

HR Exchange

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Online Video Helps New Employees Understand Their Benefit Options

Colleen Dickey

Flexible Benefits Manager

Employees Benefits Council

Starting a new job can be overwhelming. Understanding the insurance-related benefit options is just one part of the decision a newly-hired employee faces. To help, the Employees Benefits Council (EBC) has placed a 15 minute video on its Website for any newly-hired employee to view. The video explains all of the insurance-related benefits offered to state employees. The video can be accessed via streaming media. Employees with Broadband or DSL can download the video for viewing.



EBC Flexible Benefits Representative Ken Bassett demonstrates the "New Hire Video."

"The idea came from our Benefits Coordinators who needed to provide quicker access to enrollment information for newly hired employees," said EBC Executive Director Mitch Parsons. "New employees can now view this information at their convenience and play it as many times as they wish."

For more information about EBC or to view the *New Hire Video*, log onto EBC's Website at www.ebc.state.ok.us, select the *Benefits* tab, and then select the *New Hire Video*.

Celebration 05/05/05!

Joyce Smith, OPM

It's a celebration of accomplishment! It's a celebration of Teamwork! It's *Quality Oklahoma* Team Day 2005!

Often, teams perform basic units of work, with members outperforming expectations through innovation and cooperation. Many of the outcomes are replicated in other agencies, thereby furthering improved customer service and satisfaction, decreased costs, generated income, improved employee morale and resource management, and/or partnerships with others. Statewide recognition of outstanding agency teams can be accomplished by participation in *Quality Oklahoma Team Day 2005*.

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Judge Reverses Costs Award

Chanda Graham, OPM

On November 8, 2004, the Honorable Noma D. Gurich entered a final order in the case of *Tim Crawford v. Office of Juvenile Affairs*. This case was the result of an appeal from a decision entered by the Oklahoma Merit Protection Commission on March 24, 2004, awarding costs of representation to the Oklahoma Public Employees Association in the amount of \$1,550.00. This was the first case before the Merit Protection Commission in which a non-attorney was awarded costs.

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On September 9, 2004, members of the OPM Team met with representatives of the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control (OBNDCC) regarding proposed compensation legislation for the 2005 session. Pictured (l to r) are Russ Higbie, OBNDCC; Diane Haser-Bennett, OPM; Dayna Petete, OPM; Tom Patt; OPM; Lonnie Wright, OBNDCC Director; Scott Rowland, OBNDCC; Mark Woodward, OBNDCC; Tanara Lang, OBNDCC; and Anita Smart, OBNDCC.

From the Desk of the Administrator

Toward the end of each calendar year, the Governor begins to put together his Executive Budget for the coming fiscal year. He asks each agency director to submit information regarding “Notable Achievements” from the previous fiscal year. Of course, we’d all like to think that pretty much everything we do on a daily basis is “notable,” but only a few achievements make the cut, so you need to be rather selective.

Actually, we look forward to this exercise at OPM because it provides an important opportunity for us to sit down and “reminisce”, if you will, about the past year—projects begun, projects completed, and projects still in the planning stages. We try to utilize the notion of “continuous quality improvement” in everything we do at OPM and I feel we, individually and collectively, are mostly successful. But, of course, some accomplishments stand out more than others just because of their very nature.

Here are the “notable achievements” we came up with for FY 04 and FY 05 to date:

- Continued the partnership with the Office of State Finance and the Department of Central Services to accomplish the transition from state legacy systems to the integrated PeopleSoft system through the *CORE Oklahoma/PeopleSoft Project*. OPM coordinated and provided training for state agency staff in preparation for the phased-deployment of the Human Resource Management System (Human Resources, Payroll, and Time and Labor), which began July 1, 2004.
- Developed an on-line *Exit Interview Survey* for state agencies, which ensures complete anonymity, thus improving the candor of employee responses and the usefulness of the solicited information for workforce planning purposes.
- Began providing staff support for the *Governor’s Ethnic American Advisory Council*, comprised of individuals representing Oklahoma’s Middle East/Near East community. OPM also provides staff support for the Governor’s Advisory Council on Asian American Affairs and the Governor’s Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs, which were created, like the Ethnic Ameri-



can Council, to facilitate communication between state government and the communities represented by these entities. During FY 04, this effort resulted in the publication by the Department of Public Safety of the Oklahoma drivers’ manual in Spanish and the translation of the online drivers’ license examination into Spanish, a service available at 18 DPS sites statewide.

- Hosted the 16th Annual *OPM Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program* graduation ceremony for 26 individuals representing 15 state agencies. Since the inception of the CPM Program in 1986, over 316 state employees have graduated from this award-winning Program, which is designed to professionalize public management by giving Oklahoma state managers and supervisors the tools necessary to improve their management skills.

- Hosted the annual *OPM Quality Oklahoma Team Day*, which featured 35 projects representing savings to the state of over \$25 million dollars. Seventeen of these projects were awarded *Governor’s Commendations*, including OPM’s successful implementation of the Integrated Centralized Examination (ICE) computerized testing system for state government.
- Implemented the first phase of the *OPM Agency Director Salary Report* for non-appropriated state agency directors through the passage of House Bill 2006 (2004). Will pursue phase two for appropriated agency directors during the 2005 session.

Jackson Keynotes DOC Longevity Awards Ceremony

Dayna Petete, OPM

On December 7, 2004, Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration, provided the keynote address for the Department of Corrections’ annual longevity awards ceremony. During this year’s event, DOC honored 71 employees—two with 38 years of service; two with 37 years of service; one with 36 years of service; one with 35 years of service; 20 with 30 years of service; and 45 with 25 years of service—a total of 1,946 years of service for these 71 employees!

During his presentation, Mr. Jackson had the opportunity to share information

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Judge Gurich determined that the Merit Protection Commission “erroneously awarded costs” because Mr. Crawford did not file a copy of a fee agreement with his request for attorney fees and costs as required by OAC 455:10-15-3 and 455:10-15-4. Judge Gurich also determined that because the Oklahoma Public Employees Association was not a prevailing party as required by 74 O.S. § 840-6.8 and OAC 455:10-15-1, the organization could not be reimbursed for costs it incurred.

Based on her conclusions, Judge Gurich ordered that the decision issued by the Merit Protection Commission on March 24, 2004, be reversed. No appeal of Judge Gurich’s decision was filed.

Direct Deposit Decentralized

Karen Luman, OPM

On January 1, 2005, the direct deposit process was decentralized to all state agencies and Higher Education institutions.

The Oklahoma State Employees’ Direct Deposit Act, (74 O.S. §§ 292.10 et seq.) was amended during the 2004 legislative session to require all new employees to enroll in direct deposit effective January 1, 2005. By decentralizing the direct deposit process, organizations will be able to directly and immediately effect enrollments, terminations, deletions/cancellations, and reversals/recalls for their employees. This streamlined process will result in improved efficiency for agencies and enhanced service for employees.



Karen Luman, Manager of OPM’s Agency Services Unit.

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Department of Corrections Longevity Awards Ceremony participants (l to r) Ted Logan, Member, Board of Corrections; David C. Henneke, Chair, Board of Corrections; Ron Ward, Director, Department of Corrections; Debbie Boyer, Administrator of Human Resources, Department of Corrections; Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration; Kevin L. Ward, Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety and Cabinet Secretary of Safety and Security; and Ernest Godlove, Member, Board of Corrections.

with attendees regarding the state of Oklahoma’s longevity program. In 1989, the Oklahoma Legislature passed and Governor George Nigh signed House Bill 1371, which created the *Length of Service Awards Program* as part of the Productivity Enhancement Program—also known as PEP. PEP is the state of Oklahoma’s suggestion program. Through PEP, the state presents cash and non-cash awards to state employees for ideas, programs, and projects that result in increased productivity, cost savings, revenue generation, or improved safety, efficiency, morale, or better services.

