determinations within a single agency.

Pursuant to section 553(d)(3) of title 5, United States Code, I find that good cause exists to make this regulation effective in less than 30 days. This regulation is being made effective in less than 30 days because of the recommendation of FPRAC that DOD assume lead agency responsibility for all FWS wage areas where practical at the start of the calendar year.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

I certify that these regulations will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities because they will affect only Federal agencies and employees.

List of Subjects in 5 CFR Part 532

Administrative practice and procedure, Freedom of information, Government employees, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Wages.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

Janice R. Lachance,
Director.

Accordingly, the Office of Personnel Management is amending 5 CFR part 532 as follows:

PART 532—PREVAILING RATE SYSTEMS

1. The authority citation for part 532 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5343, 5346; § 532.707 also issued under 5 U.S.C. 552.

Appendix A to Subpart B of Part 532 [Amended]

2. Appendix A to subpart B is amended for the New Haven-Hartford, Connecticut; Miami, Florida; Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida; Champaign-Urbana, Illinois; Chicago, Illinois; Cedar Rapids-Iowa City, Iowa; Des Moines, Iowa; Augusta, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; Southwestern Michigan; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; New York, New York; Rochester, New York; Asheville, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; Cincinnati, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; Southwestern Oregon; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Eastern Tennessee; Houston-Galveston-Texas City, Texas; Roanoke, Virginia; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, wage areas by revising the lead agency listings from "VA" to "DOD".

[FR Doc. 98-34394 Filed 12-30-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-01-P

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 550

RIN 3206-AH63

Pay Administration (General); Collection by Offset From Indebted Government Employees

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Office of Personnel Management is issuing a final rule to make changes in the salary offset regulations to comply with the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996. The principal changes relate to the roles played by disbursing officials and debt collection centers with respect to salary offset. Also included are new expedited salary offset procedures for certain types of recent or small-amount debts.

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 1, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul Shields, (202) 606-2858, FAX: (202) 606-0824, or email to payleave@opm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On April 16, 1998, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published regulations proposing changes in the salary offset regulations to comply with the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996. The principal changes relate to the roles played by disbursing officials and debt collection centers with respect to salary offset. Also included are new expedited salary offset procedures for certain types of recent or small-amount debts. Comments were received from one labor organization and four Federal agencies.

The labor organization requested clarification regarding the effect of these changes on Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees. FAA has informed OPM that, under the authority of section 347 of the 1996 Department of Transportation Appropriations Act, FAA employees are no longer covered by the provisions of title 5 of the United States Code and related regulations. FAA has established policies paralleling the provisions of title 5 of the United States Code in many areas. One such area is salary offset under 5 U.S.C. 5514. FAA is considering whether or not to adopt as FAA policy the amendments made by this rule.

The labor organization's first recommendation was that Federal agencies should be directed to enter into appropriate bargaining with their respective unions over this change. We believe it would be inappropriate for