BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

**HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT**

**Portland, Oregon**

**PERSONNEL LETTER NO. 430-1 (Revised)DATE:** May 28, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Performance Appraisal

##### PURPOSE

This Personnel Letter -

Serves as a tool for supervisor/managers and employees to give and receive feedback in improving their ability to perform mission related work.

Provides a basis for performance-based actions, as specified by law, regulation, and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) policy.

Describes BPA’s three tier performance appraisal system for non-supervisory and non-managerial annual positions, all hourly positions, and hourly supervisors within BPA.

Incorporates a Departmental requirement to establish a critical safety element in the performance plans of all employees.

Reflects changes that will take effect at the start of the FY08 performance appraisal period.

Replaces Personnel Letter 430-1, dated November 7, 2005.

**POLICY SUMMARY**

This performance appraisal system applies to all paid civil service employees except those excluded under the Coverage section. This system serves as the basis for formally assessing employee performance. At least once a year an employee will receive a progress review evaluating his or her performance against established performance standards. If performance on a critical element is deemed unacceptable at any time during the performance appraisal period, the employee’s Rating Official shall initiate formal efforts to assist the employee to improve performance. Performance ratings are linked to other personnel actions, including performance-based monetary awards that ensure top performers are rewarded in proportion to their achievements.

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**DEFINITIONS**

**Advisory Rating**

An unscheduled summary rating which is completed under special circumstances and must be considered in assigning the next rating-of-record.

**Appraisal**

The act or process of reviewing and evaluating the performance of an employee against the described performance standard(s).

**Appraisal Period**

The period of time established in the appraisal program for which an employee’s performance will be evaluated annually. BPA’s appraisal period for employees covered under this issuance is specified in Section VII.

**Control to achieve**

A performance result that the employee is able to achieve directly through the employee’s own personal efforts or significantly influence through the employee’s actions, including leadership of other employees.

**Critical Element**

A work assignment or responsibility of such importance that **“Unacceptable”** performance in this area would result in **“Unacceptable”** performance in the position as a whole.

**Days**

All references to “days” in these procedures mean consecutive calendar days.

**Element Rating**

A rating assigned to an employee’s performance in an individual critical or non-critical performance element as measured against the performance standards established for that element.

**Employee**

Unless otherwise noted, employee means all employees who are covered by the provisions of this Personnel Letter.

**Generic Safety Element**.

A critical element with specified performance standards appropriate to employees who do not execute safety responsibilities in their daily work. This element is rated as “Meets Expectations” or “Unacceptable” only. (Note: Some employees will not have this generic element. Employees who execute safety responsibilities as part of their day-to day work assignments will have a more substantial critical safety element in their performance plans and rated at one of the three rating levels specified in this Personnel Letter)

**Minimum Appraisal Period**

The minimum amount of time an employee must serve in a position with a written performance plan in order to receive an advisory rating or a rating of record. BPA’s minimum rating period is 90 days under an established performance plan with the same Rating Official.

**Non-Critical Element**

A dimension or aspect of performance, which while important, does not have the same impact on overall performance as does a Critical Element. Non-Critical Elements are used in determining Summary Rating levels at or above **“Meets Expectations”** performance levels (see Section VIII. A & B). An employee rated as “Unacceptable” on a Non-Critical Element cannot receive a Summary Rating of “Unacceptable” unless one or more Critical Elements are also rated as “Unacceptable”.

**Opportunity Period**

An amount of time established in a Performance Improvement Plan for an employee to improve **“Unacceptable”** performance.

**Performance Plan**

The critical elements, sub-elements, and performance standards established for a position, against which an employee’s performance is evaluated.

**Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)**

A plan for improvement provided to an employee whose performance in one or more critical elements has been determined to be **“Unacceptable”**.

**Performance Standard**

The written expectations or requirements established for a position by management that must be met to be appraised at a particular level of performance. A performance standard may include, but is not limited to, measures of quality, quantity, timeliness, and manner of performance.

**Progress Review**

A periodic review and communication with an employee on his/her performance as compared to the employee’s performance plan.

**Rating Official**

The individual, normally the immediate supervisor or manager, with the authority to appraise the performance of an employee.

