



MSAOP News Notes

January 2010 Issue

Editor: Kelli Greene



Dr. Deborah Brennan is moving on to SAA

Submitted by: Marlene Coley

With the selection of Dr. Deborah Brennan to fill the Area Director's position in the South Atlantic Area, we will not only lose an Associate Area Director, we will also lose a dedicated sponsor of the Mid South Area Council of Office Professionals. Dr. Brennan has served the council well for the past 7 years, rendering advice when needed

and championing our causes. The MSACOP wishes Dr. Brennan the best of luck in her new position. We know that because of her dedication and willingness to accept a challenge, Dr. Brennan will do an excellent job as the new Area Director for SAA which is effective January 17, 2010.

Congratulations Dr. Brennan!

Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (MSACOP)

Pictures on Pg.12

The 2009 MSACOP Training Workshop for all OPs was held November 4th and 5th in Gulfport, MS. Presentations passed useful information to the attendees.

Lynda Taylor, Sr. Chair, welcomed us to the Workshop. Dr. Deborah Brennan also welcomed all to the Workshop and shared the importance of Office Professionals and their need to be professional in their positions.

Telesia Burton, Linda Fulton and Ann McGee provided an ARIS Overview and How Various Functions Work Concurrently. Did you know that in order to be a User of the ARIS system form REE-235 needs to be filled out and submitted?

Cack Norquist, Area Transportation Specialist, gave us some useful information on GovTrip and FTIS. "Entitlement" under the GovTrip purpose codes is not used and "Mission (Operational)" covers trips for Pre-Employment Interviews, Site Visits, and RPES. Cack provided the attendees with a handout on www.virtuallythere.com.

Margaret Rushing brought us all up-to-date on ARMPS and provided a Budget Overview. Guidance on entering information in ARMPS is found in the ARMS manual, Appendix 7. Margaret also included an ARMP Timeline in her handouts. She showed how the ARMPS package printout can be used to keep track of intended spending. Margaret also covered Budget and CATS for Phil Morris who had a conflict and could not join us. She told how the Status of Funds should mirror what has been budgeted in ARMPS.

Terry Krutz was going to educate us further on CATS and AXOL. However, Terry changed her presentation a little because CATS had already been covered. Terry shared information on Sole Source Justification. She

explained that when you look at Open Market for a Sole Source you need to have 3 vendors estimates. The Sole Source memo needs to be signed by the person that is doing the research.

Our Guest Speaker was Marlaine Peachey, Executive Assistant to the Mayor, City of Mandeville, LA. She shared "What's Really Important Anyway?" with the group. She talked about what was important in the business world, our circle of family & friends, and in our life.

Due to computer complications our schedule changed moving the Adobe presentation to the second day.

Lynda Taylor went over the Council's Mission & Goals. Her handout covered the series that comprise the MSAOP (GS-318, GS-326, GS-322, and GS-303). There are 4 vacancies on the Council this year. (See the flyer on page 12 of the newsletter.)

Dawn Reed and CharDae Love gave us Nuggets of Knowledge on AgLearn. They explained to the participants how to find training in AgLearn and covered in depth how to fill in the Electronic SF-182.

Our second day started with Lucienne Savell giving us useful information on Adobe Acrobat Professional. This was just the "Tip" of the iceberg. She demonstrated how to create a fillable form.

Virginia Kelley gave an overview of Microsoft Office Suite 2007. She provided a Quick Reference Guide for Word. Virginia also gave the group a demonstration on using Letterhead and Correspondence.

Lucienne Savell also provided a presentation on Microsoft outlook Calendar and Cabinet 2007. She gave us a tour of Outlook to include the Cabinet (how to add a folder &

creating a new file folder, how to filter messages) the Calendar (adding items), your Contact List (adding a contact), and the Task Window (adding a new task).

Marlene Coley provided useful information on Files Retention. Her handouts included information on "What are the Federal Employee Responsibilities"; "Some Benefits of Good Record Management"; how to create labels for file folders; "What is an Electronic Record"; "Managing E-mail as a Public Record"; and "Records Management Websites". Marlene also provided the group with a handout "File Management Basics".

Our last presentation was given by Drusilla Fratesi and Marlene Coley. They covered information from the Area Office. Did you know that the Mid South Area has 28 Research Units? Drusilla shared ways to "Be Kind to the Secretaries". She also shared some of the changes that are coming. Personnel issues were covered and she provided us with some reminders. One of her slides showed the business format for addresses, the incorrect way to address a memo, and the correct way to address a memo. Marlene provided information on RPES and the do's and don't's. She covered what is routinely missing, the correct way to format items for RPES and she finished up with the website on where we can find answers to most questions.

Some of the attendees traveled to the Poplarville Unit where there was a tour of the facility.

Thank you to everyone who made the Workshop a success!!

Submitted by: Kelli Greene

SIMPLIFY MY LIFE

Submitted by: Lynda Taylor



Simplifying your life is about gaining control and creating more time to do the things you want to do. Start by freeing up just one hour a day for 30 days and using that time to consider what is complicating your life. What can you eliminate? You will be amazed at how giving up this one hour has virtually no effect on your work, yet creates a great deal of personal satisfaction.

Here are some simplification rules to live by:

- ♦ **Less is more.** Don't answer every phone call. Don't attend every meeting you're invited to. Overestimate the amount of time needed for tasks, and work according to this schedule.
- ♦ **Just say no.** Determine what your priorities are and say no to everything else. Once you set aside time for yourself, you can honestly tell the next person that you can't make that meeting or take on that new assignment.
- ♦ **Possessions are nine-tenths of the problem.** It is one of life's great ironies that in order to buy more things, we must work harder. Working harder takes more time and we can't enjoy the things we have bought. You probably have too much stuff. You might get rid of everything you haven't used in the last 12 months.
- ♦ **What really matters is ... what really matters.** You need time to decide what is important to you. So don't waste another moment; start freeing yourself up for this critical life decision.

Remember to keep asking, "Is this going to simplify my life?" Over time these small steps add up to big change.

10 Minutes a Day to Organize Your Office

Submitted by: Ann McGee

No time to organize your office? Follow these daily steps to organize and then maintain your office.