HB 1371 specified that the awards would consist of “certificates” and “lapel pins”. The PEP Committee, chaired by Helen Arnold, Director of the Board of Public Affairs (now the Department of Central Services), decided to hold a contest for state employees to submit design ideas for the development of the pin. Director Arnold announced a 60-day contest for state employees to submit pin design ideas. The grand prize was a weekend for two at the Oklahoma state lodge of the winner’s choice. More than 250 state employees submitted over 350 design ideas.

The Committee reviewed all submissions and selected the one submitted by Alvin Ward, an employee of the Oklahoma Tax Commission. Governor Henry Bellmon unveiled the new pin during a press

conference at the State Capitol on March 15, 1990. During the press conference, Governor Bellmon also recognized Alvin Ward.



A replica of the PEP Length of Service Awards Program lapel pin.

Although there is one basic pin design—a bronze-, silver-, or gold-plated “OK”, with a star in the middle of the “O”, on a blue background—there are eight variations based on length of service at five-year intervals. In addition, “Certificates of Congratulations” accompany the lapel pins. Though it is not known who received the first lapel pin, the lapel pin for the greatest length of service was presented to Glenn McHale of the Corporation Commission on July 1, 1999, (his retirement date!) for 50 years of service.

In 2000, Governor Frank Keating recognized Alvin Ward, the designer of the *Length of Service* lapel pin, for 20 years of service to the state of Oklahoma, on the 10th anniversary of the PEP *Length of Service Awards Program*. Mr. Ward retired in 2003.



Nominate your agency team(s) for a *Governor's Commendation for Excellence*. This is a meaningful and cost-effective way to show your appreciation and support of employee contributions to the success of your agency's mission.

Quality Oklahoma Team Day 2005 will be observed at the State Capitol on Thursday, May 5, 2005. Team exhibits will be displayed from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and the Awards Ceremony will be in the House Chambers at 2:30 p.m. Public recognition of success is a wonderful way to boost your employees' morale and motivation.

This is your chance to brag about your team's accomplishments and show them to the visiting public. It's an opportunity to say thank you to your diligent employees. It's an opportunity to give employees the public recognition deserved for optimal resource management within your agency. It's a great event to incorporate into your agency's celebration of *Public Service Recognition Week*, May 2 - 8, 2005.

The deadline for Team Day applications is March 31, 2005. The application packet, which is located on the OPM Website (www.opm.state.ok.us/QualityOklaPacket.pdf), may be reproduced as needed and distributed to your human resource personnel, field offices, and teams so that they may begin gathering information for the application process.

Additional information about *Quality Oklahoma* may be accessed on the OPM Website (www.opm.state.ok.us/html/hr_hrds_quality.htm).

If you have questions regarding *Quality Oklahoma* Team Day 2005, please contact Joyce Smith at (405) 522-3617 or Tasha Miles at (405) 521-4539. Thank you for your interest and participation in this most worthwhile event.

In anticipation of decentralization, OPM hosted training for agencies still using the OPM Agency Payroll legacy system on December 9 and 10; over 160 agency representatives attended. Agencies that have converted to the PeopleSoft system previously received training and currently process their respective agency direct deposit functions.



The Spring 2005 HRDS semester will begin Monday, March 7, and end Friday, June 17.



Former local TV personality and training consultant Kerry Robertson (standing) teaches an HRDS course entitled, "Public Speaking and Effective Presentations." Participants in Ms. Robertson's November 16, 2004, class included Certified Public Manager candidates (l to r), Kelly Pensoneau, Oklahoma Health Care Authority; Dru Bradford, Department of Transportation; Moses Sogurno, State Insurance Department; and Sherry Lewelling, Cosmetology Board.

OPM Issues Annual Compensation Report

Tom Patt, OPM

The FY 2005 *Annual Compensation Report*, submitted December 1, 2004, by OPM to the Governor and legislative leadership, reveals that pay for state government classified employees is, on average, 11.43 percent below the competitive labor market, a figure that is consistent with the state's market relationship during the previous two years. "This is indicative of the fact that the state has made no progress in reducing the pay gap between state classified jobs and the market," commented Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and the Governor's Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration.

The market deficit does not take into account the two pay raises which were approved by the state Legislature during the 2004 session, and which are scheduled to take effect in 2005: A \$1,400 across-the-board increase, which became effective Janu-

ary 1, 2005, and a \$700 across-the-board increase, effective July 1, 2005. "These raises should reduce the pay disparity to some degree," Jackson noted. "However, market employers will also be providing pay adjustments to their employees over the coming months, so the precise effect on our market relationship won't be ascertained until next year's market analysis is completed."

"In light of these pay increases, this year's report does not recommend further general pay increases for state classified employees," Jackson remarked. "We do, however, recommend that state agencies continue to identify individual job families with critical recruitment and retention problems or substantial internal equity concerns, and address these problems with targeted market or equity adjustments," he added.

Comp Report, continued on page 7



On September 23, 2004, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce hosted a luncheon for a group of government officials from Vietnam who were visiting Oklahoma under the auspices of The American Council of Young Political Leaders. Pictured (front row, l to r) are Nguyen Ngoc Hung; Nguyen Thi Hong Minh; Be Thi Yen; Dessie Apostolova, International Protocol and Development Officer, Department of Commerce; Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration; (middle row, l to r) Nguyen Huu Tu; Nguyen Minh Tam; Nguyen Thu Hoai; Hguyen Thi Tuyet Nga; Tran Thi Thu Thuy; (back row, l to r) former state senator Dave Herbert; Bronnyn Bedient, Program Officer, American Council of Young Political Leaders; Hoang Cong Thuy; Barry Blark; Quy Dao; Tri Dam; and Xuyen Doan.

OPM and MPC Update State Agency Self-Evaluation

Chanda Graham, OPM

On January 14, 2005, OPM Administrator Oscar Jackson and Merit Protection Commission Executive Director Susan Bussey released the updated Agency Self-Evaluation of Human Resource Management Practices and Agency Human Resource Management Plan (ASE). The ASE was designed by OPM and MPC to provide state agencies with a tool to assess their human resource activities, identify areas for improvement, and develop a strategic plan for lawful and effective human resource management.

The ASE consists of two parts. Part 1 is a checklist that assists agencies in determining whether they are in compliance with personnel-related federal and state statutes, as well as with rules of the Oklahoma Merit System of Personnel Administration. The format lists legal requirements, including specific references to statute or rule, with space provided for the agency to make notations as to the persons responsible and dates of completion for each item. Part 2 is

a series of questions that builds on Part 1 by coaching agencies in the development of a Human Resource Management Plan. The focus of Part 2 is continuing compliance, as well as effective human resource management planning and practices.

There are two versions of the ASE—one for Merit System agencies and one for non-Merit System agencies, and both are available on the OPM Website (www.opm.state.ok.us/2005PDFfiles/HRSERVICES/ASE.pdf).

In 1998, the ASE was nominated for and received the *Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award* from the National Association of State Personnel Executives. This award recognizes innovative state human resource management practices that ensure access and equity while enhancing productivity and service delivery. The ASE also received a Governor's Commendation Award during *Quality Oklahoma* Team Day 1998.