**Rating-of-Record**

The summary rating:

Required at the time specified by the performance appraisal system (normally at the end of an employee’s annual rating period); or,

At other times specified by this Personnel Letter, such as for documenting an “acceptable level of competence” determination for within-range increase purposes, at the end of the “opportunity to improve” period specified in a Performance Improvement Plan, and at the end of an annual rating period that is extended to satisfy minimum rating period requirements.

**Reviewing Official**

A higher-level manager, normally the rated employee’s second-level manager, who reviews and approves performance plans and performance ratings in keeping with the provisions of this Personnel Letter.

**Summary Rating**

The rating used to describe an employee’s overall performance level.

# COVERAGE

This performance appraisal system applies to all paid employees except:

Annual employees in positions with duties that meet the minimum requirements for application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), which is published by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). (The supervisory status code for such positions is coded as “2” in HRMIS). [See Personnel Letter 430-2, September 17, 2004, for BPA policy regarding assessing performance of these BPA employees]);

Employees covered by the Departmental SES performance appraisal system;

Presidential appointees;

Experts and consultants;

Employees in non-career executive assignments under 5 CFR, Part 305;

Employees whose employment is not reasonably expected to exceed 120 days in a consecutive 12-month period;

Employees that move from a BPA position not covered by the provisions of this Personnel Letter (PL) into a position covered between September 1 and October 31 (until a new appraisal period starts on November 1). Instead, for performance appraisal purposes, and other related personnel actions, the employee’s BPA rating-of-record for the year will be based on the prior position and assigned in keeping with the provisions of the performance appraisal program covering the prior position; and,

A new BPA employee who enters on duty with BPA between September 1 and October 31, such as new appointee, transfer or movement from another Federal agency or component of DOE, etc., until a new appraisal period starts on November 1.

**RESPONSIBILITIES/AUTHORITY**

The **Chief Executive Officer** shall ensure that subordinate executives are aware of their responsibilities under these procedures.

The **Chief Operating Officer** and **Vice Presidents** are responsible for administering the performance appraisal system within their respective organizations in accordance with this Personnel Letter and shall:

Ensure managers and supervisors under their jurisdiction attend needed training;

Ensure performance plans are approved at the beginning of the rating period and employees’ performance is appraised and documented in a timely manner;

Ensure performance appraisals are fair, objective, and collectively reflect the organization’s performance; and,

Ensure “Unacceptable” performance is dealt with on a timely basis in accordance with the section “Dealing with ‘Unacceptable’ Performance,” below (also see Personnel Letter 432-1).

The Chief **Human Capital Officer** is responsible for:

Establishing and publishing local policy.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the performance appraisal program in meeting intended purposes.

Maintaining liaison with OPM and the Department of Energy on related policy and regulatory matters.

Ensuring appropriate coordination with BPA’s recognized bargaining units.

Providing technical and operational support and advice to Rating and Reviewing Officials to help them administer the performance appraisal program in a manner consistent with the provisions in this Personnel Letter (PL) and applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Arranging for necessary training and orientation on the performance appraisal program and related matters.

Ensuring performance appraisal documentation is maintained in the Headquarters Human Capital Management office as required within 5 CFR, Parts 293 and 297.

Ensuring ratings-of-record are entered into the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) in a timely and accurate manner.

**Reviewing Officials** are responsible for:

Ensuring established performance plans are tied to BPA’s mission, business objectives, organizational Balanced Scorecards or other organizational work plans, and leadership and supervisory responsibilities in support of BPA’s People and Culture objectives;

Approving performance appraisal ratings, with the purpose of ensuring that the ratings reflect actual performance and result in appropriate and meaningful distinctions among performers when warranted;

Ensuring **“Unacceptable”** performance is dealt with in a timely manner.

Ensuring performance appraisal program results are linked appropriately to other personnel actions, including rating-based monetary awards that ensure top performers are rewarded commensurate to their achievements.