1. On Mondays, de-clutter your office. Remove at least one item which you don't use at least monthly. Remove all personal items from your desk. Throw away pens that don't work. Reduce your ketchup/salt/napkin supply by 90%.
2. On Tuesdays, take inventory. Review your supplies and make a list or place an order. Take a few minutes to look through an office supply catalog. You'll find a myriad of useful organizing items.
3. Think on Wednesdays. How can you make better use of your computer? Can you develop a spreadsheet to help organize some aspect of your job? Do you need to find and register for a computer class? Do it today.
4. Thursday is sorting day. Go through all those business cards and small pieces of paper which have accumulated throughout the week. Put them where they belong. Also put away any reference materials you've been using.
5. Have fun filing on Fridays. End your week by cleaning up all the paper lying around your office. Purge your files. Have a mean and clean filing system which you can actually use.

Then have a wonderful weekend.

Organize Your Desk in 8 Steps

Submitted by: Ann McGee

1. Remove everything from your desk. Place your phone on your left if you're right handed and on the right if you're left handed. Display personal items elsewhere.
2. Keep a spiral notebook by the phone for messages and phone notes. Write your voice mail messages in it and delete them from the system. Jot down reference notes before you make a call to reduce phone time.
3. Open your planner or turn on your PDA and place it on your desk. Use it to keep track of to-dos, follow-ups and ideas.
4. Keep office supplies in one drawer only. Buy a dozen of your favorite, inexpensive pens and keep them in a cutlery tray in the drawer. Keep back-up supplies in a plastic storage
5. Sort through your desk files. Keep in your desk drawers only files you use weekly or those that are personal or confidential.
6. Place your computer at a 90 degree angle to your desk. Keep your desk work surface clear of everything except essentials and your current project.
7. Set up a system for active files either in a step file sorter on your desk or in your file drawer. Sort your paperwork into it: Do, Consider, Awaiting Answer, File, Hold, Read and Refer.
8. Take ten minutes at the end of each day to keep your desk organized. Place tomorrow's top priority project in the center of your desk. You're ready for anything!

Prioritize items on your to-do list if you feel like you're spinning your wheels. Use **A** for the items that have to be done today, **B** for the things you should do today, and **C** for the tasks you hope to do.

Spend ten minutes at the end of your work-day planning and making tomorrow's to-do list.



US Bank Travel Card

Provided by: Cack Norquist (e-mail July 16, 2009)

We have put together a step by step guide to assist cardholder in registering online for USBank Access. You may use Access to monitor and manage your USBank account. If you have any problems with registration, they must contact USBank for assistance (888-994-6722). It is an easy process and if you have an open account with USBank you will be able to register and use the system in order to make a payment online.

The instructions for USBank Travel Cardholder Access are in SharePoint. Click the link below to access the document.

<https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/MSA/Shared%20Documents/Travel%20Card%20Information/US%20Bank%20Cardholder%20Access.pdf>

Remember that SharePoint uses the same login ID and Password as your Outlook e-mail.



Purchase Card—New Guidance—Update

Submitted by: Lynda Taylor

This is intended to be clarification for the email forwarded by Terry Krutz on October 22, 2009 entitled 'Purchase Card - New Guidance - Update' regarding changes in AXOL entries.

Before going any further let me give you some information provided by Phil Morris. Press 'Caps Lock' to type your entries. When you open the transaction list and select the charge which you are approving,

- ♦ Check to make sure the Accounting Code and Budget Object Class Code is correct;
 - To check or change go to the Account Details Tab. Check the first four digits to make sure it has the correct year (0309 or 0310). The 03 is the agency number and the 09 or 10 indicates the year. Change only if necessary.
 - Highlight the nine digit number in the center and the two digit number to the right then type the correct accounting code without the first digit (last digit of the FY).
 - Now select the magnifying glass to the right of the accounting code line. It should bring up the correct accounting code and the word 'Select' to the left. Select.
 - Scroll to the right and check the BOCC. Select the magnifying glass and select the correct code.
 - Be sure to 'Save Allocations'
- ♦ There are several tabs: Use only the Comments and Summary tabs, unless you must change the Accounting Code;
- ♦ **DO NOT** select the User Line Item tab. If you should open the User Line Item tab you will need to complete the information in order to save. It will be best to skip that tab all together;
- ♦ Select Comments. See the following instructions.

Mandatory Fields to be completed under the Comments tab. Comment blocks 2, 4, & 5 must be completed for **all purchases**. Blocks 1 & 3 are for checks only.

Block 1

Comments Field	Old Name	New Name	Required Information
Comments Field 1	Conv. Checks TIN#	No Change This one pertains to check writers only. <i>Insert the "tax identification number" (TIN) without spaces or hyphens.</i>	Insert merchant's TIN when writing a check. Insert the TIN/EIN in the first 9 positions of the block when approving the transaction. DO NOT enter dashes or additional characters in the TIN/EIN.

Block 2

Comments Field	Old Name	New Name	Required Information
Comments Field 2	FPDS_NG/FS-281	Agency Specific Data Per Phil use your cc Log No. ex. 73LET000055	Enter Agency Reference Number (ARN). Refer to REE Manual 213.3M for specific information pertaining to the ARN.

The instructions say to use the first letter of your first name and then your last name. However, Phil Morris has told me that we are to continue writing the log number as previously instructed but be sure it is in the Agency Specific Data block.

Block 3

Comments Field	Old Name	New Name	Required Information
Comments Field 3	Comments Field 3	Conv Chk Mer Infr/ Waiver # This one pertains to check writers only. <i>Enter Merchant's name, address, CityStateZip and the waiver code.</i>	Enter the Merchant Name, Address, City State, Zip Code and EFT waiver code. Refer to Exhibit 3 in the 'Cardholder's Purchase Card Program Guide' for a listing or the EFT waiver codes.

Block 4

Comments Field	Old Name	New Name	Required Information
Comments Field 4	Goods Recvd Date	No Change Date you received items: Ex 10/11/09	Enter date goods were received.