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OPM State EAP Releases FY 04 Annual Report

Robert Stevens, OPM

In December 2004, the OPM State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) submitted the *FY 04 State Employee Assistance Program Annual Report* to the Governor, Senate President Pro Tempore, and Speaker of the House of Representatives. According to the report, during FY 04, OPM State EAP Team members assisted 218 individuals—13 percent were supervisors and 87 percent were non-supervisors. Seventy-two percent of these clients were from the Oklahoma City area; 11 percent from Tulsa; three percent from Lawton; three percent from Enid; and 11 percent from other areas of the state.

Out of 632 referrals made during FY 04, 12 percent were for work-related problems; 31 percent were related to family conflict or parent/child problems; 14 percent were for marital problems; four percent were for alcohol/drug problems; and ten percent were mental health-related. Thirty-eight percent of the participants were self-referred, 17 percent were referred by a supervisor, 29 percent by family members, 12 percent by co-workers, and four percent by other sources. During FY 04, the OPM State EAP provided 5,312 actual clock hours of direct services—74 percent were for EAP counseling. [Note: Some clients were multiple referrals and are counted for each referral made.]

In 1987, Governor Henry Bellmon created the EAP within OPM by Executive Order; the Legislature made the OPM State EAP a statutory program in 1992. Initially, the OPM State EAP was created to provide assistance to state agencies in establishing work-related stress-prevention procedures.

The OPM State EAP, which is voluntary, provides assistance to state agencies in their management of employees whose personal problems may have a negative impact on job performance. The OPM State EAP also assists employees and their family members who are seeking corrective help with medical or mental health problems, including alcohol or drug abuse, and emotional, marital, familial, financial, or other personal problems.

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Specifically, the OPM State EAP provides:

- **Referral Services** (maintaining contacts with community service providers for the purpose of networking and coordinating services to state agencies and employees);
- **Education/Training** (focusing attention on the personal concerns of employees that have a negative impact on productivity, while generating awareness of the EAP as a source of assistance. EAP Team members conduct classes on *Managing the Troubled Employee*, *Stress Management*, and mandatory drug and alcohol training);
- **Counseling** (resolving problems related to alcohol or drug abuse and emotional, marital, family, mental health, financial, and other personal problems, while developing short- and long-term goals); and
- **Critical Incident Debriefing** (providing crisis intervention to agencies for troubled employees and their family members by offering professional emergency services).

Members of the OPM State EAP Team, Robert Stevens, EAP Coordinator; Warren Thompson and Deanna Miller, EAP Representatives; and Blanche Longoria, Administrative Assistant; also provide copies of their marketing video, *It Works*, to state agencies and employees. Twenty-one videos were distributed during FY 04.

Rules Update

Chanda Graham, OPM

Emergency amendments to the Merit Rules, Voluntary Payroll Deduction Rules, Direct Deposit Rules and State Agency Review Committee Rules are currently under consideration by Governor Henry. The following are a few amendments of note:

- Amendment to OAC 530:10-15-45 allows the use of compensatory time for paid leave pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act. However, it should be noted that FMLA leave paid with compensatory time will not count against

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In May 2004, the OPM State EAP Team was named OPM's "Team of the Year." Pictured (l to r) are Deanna Miller, EAP Representative; Blanche Longoria, Administrative Assistant; Bernie Buchaneau, chair of OPM's Employee Recognition Committee; Robert Stevens, OPM State EAP Coordinator; and Warren Thompson, EAP Representative.

Sick Employees are Encouraged to Stay Home

Reprinted with permission
1/14/05 "HR Bulletin"

International Public Management Association for Human Resources

Most healthy adults, more than 95% by the federal government's latest reckoning, are entering the flu season unvaccinated. According to a recent story in the *Los Angeles Times*, the shortage has eased in some states, but with just 5 million doses left and with large numbers of high-priority patients still seeking the vaccine, public health authorities are calling for continued rationing. Most healthy workers probably will remain unvaccinated through the season.

As a result, "presenteeism"—the practice of showing up to work sick—is now on the agenda of human resources departments across the country.

Whether it is a flu, cold, or stomach virus going around, organizations and their employees are realizing that it only takes one employee coming to work sick to spark a workplace outbreak and set off waves of absenteeism down the line.

"All of a sudden, people are talking about it," says Ron Goetzl, a Cornell University/Medstat economist who studies the phenomenon of working while ill. "It wasn't in people's vocabulary a year ago." Now, he says, "employers are realizing there

are real costs to it."

This year, especially, says workplace analyst Lori Rosen, "the idea of the 'hero-worker' that manages to punch in for a full day's work despite illness needs to be discouraged." Contagious workers jeopardize the health and productivity of all employees, she says. So their bosses need to emphasize that while they need their employees at work, "they first want a healthy workplace," says Rosen, of CCH Associates, a human resources consulting firm.



Link to the *Los Angeles Times* (<http://www.latimes.com/features/health/la-hero10jan10,0,7802281.story?coll=la-home-health>) for the full story (free registration is required).

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“OPM also recommends that the minimums, midpoints, and maximums of classified pay bands be adjusted upward by five percent effective July 1, 2005,” Jackson continued. “Given the pay increases to occur in 2005, the cost of such an adjustment would only be \$3,304 for the entire classified workforce, a negligible amount that could easily be absorbed by state agencies without additional funding from the Legislature, as was the case with the last adjustment in 2001,” Jackson added.

The *Report* also indicates that overall classified employee turnover was 12.5 percent in FY 2004, while the voluntary turnover rate was 10.9 percent. These figures represent slight increases from last year’s rates of 11.2 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively. The overall turnover rate reflects resignations, retirements, and discharges, while the voluntary rate is based on resignations and retirements only. OPM conservatively estimates that in FY 2004 turnover cost the state over \$60 million.



Tom Patt, OPM's Director of Compensation and Workforce Planning.

This year’s *Report* also considers the pay of state government’s top agency executives. OPM has studied this issue since 2001, when Senate Bill 224 became law. The study required by SB 224, which was completed in January 2002 and revised in 2003, compared the salaries paid to the directors of both appropriated and nonappropriated state agencies to those of executives in both the public and private sector labor markets. The resulting report recommended adoption of a salary range structure for agency director salaries; pay adjustments to the minimum of the pay range for agency directors whose current pay falls below the

minimum without additional funding from the Legislature; and establishment of an Oversight Committee to deal with administration of the system.

“Failure to deal appropriately with agency director pay can create salary compression problems, since the director’s salary often serves as a barrier to salary growth of subordinate managers and employees,” commented Jackson. “We are pleased that the Legislature decided during the last session to incorporate the nonappropriated agency directors into the Hay-recommended salary structure,” he continued. “This year’s report simply recommends that all remaining agency directors be incorporated into this same structure, thus enabling the state to administer agency director pay in a manner that will ensure internal equity and external market competitiveness, consistent with principles similar to those employed in the state classified pay system—a system that has been in place since 1982, and which serves 27,500 classified state employees.”

The only start-up cost associated with the creation of such a system is approximately \$306,193 (which includes mandatory retirement benefits and Social Security) necessary to adjust the pay of the 38 state agency directors whose current pay would fall below the minimum of the proposed pay bands. “This cost could be absorbed within the operating budgets of the affected agencies, without additional appropriations by the Legislature,” Jackson stated.

Kudos

to Carrie Rohr, OPM Director of Human Resource Development Services, on her appointment as a member of the Program Committee for the 2005 IPMA-HR Annual Conference, which will be held October 15 - 19, 2005, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

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Though the ASE is not mandatory and need not be completed and returned to OPM or MPC, it is a valuable tool for the training and orientation of new state human resources personnel and agency directors, as it provides an overview of state and federal requirements related to human resources.