**Rating Officials** are responsible for:

Ensuring performance plans are established and communicated to employees within 30 days of the beginning of employees’ appraisal periods or their assignment to a new position, as required in this PL (except as provided for in Section II.G & H);

Ensuring performance plans are tied to BPA’s mission, business objectives, organizational Balanced Scorecards and other organizational work plans, and leadership and supervisory responsibilities in support of BPA’s People and Culture objectives;

Monitoring employee performance against performance plan expectations throughout the appraisal period, periodically informing employees of how they are performing, and conducting at least one formal progress review at about the midpoint of the appraisal period;

Initiating action to deal with **Unacceptable** performance in a timely manner.

Assigning advisory ratings and ratings-of-record on a timely basis as required in this PL and ensuring the ratings reflect actual performance and result in meaningful distinctions among performers, as appropriate;

Ensuring performance appraisal program results are linked appropriately to other personnel actions, including performance-based monetary awards that ensure top performers are rewarded commensurately with their achievements; and,

Ensuring their employees are given an opportunity to participate in the establishment of their performance plans, as described in paragraph VI.E.

**APPRAISAL PERIODS**

**Minimum Appraisal Period**: The minimum appraisal period is 90 days under a performance plan (established under the provisions of this PL) with the same Rating Official.

**Official Appraisal Period**: The appraisal period is from November 1 through October 31.

**Time Requirements**: Unless an extension of an appraisal period is needed under paragraph D below, all ratings must be assigned and forwarded to Human Capital Management (HCM) not later than 30 days after the appraisal period ends. Ratings may be assigned up to 30 days in advance of the end of the appraisal period in order to balance workload. Ratings for employees who are on leave or extended training and are otherwise due, should be delayed until the employee returns unless a within-range increase determination is due. If the decision is to deny within-range, the employee’s signature is not required but the Rating Official must discuss the rating with the employee orally, that is via telephone.

**Criteria for Extending Appraisal Periods**:

Employees who have not been in the same position, under the same Rating Official with established performance plans for at least 90 days, will have their appraisal periods extended until the 90-day minimum appraisal period requirement is met (i.e., the end date of the period covered will be indicated on the appraisal form). However, as indicated in Section X.C., if an advisory rating has been issued, under the provisions of this issuance (as opposed to under a different performance appraisal program) within 90 days of the end of the appraisal period, it may become the rating-of-record.

An appraisal period may be extended until an opportunity period for improving **“Unacceptable”** performance has been completed. When the appraisal period is extended for this reason, the employee shall be notified in writing of the extension of the appraisal period to the end of the opportunity period and that the current performance plan will remain in effect until that time. In such cases, the rating-of-record shall be completed within 30 days after the completion of the extended appraisal period. The ending date of the extended appraisal period covered will be indicated on the appraisal form and shall correspond to the end of the opportunity period.

**NUMBER OF RATING LEVELS**

The following three rating levels are used for all performance elements: “**Significantly Exceeds Expectations**” (S), “**Meets Expectations**” (M), and “**Unacceptable**” (U). The generic safety element is rated only at the “Meets Expectations” or “Unacceptable” levels and is not factored into the summary rating unless it is Unacceptable. The rating levels are used to rate performance both on a critical/non-critical element and to assign a summary rating to reflect overall performance in the position.

The intent of these rating levels are described below:

“**Significantly Exceeds Expectations”** is intended to reflect exceptional performance that clearly exceeds the expectations established in the underlying performance standards and is reserved for top-level performance.

**“Meets Expectations”** is intended to reflect a broad range of performance that is considered successful, with the upper end reflecting performance that exceeds expectations in many respects but does not meet the definition of performance at the Significantly Exceeds Expectations level.

**“Unacceptable”** is intended to reflect performance that fails to meet expectations in one or more important respects. For a Critical Element only, such performance also warrants consideration of removal from the position (i.e., federal service) or reduction in grade if performance is not improved within a reasonable period of time with assistance.

# PERFORMANCE PLANS

**Documentation**: All performance plans shall be established and documented on BPA Form 3430.03e, a copy of which is attached as Appendix A. The generic safety element, where used, must be established and documented on BPA Form 3430.03e.