Block 5

Comments Field	Old Name	New Name	Required Information
Comments Field 5	Treasury Pymnt Details	Item Description Pipette tips, glue, pens, and filter tips. Appearance that item could be for personal use: ex. "Refrigerator for Conference Room use." "Digital camera to use in fire ant project." Training: "Lynda Taylor, MSAOP 2009 Training Workshop, Nov. 4-5, 2009, Gulfport, MS." FedEX: 750164023365 if not included in the Merchant Name field. You could just get in the habit of adding the airbill or invoice no.	Enter a complete description of items purchased. NOTE: If the item purchased appears to be an item that can be used for personal consumption (i.e., refrigerator, camera, microwave, TV, radio, etc.) include in the item description an explanation of the purpose of the purchase (e.g., to support a project or research). For training, include the name of the employee and title of training course; for FedEx, enter the air bill or invoice number if information to identify the transaction is not included in the Merchant Name field.

NOTE: Approving Officials are to ensure that the item description information is entered before "final approving" the transaction.

Return to the Summary tab and proceed to Approve.





Did you know? More AgLearn resources are available at no cost to you. (Your agency has prepaid for your license!)

January New Releases





Essential Skills for Administrative Support Professionals

 [Interacting with Others](#) (1 hour) In addition to learning skills to be able to interact effectively w/others, this course provides techniques to help you deal with criticism, how to react to and act on it constructively.


 [Putting Your Best Foot Forward](#) (1 hour) Practice positive office politics to enable you to put your best foot forward as you make your mark in the organization.


Business Grammar Basics


 [The Mechanics of Writing](#) (1 hour) Refresh or refine your basic business grammar skills for any kind of business writing, from e-mail and memos to reports and presentations.


 [Common Usage Errors](#) (1 hour) Learn how to use commonly confused words correctly, including word pairs that sound alike and those that have related meanings.

Effective email communication is within reach. Below is just a sample of the many courses, books, and videos that are available now and at no cost to you!


 [Addressing and Redistributing E-mail](#) (1 hour) Learn proper etiquette for forwarding e-mails and using reply and reply all.

 [The Executive Guide to E-Mail Correspondence](#)
The book includes model letters for every situation.

 [Email Etiquette Series](#) (3 minutes each)
Tim Sanders covers the 12 Immutable Laws of Email Etiquette.

 [Using E-mail and Instant Messaging Effectively](#) (1 hour)
Discover fundamental elements every e-mail should contain, and keeping e-mails concise.

 [E-Mail in an Instant 60 Ways to Communicate with Style and Impact](#)
Manage and respond to the messages you receive with style and impact.

 [Important e-mail messages](#) (2 minutes)
Instant Advice® on how to handle important emails.





Take control today!


You can effectively manage and control your anger using the tools in AgLearn. Take a few minutes to explore the resources that are available now!


You could save a pencil or two!





 [Managing Anger in the Workplace Simulation](#) (2.5 hours)
Practice ways to keep your cool and your professional relationships intact.

 [Since Strangling Still Isn't an Option](#) (2.5 hours)
Gain "empowerment skills" to offset difficult situations and dissolve barriers.

 [Experiencing Anger](#) (2.5 hours)
Understand why people become angry and recognize how you express your own anger. You will also learn simple techniques to minimize angry emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

 [The Anger Trap: Free Yourself from the Frustrations That Sabotage Your Life](#) :Break the destructive cycles of criticism, frustration, and irritation that hurt you and others around you.

 [Managing Your Anger](#) (2 hours)
Discover techniques that will help you prevent your anger from getting out of control.

 [Dealing with anger](#) (2 minutes)
Instant Advice® on how to deal with anger.

Read the following from Rita Keeling:

FYI – This is a good refresher course for those who prepare correspondence. I am in the process of taking this course and have had my eyes opened to grammatical errors that I have made. You might find it helpful, too.

Avoiding Grammatical Errors in Business Writing

Duration about: 4.5 hrs

Overview/Description

Grammar: the very word strikes terror into the hearts of learners everywhere. For many people, it recalls the most difficult or most boring classes they can

remember from childhood. Yet using correct grammar is one of the key skills for any business writer. Poor grammar skills interfere with communicating a clear message; moreover, they may suggest that the writer is careless and perhaps unprofessional. In this course, you will learn to recognize and repair the most common grammatical errors in sentence construction. Using correct grammar will help you to convey your information accurately and to represent yourself and your company as articulate and professional.

The AgLearn Vine has useful information.

Are you aware that there are help books in AgLearn?

It can be accessed at <https://aglearn.usda.gov/scorm-content/JobAids/TheVineJan2009.pdf>.

Take a quick look.



Develop your own personal financial plan with the help of a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional!

*Interactive – Self-paced
24x7 access through AgLearn
Why should I take this training?*

Investing wisely in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is key to Federal Financial and Retirement Planning and critical in these difficult economic times.

What will I learn?

How to develop your own personal plan.
How to choose investments for your TSP and other savings.
Which types of investments to use for short, intermediate and long-term goals.

Early-Career – Get off to the right start.

[Early-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS \(DMASON 106\)](#)
[Early-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS Special \(DMASON 107\)](#)

Mid-Career – Don't procrastinate.

[Mid-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS \(DMASON 109\)](#)
[Mid-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS Special \(DMASON 110\)](#)

Late-Career – Can you afford to retire?

[Late-Career Financial and TSP Planning for CSRS \(DMASON 101\)](#)
[Late-Career Financial and TSP Planning for CSRS Special \(DMASON 102\)](#)
[Late-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS \(DMASON 103\)](#)
[Late-Career Financial and TSP Planning for FERS Special \(DMASON 104\)](#)



MID SOUTH AREA COUNCIL OF OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

The **Mission** of the MSACOP is to provide a resource for the Area Director's Office and all levels of management for matters relating to office professionals.

The **Goal** of the Council is to enhance office professions through training, networking, mentoring, and recognition of office support employees. It is the desire of the Council to work with all levels of management to assure that office support staff are highly skilled and motivated professionals and to assure that the clerical and administrative needs of the Mid South Area and ARS are met.