In October 2004, OPM Financial Management Services Team member Patti Ormerod was elected Vice-President of the Oklahoma Alliance for Civil Rights, Inc. (OACR). Ms. Ormerod serves as OPM's Human Resources Manager. OACR is an organization composed of individuals in the public and private sectors employed in the areas of personnel, affirmative action and/or Equal Employment Opportunity. Members assist and support affirmative action and Equal Employment Opportunity personnel by identifying recruitment sources; serving as a network for professional information and development in the area of Equal Employment Opportunity and affirmative action; disseminating information to schools, organizations and agencies; and advocating for progress in the area of Equal Employment Opportunity.

Governor's Council Member Speaks at OSU-Tulsa

*Reprinted with permission ocolly.com * The Daily O'Collegian Oklahoma State University Jenny Redden, Staff Writer November 15, 2004*

About 40 people heard a former U.N. official speak at Oklahoma State University-Tulsa on Friday, November 12.

Richard Bonilla explained the history of the United Nations, stressing its role as an international organization, rather than a one-world government.

“The United Nations does not have an army; it cannot raise taxes; it does not legislate,” Bonilla said. “It is an international organization of sovereign nations—it is not

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the 12-week FMLA entitlement.

- Amendment to OAC 530:10-17-31 extends the deadline for submission of the performance management process compliance report from January 1 to March 31 of each year.
- Amendment to OAC 530:15-3-15 is a new section requiring agencies to coordinate with employee organizations to annually distribute organizational materials to agency personnel.
- Amendment to OAC 530:20-1-3 is a new section that reflects the Direct Deposit Act [74 O. S. §§ 292.10 et seq.] requirement that all state employees hired after December 31, 2004, be enrolled in the direct deposit system and employees hired before December 31, 2004, be enrolled in the system by June 30, 2007. The direct deposit rules have also been amended to facilitate the decentralization of the process from OPM.

OPM is currently drafting permanent rule amendments. If you would like to provide input or inquire as to any rule amendments, please contact Chanda Graham, OPM Chief Policy Attorney, (405) 522-1736, chanda.graham@opm.state.ok.us.

Oklahoma Has a New Address

*Reprinted with permission
11/29/04 Capitol Network News*

It's no longer *Your Oklahoma*, but visitors to the new state Website unveiled on November 29, 2004, should have easier access to state services and programs, Governor Brad Henry said at a Capitol news conference.

"It has always been one of my goals to make government more accessible," Henry said. "This is our newest attempt to make state government more open to the people of Oklahoma."

The new Website, www.ok.gov, features a number of new services and design improvements, according to Lisa Counts, OK.gov general manager.

"The new Website features a newsroom for all state agencies to post information

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OPM hosted a rules hearing on November 4, 2004, during which proposed emergency amendments to the Merit Rules, Voluntary Payroll Deduction Rules, Direct Deposit Rules, and PEP Rules were discussed. OPM Chief Policy Attorney Chanda Graham (r) hosted the meeting, which was attended by numerous agency representatives, including Phil Kraft, Deputy Director for Agency and Regulatory Affairs, Employees Benefits Council (l).

Conference Survives Hurricane Ivan

Tom Patt, OPM

Even the ravages of a deadly hurricane were unable to daunt the intrepid organizers of the 2004 Southeastern States Salary Conference (SESC). The annual conference, which brings together the compensation staffs of 14 member states in the southeastern quadrant of the country, was originally scheduled for October 4 - 6, 2004, in Orange Beach, Alabama. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans. During August and September, as the conference

dates approached, a series of hurricanes hit Florida and the Gulf Coast of the United States. Perhaps the most devastating was Hurricane Ivan, which came ashore on the coast of Alabama and the Florida panhandle in mid-September packing 130 mile-per-hour winds. The Orange Beach resort, including the hotel in which the salary conference was scheduled to take place, was decimated.

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Tom Patt, OPM Director of Compensation and Workforce Planning (r) gets acquainted with Arkansas' compensation experts, Herb Scott, Senior Personnel Supervisor (c), and Betty Scull, Personnel Analyst (l), during the Southeastern States Salary Conference.

Council Member, continued from page 7
a world government.”

Because the organization does not raise its own funds, Bonilla explained that it asks member nations to contribute in order to pay for its many programs.

“The United Nations has a budget of \$1.5 billion a year. The United States pays for 22 percent of that; Japan for almost 20 percent; and both the United Kingdom and France for about 6 percent. The other coun-



Photo of Richard Bonilla by Will Gungoll, Daily O'Collegian.

tries contribute less than 1 percent each,” Bonilla said.

For listeners interested in working for the United Nations, Bonilla explained what the organization looks for in applicants.

“The competition is tremendous. You need multiple languages and a higher degree,” Bonilla said. “You also need to have a special talent that the United Nations needs.”

In addition to sharing facts and figures with the audience, Bonilla expressed an honest love and appreciation of the organization.

“The charter was signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco,” Bonilla said. “I made it a personal pilgrimage to see the place where the charter had been signed.”

“The United Nations is more than a big glass and concrete building, located on 48th and 42nd Streets in New York City. It is about people, ideas, things that you can do for the betterment of the world,” he said.

Bonilla ended his presentation by encouraging the audience to explore working for the United Nations and becoming leaders of the world.

“The future is up to you,” he said. “Tonight, I want to pass the torch.”

After the speech, the International Student Organization hosted a reception, giving audience members the opportunity to speak with Bonilla individually.

There, Bonilla presented Faraz Yaqoob, International Student Organization president and electrical engineering senior, with a flag bearing the United Nations crest.

“I really enjoyed his speech,” Yaqoob said. “We were hoping for more people to come, but this was a good start for us.”

Minon Gordon, International Student Organization co-adviser, organized the event. She has known Bonilla since she was a young girl, and she thinks of him as a grandfather.

“I just wanted to make him proud. I

wanted everything to be perfect,” Gordon said. “This may be the last time he speaks, and I’m honored that he spoke for us.”

Editor's Note: Governor Brad Henry appointed Richard Bonilla to the Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs in March 2004. The Council was initially established by Governor Frank Keating in 1996, and continued by Governor Henry in 2003, to provide advice regarding the development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs relating to the special needs of Hispanics. This Council also makes a concerted effort to increase statewide public awareness of problems facing Hispanics and expands opportunities for Oklahoma Hispanics in education, employment, health, housing, culture, and recreation. All members are appointed by the Governor. OPM's Office of Equal Opportunity and Workforce Diversity provides staff support to the Council.



Members of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission staff surprised their OPM Applicant Services liaison Patty Nelson on November 3, 2004, with a luncheon and the presentation of a “Certificate of Appreciation” for her “constant and generous support of the mission of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission”. Pictured with Ms. Nelson (second from left) are OESC staff members (l to r) Glen Robards, Vicki Kelso, and Levi Omwuchuruba.



In December 2004, OPM Human Resource Development Services (HRDS) Team member Joyce Smith was elected President-Elect of the Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Managers. Her term began on January 1, 2005. In addition to her responsibilities as an HRDS instructor, Ms. Smith coordinates the Quality Oklahoma Program (see related story, page 1) and the Productivity Enhancement (PEP) Program.

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and features a Google search engine to find information,” Counts said.

She said any information on agency Websites could be found using the state’s new search engine. She added the site includes a statewide calendar of events, Oklahoma information and photo gallery, as well as access for the blind through audio.

Henry said the Website also acts as an economic development tool.

“Many businesses form their first impression of a state by its Website,” Henry explained. “The Website is more consumer, business, and generally more user-friendly than our old one.”



Office of State Finance Director Scott Meacham said the new design and portal did not pose any cost to the state, but noted the new design brought all state agency information together making it much easier to find state information.

“It is important that people are able to find what they are looking for without having to search for the right agency,” Meacham said. “The new design will become a standard for agencies to follow so that anyone who visits the state of Oklahoma online will have a positive experience.”

Meacham said in the coming months, OSF would be aiding state agencies to integrate the new design into their own address.

Counts added that the former Website had more than 10 million visitors a month, which she anticipated would increase with the new services and features of the new design.

“Of course, two million of those hits are just me,” Henry joked.

*Interested in OPM's
Certified Public Manager Program?
HRDS Director Carrie Rohr can
tell you all about it! Call her at
(405) 521-6344 for all the details.*



Members of the Department of Health's Human Resource Management department celebrated the holidays with lunch at Abuelo's in Bricktown. Pictured (back row, l to r) are Don Thompson; Kara Kearns; Dr. Doyle Fortney, Chief; Diane Garrison; Elvia Murrell; Linda Richardson; Robert Dennis; David Urang; (middle row, l to r) Jan Bobannon; Leanne Beale; Trish VanMeter; Amani Smiley; Peggy Bowerman; Valerie Courtney; Bettye Baker; (front row, l to r) Pat Ramirez; Karen Salinger; Karen Gray; Teresa Welch; Kelley Harrold; Grace Blackmon; Carol McClure; Janet Smith; and Dollzjine Posey.

Best Practices in Hiring People with Disabilities

Reprinted with permission—12/3/04 IPMA-HR "HR Bulletin"

Recently, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released a report on best practices in hiring people with disabilities in state government. The governors of Florida, Maryland, Vermont and Washington allowed the EEOC to review their employment practices as they relate to individuals with disabilities.

The EEOC looked at the following:

- Recruitment and hiring of people with disabilities for state jobs;
- Provision of reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities;
- Retention and advancement of individuals with disabilities; and
- Employment of individuals with disabilities in both private and public sector jobs

Some of the best practices identified by the EEOC include:

- Individuals with disabilities as part of diversity programs—conduct targeted outreach and recruitment efforts;
- Vermont provides a “must interview” to anyone with a disability who meets the minimum job qualifications;
- Washington created a supported employment program to assist individuals who need on-the-job training and long term support to work successfully;
- Florida secured a waiver from the Social Security Administration to allow it to move persons with developmental disabilities into jobs without jeopardizing their Medicaid and Social Security benefits; and
- Maryland and Vermont track information related to providing reasonable accommodations that can be used to assess the effectiveness of their reasonable accommodation

EEOC, continued on page 13

Agency HR Changes Since 11/04

Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

*Linda Phipps
HR Management Specialist I

Carmen White
Administrative Technician III*

Department of Environmental Quality

*Michele Morris
HR Management Specialist II
Interagency transfer from OPM*

Oklahoma Historical Society

*Sherri Henderson
HR Management Specialist II*

Department of Human Services

*Margot Barnes
Intra-agency transfer from Operations
to HRMD Classification/Compensation*

*Mikéi Guíterrez
HR Management Specialist IV
HRMD Benefits*

*Kay Hagerman
Personnel Manager II
HRMD Benefits/Programs*

*Joe Kirk
Programs Manager IV
Retired*

*Ed Manek
Budget Analyst III
Interagency transfer to DCS*

*David Peugh
Personnel Manager II
Classification & Compensation
Retired*

Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

New address effective Monday, January 24, 2005:

*Shepherd Mall
DMHSAS Human Resources Management—
Central Office
2401 N.W. 23rd Street, Suite 85
Oklahoma City, OK 73107
(405) 522-3902*

Office of Personnel Management

*Terri Berry
HR Management Specialist
Applicant Services
Interagency transfer from DHS*

*Lance Cullen
HR Management Specialist
Personnel Assessment
Resigned*

*Harry Gentry
HR Management Specialist
Intra-agency transfer from Applicant Services to
Management Services*

*Laraine German
HR Management Specialist
Applicant Services
Resigned

Michele Morris
HR Management Specialist
Management Services
Interagency transfer to
Department of Environmental Quality

Laura Sobr
Carl Albert Public Internship Program
Executive Fellow
Management Services*

All Appointing Authorities Memos Since 11/04

OPM 05-07 (1/19/05)

"Quality Oklahoma" Team Day 2005

OPM 05-06 (1/19/05)

*Revision to List of Organizations and Policies
Approved For State Employees' Voluntary Payroll
Deductions*

OPM 05-05 (1/19/05)

*State Agency Hiring Freeze—
Executive Order 2005-01 UPDATE*

OPM 05-04 (1/13/05)

*Agency Self-Evaluation of Human Resource
Management Practices and Human Resource
Management Plan FY 2005*

OPM 05-03 (1/13/05)

*State Agency Hiring Freeze
Executive Order 2005-01*

OPM 05-02 (1/13/05)

*OPM FY 2005 Annual Compensation Report
(Revised)*

OPM 05-01 (1/10/05)

*Executive Order 2004-38 - Federal Drug-Free
Workplace Act of 1988*

OPM 04-47 (12/17/04)

*State Employee Assistance Program
Fiscal Year 2004 Annual Report*

OPM 04-46 (12/16/04)

*Semi-Annual Allocation and
Salary Adjustment Report*

OPM 04-45 (12/16/04)

*Implementation of House Bill 2005
(Employee Pay Raise)*

OPM 04-44 (12/10/04)

*Revision To List Of Organizations And Policies
Approved For State Employees' Voluntary Payroll
Deductions*

OPM 04-43 (12/07/04)

OPM FY 05 Annual Compensation Report

OPM 04-42 (11/22/04)

State Agency Services During Hazardous Weather

OPM 04-41 (11/10/04)

Decentralization of Direct Deposit

OPM 04-40 (11/09/04)

*Attorney General Opinion 04-33—HB 2005 and
HB 2006—Agency Director Salary Changes*

OPM 04-39 (11/05/04)

Employee Service Rating (PMP) Compliance Form

*For information regarding PEP,
contact Joyce Smith at
(405) 522-3617.*



On November 30, members of the Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs presented "Certificates of Appreciation" to Department of Public Safety (DPS) staff members for their efforts to ensure the publication by DPS of the Oklahoma drivers' manual in Spanish and the translation of the online drivers' license examination into Spanish, a service available at 18 DPS sites statewide. Pictured (l to r) are Oscar Quiroga, Chair, Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs; Karen Gentry, Director, DPS Drivers' License Examining Division; Casey Blackford, Administrative Officer, DPS; and Kevin Ward, DPS Commissioner and Cabinet Secretary of Safety and Security. OPM provides staff support for the Council.

IPMA-HR Audioconference Series: Military Leave—What You Need to Know

When: Thursday, February 10, 2005

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. EST

With so many courageous men and women volunteering to serve their country in Iraq and Afghanistan, military leave has become a major issue for employers. As an employer, what are your responsibilities to service members called up to active duty? Must you hold a job open indefinitely? What types of benefits must be maintained? How do you go about reinstating an absent service member?

Join IPMA-HR and Captain Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USNR on February 10 to learn the answers to these and other questions. Captain Wright will provide an overview of the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

In addition, participants will be given the opportunity to ask questions of the presenter. Don't miss this opportunity! Participants will also receive, via e-mail, reference materials to go along with the audio conference.

Pricing

IPMA-HR Members: \$99; non-Members: \$150.

Pricing is based per location and not by number of participants on the call, so be sure to include your entire HR staff!

Register Now!

Online registration is available at https://ww4.premconf.com/websvp/register?conf_id=746271. To register by phone call Premier Conferencing directly at **(800) 289-0579** and reference event code **746271**.