We're on the web:

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/osp/>



Back Row (L) : Tammy Dorman, Lucienne Savell, Donna Signa, Drusilla Fratesi, Kelli Greene, Ann McGee, Virginia Kelley, Althea Hunt
Middle row (L) : Lynda Taylor, Ginger Carden, Sydney Beaumont, Dr. Deborah Brennan
Front row (L) : Peggy Tubertini, Marlene Coley

WELCOME



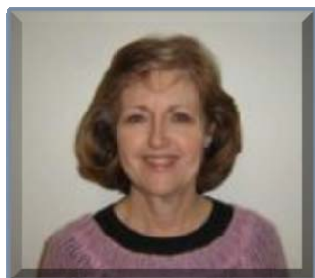
Look Who is New to the Mid South Area!

The Southern Insect Management Research Unit welcomes Ms. Sakinah Parker to our unit as the new Office Automation Assistant. Sakinah is a native of Greenville, MS. She is a 2004 honor graduate of Greenville-Weston High School. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration in 2008 from Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee where she graduated Cum Laude. Even though Sakinah is a new employee with SIMRU, she may be a familiar face to most. Since her high school years beginning in 2002, Sakinah has participated in the summer job program every year, even through her collegiate studies. Please welcome her aboard to USDA-ARS as a permanent federal employee.

Sakinah's office is located on the 4th floor, room 401. In addition, she can be contacted at 686-5232 or e-mail her at sakinah.parker@ars.usda.gov.

W
e
l
c
o
m
e

SPOTLIGHT ON:



This edition of News Notes shines the spotlight on Mrs. Linda Fulton, Program Support Assistant for the Genetics and Precision Agriculture Research Unit Research Leader, the Crop Science Research Laboratory Director, and the Mississippi State Location Coordinator at Mississippi State, MS.

Linda began her career with USDA,

ARS at Mississippi State, MS, February 1982. This career began as a Clerk Typist. Prior to employment with USDA, ARS, she worked in the secretarial field for Mississippi State University for 10 years (with the majority of this service in the Department of Entomology). She attended Wood Junior College and Mississippi State University majoring in "Secretarial Science". Linda served on the Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals from 2002-2008, serving one year as Vice Chair and one year as Senior Chair. She continues to be involved in training sponsored by the Council. (We on the Council as well as, Office Professionals throughout the MSA, have benefitted greatly from the experience and knowledge that Linda provides).

Submitted by: Peggy Tubertini

After residing in Starkville for 30 years, she has recently moved to a home on the Tennessee Tombigbee River in Noxubee County, MS, and truly enjoys the tranquility, just not the commute to work. She has been married to Harry Fulton for 38 ½ years, has one son, Stephen married to Jamie, and they have two children, Colin (16 months old) and Madeline (5 months old). Needless to say she enjoys spending time with her grandchildren.

Thanks Linda for all your hard work and dedication to ARS!



SAFETY TIPS: Cold Temperatures

Submitted by: Dawn Reed

Just like very high temperatures, very low temperatures can be hazardous to your health. Proper dress and some helpful tips can prevent problems associated with cold weather.

General Hazards: The most common hazard in the cold is frostbite. Your body doesn't get enough heat and the body tissues freeze. Body parts most often affected by frostbite are the nose, ears, cheeks, fingers, and toes.

In very bad cases, frostbite can cause permanent tissue damage and loss of movement in the affected body parts. In the worst cases, you could become unconscious and stop breathing. You could even die of heart failure.

The other cold hazard is hypothermia. That's what it's called when you're exposed to cold so long that your body temperature gets dangerously low. Just like frostbite, the worst case results are unconsciousness and death.

With both cold hazards, you're more at risk if you're older, overweight, or have allergies or poor circulation. Other factors that raise the risk are smoking, drinking, and taking medications such as sedatives.

Identifying Hazards: It is very important to know the symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia so that you can do something before it is too late.

HOLIDAY TIP #37



NEVER CATCH SNOWFLAKES
WITH YOUR TONGUE
UNTIL ALL THE BIRDS
HAVE GONE SOUTH
FOR THE WINTER.

AHAJOKES.COM

Frostbite can occur from being in a cold area or from touching an object whose temperature is below freezing. In many cases, people don't have any idea that it's happening. That's why you have to be familiar with the symptoms.

Frostbite victims usually start by feeling uncomfortably cold, then numb. Sometimes they also get a tingling or aching feeling or a brief pain. The recommended practice is whenever you feel numbness, take action!

Hypothermia can also take you by surprise because you can get it even when the temperature is above freezing. Windy conditions, physical exhaustion, and wet clothing can all make you prone to hypothermia.

With hypothermia, you first feel cold, then pain in the extremities. You'll shiver, which is how the body tries to raise the temperature.

Other symptoms include numbness, stiffness (especially in the neck, arms, and legs), poor coordination, drowsiness, slow or irregular breathing and heart rate, slurred speech, cool skin, and puffiness in the face.

As you can see, many of these symptoms are not unusual and could mean different things. But if you're exposed to very cold conditions, take them seriously and take steps to relieve them.

Protection Against Hazards: The best way to deal with cold problems is to prevent them in the first place. The most sensible approach is to limit exposure to cold, especially if it's windy or damp.

If you know you're going to be in cold conditions, don't bathe, smoke, or drink alcohol just before going out.

Dress for conditions in layers of loose, dry clothes. The most effective mix is cotton or wool underneath, with something waterproof on top.

Get dried or changed immediately if your clothes do get wet.

Be sure to cover hands, feet, face, and head. A hat is critical because you can lose up to 40 percent of your body heat if your head isn't covered.

Keep moving when you're in the cold.

Take regular breaks in a warm area. Go where it's warm any time you start to feel very cold or numb. Drink something warm, as long as it doesn't contain alcohol or caffeine.

For Frostbite, Be Aware of the Don'ts:

Don't rub the body part, or apply a heat lamp or hot water bottle.

Don't go near a hot stove.

Don't break any blisters.

Don't drink caffeine.

Do warm the frozen body part quickly with sheets and blankets or warm (not hot) water. Once the body part is warm, exercise it-with one exception: Don't walk on frostbitten feet.

Safety Precautions

As you know, prevention doesn't always work. So it's important to know what to do if you or someone you're with shows symptoms of cold problems.

The first thing to do is to get where it's warm. Get out of any frozen, wet, or tight clothing and into warm clothes or blankets. Drink something warm, decaffeinated, and non-alcoholic.

For hypothermia, call 911 for medical help and keep the person covered with blankets or something similar. Don't use hot baths, electric blankets, or hot water bottles. Give artificial respiration if necessary and try to keep the person awake and dry.

Remember To:

Check on the Elderly and individuals with health problems.

Dress young children warmly when taking them outside.

Bring your pets and plants inside.

Don't leave small children unattended around open fires (fireplace).

Reference safety precautions when using electric blankets.

Exercise extra precautions when driving; leave early to avoid rushing.

Visit the CDC link, <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/beforestorm/supplylists.asp>, and view the "Winter Weather Checklist."

"STAY WARM"

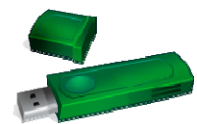
Guidance on Use of USB Drives on ARS Systems

Submitted by: Lynda Taylor

ARS client systems will be kept up-to-date with the latest anti-virus definitions and, if applicable, virus scanning engine.

No sensitive but classified data, including personally identifiable information (PII) will be transmitted via USB drives unencrypted. A policy exception waiver from the Department for ARS to allow use of unencrypted USB thumb drives for day-to-day transfer of research and collaborative information has been approved under the following conditions:

- Only ARS/Federally issued USB drives will be used in ARS systems;
- No research data related to bio-terrorism (i.e., anthrax, etc.) will be transmitted via unencrypted media; and
- Departmental policy requires all ARS employees use validated FIPS 140-2 encrypted thumb drives except for the exceptions noted in the waiver.



Copied from the MSA Computer Support Newsletter Vol. 4, Oct 2009.

Field Instructions for the Leave Error Report

NFC Reporting Center - Leave Error - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Leave Error Report

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Name	SSNO	SCD Date	A/L Cat	PP	Type Leave	Type Empl	Prior Carryover	YTD Earned	YTD Used	YTD Cr	NFC Ending Balance	P/T Carryover Balance	Accrued This PP	Used This PP	T&A Ending Balance
Sorry, there are no leave errors that match your selection criteria.															
Total Employees: 0								Total Errors: 0							
Changes annotated above are certified to be true and correct as of pay period _____.															
Certified By: _____ Date: _____															

Provided by: Rita Keeling (e-mail July 30, 2009)

These fields are generated from the NFC database:

- Blocks 1 and 2 give the name and social security number of the employee in leave error.
 - Block 3 – contains the Leave SCD (Service Computation Date) which NFC has in the database.
 - Block 4 – contains the A/L category (annual leave accrual rate of 0, 4, 6, or 8) which NFC has in the database.
 - Block 5 – this is the last PP (pay period) covered by the leave error report.
 - Block 6 – indicates the type of leave which is in error. There may be more than one line for the same employee because each leave type (annual, sick or comp) which is in error will have its own line.
 - Block 7 – indicates the type of employee (1 = full time; 2 = part time).
 - Block 8 – indicates leave hours carried over from prior year to current year (balance from PP26).
 - Block 9 – contains the total leave earned YTD (year to date).
 - Block 10 – contains the total leave used YTD (year to date).
 - Block 11 – indicates Credit Reduction (CR) which is a reduction to the earned annual or sick leave due to LWOP.
 - Block 12 – NFC ending balance (Block 8, plus Block 9, minus Block 10, minus Block 11) for annual and sick leave.
 - Block 13 – contains the part-time carryover hours for a part time employee from the NFC database.
- These fields are generated from the Time and Attendance System:
- Block 14 – this is the number of hours earned for that leave type for that pay period.

Block 15 – this is the number of hours used for that leave type for that pay period.

Block 16 – this is the ending balance shown on the T&A for that pay period.

Comp Time Errors on Leave Error Report

Comp time on the Leave Error Report includes all forms of comp time.

*** COMP Ending Balance = (COMP-CURRENT-BAL + COMP-PRIOR-YR-BAL + COMP-BAL-REL-OBS).**

This means that the NFC balance shown in Block 12 for comp time is a total of all forms of comp time (regular comp, travel comp, religious comp) still on the NFC database and still available for use.

Any comp time hours not used within the allotted time frame (26 pay periods for travel comp and regular comp earned after pay period 9 of 2007 or three years for regular comp time earned prior to pay period 10 of 2007) are not included in this total.

Comp travel hours which have aged off the NFC database have been forfeited.

Regular comp time hours which have aged off the database need to be paid out. They can no longer be used.

The total shown in Block 16 for comp time is the total number of comp time hours showing on the T&A. Be aware that the T&A system does not drop comp time which has aged off, or comp travel which has been forfeited.

For those with TINQ access:

NFC TINQ screens will show comp time hours which need to be paid, as well as the current available balances for comp travel, regular comp and religious comp.

Regular comp time hours which have aged off the database will appear in the Prior Year 2 field on the NFC database and need to be paid out. They can no longer be used.



Question(s) Corner



How can an Adobe PDF, JPEG, TIFF, file (etc.) be changed/converted to a Word file so that it can be edited/worked on?

Lucienne Savell answered: This is a good question. I have not had a challenge of changing a figure from a .pdf. I have, although, been able to edit .jpeg and .tiff figures using "Paint" which comes with Microsoft Office. Once edited save as a BMP or back to a .jpeg and bring the figure into Word. You do have



to be careful when editing them, of course.

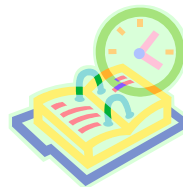


If you find yourself pondering a question and need help finding the answer than this is the place for you.

Submit your question(s) to kelli.greene@ars.usda.gov and your question and answer will be printed in the next newsletter.

How to Revise a Leave Request through the Calendar View...

Submitted by: Virginia Kelley



- You submit a leave request for 2 hours of annual leave. Your supervisor approves the request. It's done. Well, so you thought. Then you only take 1 hour of leave. Now you need to contact your supervisor to revert the request to you so you can edit and resubmit. However, there is another way that does not require the reverting step.
1. From the employee main menu click on "Leave/Prem Pay"
 2. Select "Leave"
 3. Click on "Calendar View"
 4. Select the day that you want to revise.
 5. Change the existing request and click save.
 6. The request will be sent to your supervisor for approval.