Once registered, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with a toll-free number and simple instructions to access the audio conference. A copy of the presenter's handouts will be e-mailed to all registered participants at least three business days prior to the audio conference.

Deadline/Cancellations

Registration deadline is **February 9 at 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)**. Refund requests must be made in writing by February 3, 2005. Requests received after Febru-

ary 3 will not be honored. However, substitutions will be allowed or a credit will be given towards a future audio conference.

About Captain Samuel F. Wright, JAGC, USNR

Captain Wright is a judge advocate in the Naval Reserve. He was commissioned an Ensign more than 30 years ago, in December 1973, in the Navy's JAG Corps Student Program. After graduating from law school and passing the Texas bar exam, he reported to active duty in January 1977 as a Lieutenant (junior grade).

In March 1977, Captain Wright graduated from the Naval Justice School (Newport, Rhode Island) and received a superseding appointment in the Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps. He has advanced through the ranks and was promoted to Captain (O-6) in December 1995.

Captain Wright is a 1973 graduate of Northwestern University, with a BA in Political Science. He has his JD from the University of Houston, 1976, and an LL.M. in Labor Law, 1980, from Georgetown University. He has been a member of the Texas Bar since 1976 and of the District of Co-

Military Leave, continued on page 13



On December 14, 2004, HR professionals from throughout state government attended the Oklahoma Public Human Resource Association's Holiday Training Conference, which was held at the beautiful Ronald J. Norrick Library in downtown Oklahoma City. Guest speakers included Gary Jones, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Public Employees Association (l), and Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration (r). Pictured with Mr. Jones and Mr. Jackson is Ron Wilson, Human Resources Director, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, and OPHRA President.

Conference, continued from page 8

Alabama, which was the host state for the event, immediately jumped into action, notifying the participants that the conference would have to be postponed and looking for a suitable alternative site. Within a matter of weeks, Sandestin Resort, a golf and beach resort on the Gulf Coast of Florida near the community of Destin, was located and the conference was rescheduled for November 8-10.

And a wonderful conference it was. The conference sessions were filled with roundtable discussions on a number of compensation-related topics, interspersed with a series of informative presentations, including topics such as *FLSA Rule Revisions*, *Rewarding Employees During Tight Budgetary Times*, and *HR Outsourcing in the State of Florida*.

A session was also devoted to reviewing the annual SESC salary survey, which was conducted for the Conference by the state of Alabama. The survey includes pay data on 90 benchmark jobs, as well as a wealth of information on state benefit practices. The highlight of the evening social events was a dolphin cruise in the Gulf of Mexico aboard a glass bottom boat and dinner at the Back Porch Restaurant in Destin. Conference participants were each given a t-shirt which read, "We Survived Ivan."

Tentative plans have been made for South Carolina to host the 2005 conference.

Military Leave, continued from page 12

lumbia Bar since 1993.

Captain Wright has ten years of active duty, including service in the Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, the Naval Legal Service Offices in Washington and Norfolk, the U.S. Atlantic Fleet Headquarters, the A-12 Litigation Team, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the Office of the Naval Inspector General, the U.S. Fifth Fleet Headquarters (Bahrain), and the staff of the Reserve Forces Policy Board. His military decorations include a Meritorious Service Medal, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, and two Navy Commendation Medals.

He was employed for ten years (1982-92) in the Division of Labor-Management Laws, Office of the Solicitor, U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). He specialized in the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act and the Veterans' Reemployment Rights (VRR) law. He served on the interagency task force that studied the VRR law to propose amendments. Together with one other DOL attorney (Susan M. Webman), he drafted the task force work product that became the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), enacted in 1994 and codified at 38 U.S.C. 4301-4333.

Since 1997, he has written the "Law Review" column for *The Officer*, monthly magazine of the Reserve Officers Association (ROA). The back issues can be found on ROA's Website, www.roa.org. Click on "Legislative Affairs" then "ROA Law Reviews." These articles are also available on the ESGR Website, www.esgr.com. In 2003, Captain Wright received the *Distinguished Service Award* from the Standing Committee on Legal Assistance for Military Personnel, American Bar Association.

EEOC, continued from page 10

procedures.

This is simply an interim report; a final report is expected by October 2005. In the meantime, the EEOC is offering free, informal assistance to states to help them comply with the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). More information is available at <http://www.eeoc.gov>.



On December 10, 2004, the Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Managers (OSCPM) named Judy Dennis, Oklahoma Department of Transportation (c), 2004 OSCP M of the Year. Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration (l), presented Ms. Dennis with her award and a certificate signed by Governor Brad Henry declaring December 10, 2004, "Judy Dennis Day" in the state of Oklahoma. Pictured with Ms. Dennis and Mr. Jackson is Ms. Dennis' supervisor, Joe Kyle, ODOT (r).

OPM Committee Calendar

Affirmative Action Review Council

9/21/05, 10/19/05,
11/16/05, 12/14/05—8:30 a.m.
Oklahoma Water Resources Board

CPM Advisory Board

Meets at the call of the chair

Child Day Care Advisory Committee

Meets at the call of the chair

OPM State EAP Advisory Council

4/27/05, 7/27/05, 10/26/05—10:00 a.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91

Governor's Advisory Council on Asian American Affairs

4/27/05, 7/27/05, 10/26/05—2:00 p.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91

Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council

2/18/05, 5/20/05,
8/19/05, 11/18/05—3:00 p.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91

Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American & Hispanic Affairs

4/25/05, 7/25/05, 10/24/05—2:00 p.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91



Committee for Incentive Awards for State Employees

Meets at the call of the chair

Mentor Selection Advisory Committee

Meets at the call of the chair

State Agency Review Committee

2/9/05, 4/13/05, 5/11/05,
8/10/05, 11/9/05—2:00 p.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91

Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women

2/24/05, 3/24/05,
4/28/05, 5/26/05—1:30 p.m.
419C State Capitol
8/25/05, 9/22/05,
10/27/05, 11/17/05—1:30 p.m.
Office of Personnel Management
Conference Room G-91

Note: Calendar subject to change. Call (405) 521-2177 for most recent information concerning OPM Advisory Bodies and other entities staffed by OPM.

For agendas, log on to the OPM Website at www.opm.state.ok.us and open the "OPM Advisory Body Meetings" link under "Quick Links."

Story ideas for the "HR Exchange"?
Contact the Editor at
dayna.petete@opm.state.ok.us.

Congratulations!

The state agency HR professionals listed below have received the designation of "Certified Personnel Professional" since November 2004. The Certified Personnel Professional (CPP) designation is awarded to state employees assigned to professional HR positions in the executive branch of state government who attend a four-day training course, successfully complete an examination, and attend a minimum of eight hours of training in professional HR administration each year.

The next CPP training course is scheduled for April 19 - 22. For information, contact Hank Batty, OPM Deputy Administrator for Programs, at (405) 521-6303.

Sandra Byler

Office of the Attorney General

Marie Saatkamp

Department of Career and Technology Education

Karla Crawford & David Dyke

Department of Environmental Quality

Tansy Diaz & Debra Martin-Barber

Oklahoma Health Care Authority

Amy M. Parker

Department of Human Services

Nina Moser

Commissioners of the Land Office

Lucille Hicks & Pam Mulvaney

Department of Mental Health &

Substance Abuse Services

Elizabeth M. Sharon

Department of Mines

Austin Gilley & Jennifer Jepson

Office of Personnel Management

Lisa Hays

Real Estate Commission

Jammie Thomison

Department of Rehabilitation Services

Gary Glover

Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs

Former OPM Administrator Honored

Dayna Petete, OPM

Colleagues from the University of Oklahoma and various state agencies gathered at the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History on November 18, 2004, to honor former OPM Administrator and Human Resources Cabinet Secretary, James C. Thomas.