To be an Effective Communicator

Submitted by: Drusilla Fratesi

We need to be aware of what we are saying and how we are saying it, as well as mindful of the impact our communication can have on others. Words, tone, attitude, body language, voice volume, timing, inflection, etc. are all tools we use to communicate. We can use these tools effectively or ineffectively. Even if your comments are only overheard and not directed towards anyone in particular, these tools can have an effect on others. Studies show that your words account for only 7% of the messages you convey. 55% of communication is based on what people see and 38% is transmitted through tone of voice. Below are common suggestions for improving communications, yet many of us could use reminders.

As the speaker...

One suggestion for effective communication is to think through what and how you want to say something. Think about how the recipient may hear and respond to what you are saying. And choose your timing: when you say it could be just as important as what and how.

Say what you mean. Do not expect anyone to read your mind or see through your words to get to your meaning. Be specific and simple, especially when giving instructions. Skip the flowery speech and get to the point. "It's cold in here" can be translated to mean you want to meet in another room, want the thermostat adjusted, or need a break to get a sweater or cup of coffee.

Be sure the intended listener is focused on you and your words. Look at the



listener(s). Experts indicate that when people are confused, they avoid eye contact, tilt their heads, squint their eyes, lower their eyebrows, and/or cross their arms and legs. If your audience is doing this, they may not have understood your message.

Speak slowly, clearly and loud enough for the listener to hear. Don't mumble.

As the listener...

Reading between the lines and interpreting non-verbal signals can be tricky. There are many things that make up the communication process, but the listener should be careful about reading more into what is being said than is really said. Try not to misinterpret the speaker's meaning.

Ask the speaker to clarify anything that was not clear. Reflect back that you heard and understand what they are saying. "So you are saying that..." You don't have to agree, just to indicate you understood.

Sometimes what we hear is based on our own perceptions and attitudes instead of what was actually said. For example, if you are angry at someone you may choose to hear only certain parts of what the person is saying or easily misinterpret what is being said.

Slow down your listening. Most people listen about four times faster than we typically speak. Our minds fill in the gaps by thinking of other things. Force yourself to stay focused so you can comprehend everything the speaker is saying.



Personal Branding

Submitted by: Donna Signa

What is a Brand?

It describes the unique features of a product or service; it separates you from the competition; it reinforces strength of your operation; it creates a positive image; and it is the real estate you own in the mind of the consumer.

PERSONAL BRANDING is a way of clarifying & communicating what makes you different and special – and using those qualities to guide your business decisions. – William Arruda

3P's of Personal Branding: PERSONALITY, POSITION & PROMISE

PERSONALITY

- ☞ Image is the outward expression of personality.
- ☞ Your personality is part of your authentic self; including image and presence.

In 30 seconds or less, people make judgments:

- ☞ 55% is based on what they see.

- ☞ 38% is based on what they hear.
- ☞ 7% is based on the content of the message.

POSITIONING

- ☞ Leadership (What is the leadership role that you play in your organization?)
- ☞ Visibility (How will you get visibility for that leadership role?)
- ☞ Consistency (How can you consistently deliver on your brand promises?)

PROMISE

- ☞ Brand is the promise of an experience.
- ☞ Your target audience can expect that you will deliver something—a product, a service, a message, a change—and that it will do so in a certain predictable manner. Your brand sets the expectation.

Your brand operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
Reshape Your Image
Redefine Your Brand

Using Snopes.com

Submitted by: Marlene Coley



Every day we are bombarded with email messages that plead with us to find a missing kid or help a sick child, sign a petition to right some terrible injustice, take a stand on an important piece of pending legislation, forward a message to claim free merchandise, or take heed of the latest computer virus. Most of these messages if they aren't outright hoaxes are often full of misinformation.

You won't have bad luck, good luck, win a prize, get something for nothing, or make a difference if you sign this or that petition. Most petitions are not worth the email they are sent on. There are no tracking programs that can tell if you have forwarded the message to 2 people or 50.

All of these emails play on sympathies for the lost child, the sick family member, to prove "we love Jesus", our desire to take a stand on an important issue we agree with (the easy way) or the chance that when I

make that wish and hit the send button, I actually will receive a ton of money from some unknown source. About the only thing any of these emails are good for are to clog up the internet system and in some cases actually do send a virus to yours and other computers.

Before you forward an email, use a website such as snopes.com to verify that what the email says is accurate. Snopes checks out thousands of emails and will tell you whether it is true or false and give you the background of where and when the email originated. Just put the email subject title in the search block and you will soon know whether it's true or not.

Many emails have a good message and are something you would like to pass along but at the end, they always spoil the message with forward to "X" people within 5 minutes or have bad luck, good luck, etc. I still forward certain messages but now I delete all of that extra stuff from the end of the message. If someone else wants to forward it, they can without feeling guilty and I never forward a message without checking it out on Snopes first.

Helpful Shortcuts

Submitted by: Ginger Carden

Using shortcut keys as an alternative to the mouse when working in Windows can be a timesaver. You can open, close, and navigate the Start menu, desktop, menus, dialog boxes, and Web pages using keyboard shortcuts. Keyboard shortcuts may also make it easier for you to interact with your computer. Although you probably use some of these shortcuts, becoming familiar with new ones may make your job a little easier.