During the festivities, Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administra-



Susan Bussey, Merit Protection Commission; Debra Martin-Barber, Oklahoma Health Care Authority; and Tansy Diaz, Oklahoma Health Care Authority.



Barbara Williams, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, and Elizabeth Sharon, Department of Mines.



Hank Batty, OPM Deputy Administrator for Programs, coordinates the CPP Training course.

Scenes from the October 2004 CPP Training

tion, presented a proclamation from Governor Brad Henry, declaring November 18, 2004, *James C. Thomas Day* in the state of Oklahoma.

In his proclamation, the Governor noted that:

In his role as Executive Director of the State Personnel Board and Administrator of its suc-

Mr. Thomas, continued on page 15

Need an outstanding, hard-working graduate or undergraduate intern? OPM's Carl Albert Public Internship Program can help! Call Dayna Petete at (405) 521-6293 for all the details!

Crisis Management: Defining the Role of HR Professionals when Natural Disasters Strike

Alan D. Pennington

Reprinted with permission—November 2004 “IPMA-HR News”

As the recent hurricanes in Florida illustrated, communities are often called upon—at the whim of Mother Nature and more frequently than they may like—to deal with various types of natural disasters. The impact upon a community or region hit with a natural disaster is extensive and goes well beyond the monetary damage estimates that are widely disseminated in the media. While most governmental units have specific agencies tasked with preparing for and responding to natural disasters, the human resources professional plays a critical and behind-the-scenes role in an overall smooth response.

As public officials, our organizations will be faced with the task of maintaining essential public services during and after a disaster. Additionally, as professional practitioners, we have the added concern of assisting our own employees in dealing with their own personal crises arising from the disaster.

The HR Practitioner’s Role in Staffing Essential Services

Organizational disaster plans typically address in great detail the technical aspects of how essential services in the community (such as police and fire protection, public works and utility services) will be maintained and deployed during and after the disaster. However, sometimes overlooked are the very practical aspects of staffing these services when employees may have difficulty responding.

The human resources department can play a crucial role in assisting in this endeavor by:

- 1. Maintaining accurate emergency contact information.** Ideally, employees would provide this updated information whenever it changes. However, to ensure accuracy, it’s better to have a periodic update for all employees.
- 2. Identifying additional resources for staffing essential services.** During times of emergency, the service needs

of the community will frequently overwhelm the government’s available resources. The HR professional can assist in addressing this need by:

- Identifying the “special skills” of existing employees. Many of our employees have skill sets and abilities that they do not utilize in their normally assigned job function. Maintaining some type of “emergency resource listing” can provide a listing of additional personnel within your organization who can be reassigned during emergency situations to areas of greater need. An easy way to continually collect this information is to include it as part of the new hire orientation. You should focus on identifying those skills and/or abilities that require special training and/or licensing (for example—commercial driver’s license).
- Identify other sources for additional personnel. Have prepared a listing of sources where individuals with key skills can be hired or borrowed. This may include temporary staffing agencies, union halls, and neighboring communities (assuming they aren’t dealing with the same disaster).

- 3. Providing flexibility in personnel rules and/or collective bargaining agreements.** It is important that the appropriate language be included into all personnel rules or collective bargaining agreements covering your employees that allow for certain provisions to be waived during a declared emergency. In a time of true emergency, rules and regulations regarding work jurisdiction, job duty assignments, working hours, etc. will need to be suspended in whole or in part in order to allow the appropriate personnel deployment to occur.

These three items are relatively simple and can be accomplished without the investment of large amounts of time or money. However, the availability of this

Mr. Thomas, continued from page 14

cessor agency, OPM, James C. Thomas presided over the wholesale reform of the state government personnel system in 1982, which included the creation of OPM as the administrative agency for the state personnel system and the Ethics and Merit Commission (now the Oklahoma Merit Protection Commission) as a quasi-judicial entity to decide personnel-related disputes.

During his long and distinguished career as head of the state government personnel system, James C. Thomas was instrumental in the creation and development of a number of innovative programs designed to improve the services provided to the citizens of the state of Oklahoma and the



On July 31, 2002, Mr. Thomas participated in the festivities commemorating the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Oklahoma Personnel Act and the creation of OPM and MPC.

working conditions under which state employees labor, including:

- Employee Service Evaluation system;
- Affirmative Action Plan requirement for state agencies;
- Voluntary Payroll Deduction Program;
- Productivity Enhancement Program;
- Certified Public Manager Program;
- State Employee Assistance Program;
- Fair Employment Practices Act;
- Persons with Severe Disabilities Employment Program;
- Mandatory Supervisory Training;
- Agency Payroll System; and
- Carl Albert Public Internship Program, which is designed to assist students at institutions of higher education in gaining experience and knowledge in state government and to encour-

Disaster, continued on page 16

Mr. Thomas, continued on page 16

Disaster, continued from page 15

information during emergency situations can greatly enhance the speed and type of response provided by your agency.

The HR Practitioner's Role in Meeting Employees' Needs During a Crisis

Natural disasters not only greatly impact public agencies but also have significant impact upon the personal lives of your employees, including loss of utilities, loss/damage to vehicles or housing, and dealing with other family issues. Depending upon where your employees live in relation to their work site and the type of disaster, they may be unable to respond to their work site or not have a normal work site to respond to.

One of the first things you should do following a disaster is to determine whether employees should report to work. Have a plan of action to provide notification to all essential services employees regarding when and where they should report. You may also need to make arrangements to assist employees in physically reporting to the workplace. Staffing may need to be modified to assist in covering for those unable to report.

For non-essential personnel, you need to determine whether or not they can be reassigned to assist in providing more critical services or whether they should not report at all. Employees may need time to handle their personal affairs and a policy covering time-off or flexible work hours during emergencies should be in place in advance.

Just as your organization's resources may be strained during the response, keep in mind that the financial resources of individuals may also be tight at this time due to damages or destroyed housing and vehicles. Even those with great insurance coverage may struggle while claims are being processed and alternative arrangements are being made. You can assist employees by having available for them information regarding temporary assistance programs that may be available in your community or through your organization. Employees may request hardship withdrawals or loans from their retirement plans/account—be familiar with the guidelines regarding these and the appropriate methods for requesting and processing the request.

An extremely valuable resource during this time is your employee assistance program (EAP). A good EAP has various programs, staff members and resources that can assist individuals with dealing with a variety of issues including financial difficulties, stress and death.

Ensure that HR personnel are involved in all disaster planning efforts within your organization. Your role and viewpoint are unique ones, and they can have not only a large impact upon how well the entire organization responds to the disaster but also how well your employees are able to deal with it on a personal level.

Alan D. Pennington is the assistant city manager for the City of Peoria, Ill. He serves as the chief negotiator for the City of Peoria with eight labor unions and has presented more than 20 grievance arbitration cases on the City's behalf. Pennington writes the bimonthly Focus on Labor column for "IPMA-HR News."

FYI

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has issued the standard mileage rate for businesses to use in deducting automobile costs in 2005. Beginning January 1, 2005, the new rate is 40.5 cents per mile, up from 37.5 cents per mile in 2004. The rate for deductible medical or moving expenses is 15 cents per mile in 2005, up from 14 cents in 2004. Finally, the rate when giving services to a charitable organization is 14 cents per mile in 2005. The IRS maintains a Website at: <http://www.irs.gov> regarding tax information.