General Windows keyboard shortcuts:

Press

Ctrl+C

Ctrl+X

Ctrl+V

Ctrl+Z

Delete

Shift+Delete

Ctrl while dragging an item

Ctrl+Shift while dragging an item

F2

CTRL+RIGHT ARROW

CTRL+LEFT ARROW

CTRL+DOWN ARROW

CTRL+UP ARROW

CTRL+SHIFT with any of the arrow keys

SHIFT with any of the arrow keys

CTRL+A

F3

ALT+ENTER

To

Copy

Cut

Paste-Inserts the contents of the clipboard at the insertion point (cursor)

Undo the last action

Delete

Delete selected item permanently without placing the item in the Recycle Bin

Copy selected item

Create shortcut to selected item

Rename selected item

Move the insertion point to the beginning of the next word

Move the insertion point to the beginning of the previous word

Move the insertion point to the beginning of the next paragraph

Move the insertion point to the beginning of the previous paragraph

Highlight a block of text

Select more than one item in a window or on the desktop, or select text within a document

Select all

Search for a file or folder

View properties for the selected item

ALT+F4

ALT+Enter

ALT+SPACEBAR

CTRL+F4

ALT+TAB

ALT+ESC

F6

F4

SHIFT+F10

ALT+SPACEBAR

CTRL+ESC

ALT+Underlined letter in a menu name

Underlined letter in a command name on an open menu

F10

RIGHT ARROW

LEFT ARROW

F5

BACKSPACE

ESC

SHIFT when you insert a CD into the CD-ROM drive

Close the active item, or quit the active program

Displays the properties of the selected object

Opens the shortcut menu for the active window

Close the active document in programs that allow you to have multiple documents open simultaneously

Switch between open items

Cycle through items in the order they were opened

Cycle through screen elements in a window or on the desktop

Display the Address bar list in My Computer or Windows Explorer

Display the shortcut menu for the selected item

Display the System menu for the active window

Display the Start menu

Display the corresponding menu

Carry out the corresponding command

Activate the menu bar in the active program

Open the next menu to the right, or open a submenu

Open the next menu to the left, or close a submenu

Refresh the active window

View the folder one level up in My Computer or Windows Explorer

Cancel the current task

Prevent the CD from automatically playing

Microsoft Word Shortcuts from OCIO

Submitted by: Lynda Taylor

Shift+F3: Toggle selected text between lowercase, initial capitals, and uppercase

F4: Repeat your last action, including searching, typing, and formatting

Ctrl+F6: Toggle between open documents

F7: Run the spell checker

Ctrl+V: Paste-Inserts the contents of the clipboard at the insertion point (cursor)

Ctrl-Y: Redo-After an action has been undone, it can be reinstated in the document

Copied from the MSA Computer Support Newsletter,
Vol 1, Feb 09

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp/newsletter/2009/february.pdf>

Looking for another AgLearn Course??

Using Effective Business Communication

Web Based ADM0103_SKILLSOFT

Description: Someone walks into your office and tells you that the ten important packages you couriered have safely arrived in Albany, New York. Unfortunately, they were supposed to go to Albany, Georgia. This is an announcement no one wants to hear. This course is designed to help you use effective business communication as an effective administrative support professional.

Learn about etiquette in the workplace, telephone communication, and written business communication. This course, Using Effective Business Communication, will provide you with tools to become a successful administrative support professional. You will learn how to disseminate information efficiently and effectively.

Duration: 2 hours.

URL's to Share

Submitted by: Lynda Taylor

<http://www.da.usda.gov/oo/target> USDA Target Center Find Assistive Technology, Ergonomics, Education, Section 508 Compliance, Temporary Disability, Emergency Preparedness, Interpreting Services, and much more.





















<http://www.nutrition.gov/> Providing easy, online access to government information of food and human nutrition for consumers. You can read items in the news, search on weight management, nutrition and health issues, shopping and cooking, and much more.

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/> Provides information on the food pyramid, tips and resources, as well as interactive tools for a personalized food plan, menu planner, and tracker. This site has information not just for adults but helps calculate for children from 2-5 yrs, 6-11 yrs, on up. You can find 2010 dietary guidelines, helpful tips, teach teens how to use the meal planner, and so much more. Check it out.



Rules of Style

Submitted by: Althea Hunt

-  Never abbreviate the name of the State on the inside address. Please spell out the full name.
-  Use the two-letter State and Territory abbreviations only in addressing mail; i.e., on the envelope.
-  Always ensure that all correspondence bearing the address of persons who are employees of the Agricultural Research Service identify themselves as such. Use "USDA, ARS" in the addressee block on the envelope.
-  Use the first person plural (we/our) instead of the first person singular (me, I, my) whenever possible and appropriate.
-  Keep sentences under 25 words.
-  Keep responses short and to the point – preferably under one page.
-  Do not split names, titles, or dates between two lines.
-  Spell out numbers of less than 10 within a sentence.
-  Do not separate the month and year with a comma when typing dates; e.g., January 2010.
-  Use a comma after each item within a series of three or more words, phrases, letters, or figures used with and, or, or nor, e.g., red, white, and blue.
-  Use a comma to separate an introductory phrase from the subject it modifies.
-  Use a comma before the conjunction in a compound sentence.
-  Use a comma before and after Jr., Sr., academic degrees, and names of States preceded by names of cities within a sentence.
-  Use a semicolon to separate clauses containing commas.
-  Avoid excessive hyphenation. Do not hyphenate on the first line of a paragraph. If you do hyphenate, make sure the word is divided correctly; a word hyphenated incorrectly is as bad as a misspelled word.
-  When the text of the letter is very short (less than 10 lines), double space.
-  Never use words that cannot be found in a standard dictionary.
-  Be uniform. For example, if you capitalize "Committee" or "State," be consistent throughout the letter.
-  The first time you refer to any Agency or organization, please type out the full name followed by its abbreviation in parentheses if it will be referred to in subsequent paragraphs.
-  For members of Congress, the inside address is "Honorable Full Name". Salutations are "Dear Congressman Surname", or "Dear Congresswoman Surname", for Representative; and for Senators, "Dear Senator Surname". Salutations for Chairmen of Congressional Committees and Subcommittees are "Dear Mr. Chairman". State representatives are addressed as "Mr. Surname". Complimentary closing is "Sincerely".

GovTrip Authorization—Trip Detail Guidelines

Provided by: Cack Norquist

When the purpose of travel is conference, meeting, outreach or training on the authorization, please place the full name of the conference, meeting or training in the "Trip Detail" Section travel authorization. Spell out the conference name as it appears on the brochure of notice for the meeting. Please use the following guidance when entering conference, meeting, or training names.

Do not use abbreviations, for example: instead of INT'L, spell out International; instead of ASSN, spell out Association; instead of TRNG, spell out Training; instead of COMM, spell out Committee; instead of AMER, spell out American; instead of NAT'L, spell out National; and instead of MTG, spell out Meeting, etc.