—12/3/04 IPMA-HR "HR Bulletin"



The first session of the 50th Oklahoma Legislature will convene on Monday, February 7, 2005.

Mr. Thomas, continued from page 15

age recruitment of such students to pursue careers in state government service.

During his tenure with the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, James C. Thomas managed one of the nation's largest state park systems with 59 parks, five resort lodges, and nine golf courses; secured more than \$22 million in General Obligation and Revenue Bonds to improve facilities; implemented disability compliance standards; built new income-producing facilities; and provided additional recreational equipment.

Since becoming Executive Director of the Center for Public Management in the University of Oklahoma's College of Continuing Education, James C. Thomas has drawn upon his vast reservoir of expertise and experience in directing the affairs of two important state agencies to create innovative partnership opportunities between state government and the University of Oklahoma that have permitted state agencies to increase services and improve their quality, develop highly trained staff, and reach a wider client base—all for fewer dollars.



Dayna Petete, OPM Assistant Administrator for Communications and Legislative Liaison (c), taught her HRDS class, "Legislative Process" to Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation staff members at Quartz Mountain Lodge in October and November. Pictured with Ms. Petete are DeAnna Stillwell (l) and Felicia Jackson (r), both of the OSBI training staff.

An Evening with Neighbors

*Dr. Sandra K. Rana, Chair
Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council*

The Ethnic American Advisory Council was established by Governor Brad Henry on May 27, 2004, with the purpose, among other things, to "provide advice and assistance to the Governor on the development and implementation of policies, plans and programs relating to the needs and values of the Ethnic American community".

a reading and a prayer of thanks for the completion of the fast, the serving of dates to break the fast, and of course, the dinner, which was paid for by private donations.

A wonderful array of culinary dishes was specially prepared for the evening and served buffet-style to the guests of the Ethnic American Advisory Council. Honored



Governor Brad Henry; Dr. Sandra K. Rana, Chair of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council; Brenda Thornton, Director of OPM's Office of Equal Opportunity and Workforce Diversity; and Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration.

One of the values that is shared by the members of the Ethnic American community is the observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a month of fasting, a reflection on the blessings of God, and the opportunity to share those blessings with others. At the conclusion of each daily fast, a prayer and a dinner is shared with family, friends, and neighbors. This dinner is called the Iftar dinner.

The Ethnic American Advisory Council was honored to host its first Iftar dinner on November 5, 2004, in the Phillips Pavilion on the grounds of the Governor's Mansion. This graceful building represents the many peoples of Oklahoma and the rich history of our great state. The event included

guests included Governor Brad Henry and First Lady Kim Henry, U.S. Federal Appeals Judge Robert Henry, Oscar B. Jackson, Jr., OPM Administrator and Cabinet Secretary of Human Resources and Administration, and his wife, Shirley Jackson

There was a rich diversity of cultures at the event brought together with the common goal of mutual fellowship and goodwill. In the true spirit of the evening, all of the attendees were grateful to God for the blessings of living in this great state and to be able to share those blessings with each other at this meal.

OPM's Office of Equal Opportunity and Workforce Diversity provides staff support for the Council.

North Carolina Site of 2005 IPMA-HR Southern Region Conference

*Dayna Petete, President-Elect
IPMA-HR Southern Region*

The North Carolina Chapter of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) will host the 2005 IPMA-HR Southern Region Annual Conference, April 24 - 27, at the Hilton Charlotte & Towers in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Conference is entitled, *The Mind of HR*, and features such topics as, *Human Capital Management Tools, Saving Benefits Dollars, Developing the HR Team to Meet Today's/Tomorrow's Challenges, Recruiting and Hiring People With Disabilities, Why HR Needs to be a Strategic Player and How to Become One, How to Reward Top Performers, and Domestic Violence and the Workplace.*



Individuals interested in attending the Conference may visit <http://themindofhr.charmeck.org> to find out more about the Conference and to register.

IPMA-HR is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to providing resources and advocacy for public HR professionals at all levels. Comprised of four US Regions and more than 50 Chapters, IPMA-HR represents more than 11,000 individuals and 1,200 agencies in local, state, and federal levels of government worldwide.

The IPMA-HR Southern Region was established in 1947 for the purpose of fostering and promoting within the territorial limits of the Region all the aims and purposes of IPMA-HR; assisting in keeping HR professionals informed about signifi-

Southern Region, continued on page 18

cant trends and developments in human resources by providing current information on the latest human resources procedures and techniques; enabling members to increase their professional growth and development by participating in Region programs such as meetings, conferences, seminars, and workshops; providing a source of contact and communication within the Region for HR professionals at all levels of government (municipal, county, state, and federal) as well as private industry, colleges and universities; facilitating the sharing of resources and experiences to overcome challenges shared by Region members; bringing the purposes and objectives of IPMA-HR closer to the individual and providing a means for a continuous program of activity in each locality; and providing an identifiable link with IPMA-HR and local Chapters through which they can develop a stronger professional human resources association.

The Southern Region is made up of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

The Oklahoma Public Human Resources Association (OPHRA) is the premier public sector organization representing and serving Human Resources and Labor Relations professionals in the state of Oklahoma. Membership is comprised of individuals from state, county, and municipal government, as well as employment law experts.

Since 1999, OPHRA has been affiliated with two national professional organizations, the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and the National Public Employer Labor Relations Association (NPELRA). Through these affiliations, OPHRA offers its Oklahoma members a unique opportunity to share information and resources, gain technical training and expertise, and access to information regarding state and national legal issues and trends related to HR and Labor Relations management. Visit the OPHRA Website at <http://www.ophra.info/>.



Oklahoma's First Lady Kim Henry (c) with members of the Governor's Ethnic American Advisory Council, Malaka Elyazgi (l) and Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour, who serves as Vice-Chair/Secretary of the Council.

Organizations Counting on HR Service Delivery to Bring More Gains in Productivity in 2005

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Employers are looking to their HR units to achieve additional gains in productivity and support other key business objectives by continuing to take advantage of the Web to manage self-service transactions by employees and managers in 2005. HR units appear confident that they can deliver, although employee self-service remains well ahead of manager self-service in terms of general availability.

According to Towers Perrin's 2004 *HR Service Delivery Survey*, HR departments are on course to make Web-based employee self-service even more widely available than ever in 2005 and there will be a significant push to expand manager self-service as well. Supporting these expansion efforts is the fact that a majority of respondents reported significant improvements in terms of both timeliness (82%) and accuracy (74%) of HR data as a result of their ongoing investment in self-service functions. A number also reported measurable reductions in the workload of HR generalists and administrators.

These gains are similar to those reported by employers in Towers Perrin's previous annual HR self-service surveys, so they are not particularly surprising. However, they are especially welcome these days given the

ongoing emphasis by many companies on containing cost and raising productivity. Successfully implemented HR self-service programs—for both employees and managers—fill the bill by freeing up employees to conduct company business and stay focused on performance goals, in addition to enhancing the operational efficiency of the HR departments themselves.

Nevertheless, the latest survey results indicate that the widespread success with HR self-service programs is not shared equally across all companies. While employers are fairly adept at putting in place new technology and processes to ensure smooth HR transactions, too often not enough attention is paid to two elements that are a critical part of the most cutting-edge self-service initiatives—intuitive, user-friendly Website design and change management. Organizations that excel in these areas are often more successful than others in achieving returns on their investment in HR self-service, as defined by improved timeliness, accuracy and workload reduction throughout the organization.

To access the Towers Perrin's 2004 *HR Service Delivery Survey*, link to <http://www.towersperrin.com/hrservices/global/default.htm>.