Do not use acronyms, for example: Instead of WIG, spell out Women in Government; and instead of AVMA, spell out America Veterinary Medical Association, etc.

Conference/training names must be specific, for example: Instead of GSA Training, spell out Acquisition Training then enter training dates and sponsor. Example: Acquisition Training – 5May-7May2009 – General Service Administration.

Unless agency name is a part of the conference/training title/name, delete it. Do not use quotation marks in conference/training title/name, for example: Instead of "Beltwide Cotton Conference", spell out Beltwide Cotton Conference without the quotation marks.

Spell out states, if it is included in the title of the conference/training, for example: Instead of TX Honeybee Producers Meeting, spell out Texas Honeybee Producers Meeting.

Eliminate all references to specific years, or references to annual meetings, I.E., 132ND annual, in the title of the conference/training, for example: Instead of 35th Annual Women in Government Meeting, drop the 35th and the Annual and spell out Women in Government Meeting.

For National Program Conferences or workshops, do not put the program number in the title of the meeting: Instead of NP 107 Workshop, spell out Human Nutrition Program Stakeholder Workshop

Good News for Secretaries and Administrative Assistants

Submitted by: Sydney Beaumont



According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics' 2010-2011 Occupational Outlook Handbook, things are looking A-OK for secretaries and administrative assistants.

SOME SIGNIFICANT POINTS

This occupation ranks among those with the largest number of job openings. Opportunities should be best for applicants with extensive knowledge of computer software applications. Secretaries and administrative assistants are increasingly assuming responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff.

EMPLOYMENT

Secretaries and administrative assistants held about 4.3 million jobs in 2008, ranking it among the largest occupations in the U.S. economy. The following tabulation shows the distribution of employment by secretarial specialty:

Secretaries, except legal, medical, and executive	2,020,000
Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	1,594,400
Medical secretaries	471,100
Legal secretaries	262,600

Secretaries and administrative assistants are employed in organizations of every type. Around 90 percent are employed in service-providing industries, ranging from education and healthcare to government and retail trade. Most of the rest of the work is for firms engaged in manufacturing or construction.

EARNINGS

Median annual wages of secretaries, except legal, medical, and executive, were \$29,050 in May 2008. The middle 50 percent earned between \$23,160 and \$36,020. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$18,440, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$43,240. Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of secretaries, except legal, medical, and executive in May 2008 were:

Local government	\$32,610
Colleges, universities, and professional schools	31,530
General medical and surgical hospitals	30,960
Elementary and secondary schools	29,850
Employment services	28,340

JOB OUTLOOK

Employment is projected to grow [about as fast as the average](#) (according to this link projections say that between 2008 and 2018 secretary jobs will increase 7 to 13 percent).

Secretaries and administrative assistants will have among the largest number of job openings due to growth and the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave this occupation.

If you would like to learn more:
<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm>

Did you Know?

HOW A DESK JOB WEARS YOUR BODY DOWN

Long hours and lots of sitting take a toll

POSTURE

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Loss of flexibility, rotator cuff disease, chronic pain in neck/shoulder/back/hands, indigestion, constipation, pulmonary disease. **DETAILS**

BACK

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Thoracic outlet syndrome, cervical radiculopathy, bursitis of the shoulder, pulled or strained muscles/ligaments/tendons of the lower back, ruptured disks. **DETAILS**

MENTAL HEALTH

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Stress, anxiety, exhaustion, overall malaise, disordered sleep, depression. **DETAILS**

EYES

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Fatigue, eyestrain, temporarily blurred vision, headaches, neck and shoulder pain, migraines. **DETAILS**

HEART

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: High blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, angina, stroke, heart attack. **DETAILS**

ARMS, HANDS AND ELBOWS

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Carpal tunnel syndrome, hand/wrist tendinitis, tenosynovitis (de Quervain's disease), ulnar nerve entrapment. **DETAILS**

GUT

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Weight gain, loss of muscle mass, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, impaired libido. **DETAILS**

LEGS

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Loss of muscle mass, loss of flexibility, peripheral vascular disease. **DETAILS**

[http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9115418/Graphic Head to toe hazards of the desk bound body](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9115418/Graphic%20Head%20to%20toe%20hazards%20of%20the%20desk%20bound%20body)



We need you!

Have you thought about serving on the Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (MSACOP)? Are you dreaming of what you can do to help the Council achieve its goals? Then we definitely need you.



To be eligible (we will need you for a three-year membership):

- ✓ You must be a permanent, full-time MSA employee;
- ✓ In the GS-318, GS-326, GS-322 or GS-303 series;
- ✓ Have at least two years' experience with ARS;
- ✓ Must be willing to promote the mission and goals of the council;
- ✓ Must be willing to devote time necessary to serve on committees; and
- ✓ Must have full support and approval of your supervisor.

In addition to working with committees as needed, all members are expected to:

- 1) Support and actively participate in the activities of the Council.
- 2) Serve as advisors to office professionals in the Mid South Area.
- 3) Collect and report information on significant activities and questions. Each council member is responsible for submission of at least one article for each issue of MSAOP News Notes.
- 4) Keep ARS office support staff aware of information and activities of the Council.
- 5) Inform Area Director, Associate Area Director, Deputy Director, Center Directors, Research Leaders, and Administrative Officers of accomplishments and recommendations of annual meeting.

Additional information about the Mid South Area Office Professionals is available on the website (<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/osp>).



Several vacancies occur each year and applications are taken in the spring. For information please contact Drusilla Fratesi at drusilla.fratesi@ars.usda.gov

MSACOP Training Workshop held In Gulfport, MS November 4th & 5th, 2009

Pictures by: Virginia Kelley & Marlene Coley



Joan Fabick is assisting the guest speaker, Ms. Marlane Peachey. Her presentation was "What's Really Important Anyway?"

The MSACOP Training Workshop was a success. Thank you to everyone who helped make it successful.



Terry Krutz is speaking to the attendees about Sole Source Purchases and AXOL.



Cack Norquist covered GovTrip



Poplarville location tour.



Margaret Rushing presented information on ARMS, Budget Overview, Budget, and CATS.