**Minimum Content of Performance Plans:**

**All Non-supervisory Annual and Hourly APPLICATION FOR INCLUSION OF A PROPERTY IN THE U.S. WORLD HERITAGE TENTATIVE LIST "French Creole properties of the Mid-Mississippi Valley Corridor"Prerequisites for U.S. World Heritage NominationsPrerequisite 1 - Legal Requirements:A. National Significance:Has the property been formally determined to be nationally significant for its cultural values, natural values, or both (in other words, has it been formally designated as a National Historic Landmark, a National Natural Landmark, or as a Federal reserve of national importance, such as a National Park, National Monument, or National Wildlife Refuge)? If not, are there on-going processes to achieve any of the above designations and what is their status? (Listing in the National Register of Historic Places is not equivalent to National Historic Landmark status.)YES: \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_\_\_NO: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Comment:\_\_All of the properties included in the application are National Historic Landmarks. B. Owner Concurrence:Are all the property owners aware of this proposal for the inclusion of the property in the U.S. Tentative List and do all of the property owners agree that it should be considered? If any agreement is uncertain or tentative, or if the ownership situation is disputed, otherwise complicated, or unclear, please explain the issues briefly.YES: \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_\_\_NO: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Comment:\_\_\_The owners of all of the properties included in the application are aware that their properties are included , and agree that their properties should be included in the application.C. Willingness to Discuss Protective Measures:If the property is nomEmployees**: All performance plans shall contain at least three Critical Elements. One Critical Element must cover critical technical performance expectations of an employee’s position. The other Critical Element must cover critical behavioral performance expectations of an employee’s position. A third required Critical Element covers working safely(see below).

**Supervisory Hourly Employees**: In addition to the three Critical Elements covering technical, behavioral performance expectations, and safety, performance plans for BPA hourly supervisory employees must also contain an additional Critical Element covering leadership, management and supervision. This Critical Element requires performance assessment under four sub-elements:

**Leadership**: Covering setting direction and managing work.

**Talent:** Covering building and fostering a talented workforce.

**Motivation/Alignment:**  Covering motivating and aligning staff around organizational purpose, goals, strategies, and results.

**Positive Work Environment:** Workforce and workplace diversity, supportive work environment, communication, and conflict resolution.

**Critical Safety Element:**  Each employee’s performance plan must contain at least one critical safety element. Employees who execute safety responsibilities on a daily basis (such as hourly workers, as well as some annual employees, must have an element that reflects the complexity of those responsibilities to be rated as “Significantly Exceeds Expectations,” “Meets Expectations,” or “Unacceptable.” These employees will not use the generic safety element.

Employees who do not execute safety responsibilities on a daily basis, such as accountants or human capital management specialists, must use a generic safety element. This generic safety element will be rated only at either the “Meets Expectations” or “Unacceptable” Levels. The generic safety element for non-supervisory annual and hourly employees has been incorporated into the performance plan and appraisal form.

**Additional Elements:** Other Critical or Non-Critical Elements may be established as part of an employee’s performance plan to appropriately address performance expectations associated with the employee’s assigned responsibilities.

**Performance Standards:** One or more discrete performance standards will be established under each critical and non-critical element in an employee’s performance plan. If sub-elements are used, (as they must be for the leadership, management and supervision critical element for hourly supervisors), the discrete performance standards are established for each of the relevant sub-elements. Performance standards are the measures or targets that reflect the performance expectations established by the Rating and Reviewing Officials for the employee being appraised. Performance standards reflect expected results and are based on such measures as quality, quantity, timeliness, and manner of performance. See Appendix B for additional guidance on how to avoid common errors in writing performance standards.

**Level of Difficulty:** Performance standards are written at the **“Meets Expectations”** level of performance. If necessary or desirable, standards may also be written for the **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations”** and/or “**Unacceptable**” levels (except that the generic performance standards for the generic safety element are written only at the “Meets Expectations” level.

**Range of Performance:** It is permissible and often advisable to describe a range of performance at the **“Meets Expectations”** level of performance. For example, a standard could state, “an average of 3-5 days is needed to process requests”, “an average of 3-5 meetings per year are held separately with each employee to discuss the employee’s developmental needs and progress,” etc.

*(Note: These are descriptive measures and like the content of all standards, should be written in a manner that is within an employee’s control to achieve. “Control to achieve” is defined as a result that an employee is able to: [a] achieve directly through his/her own personal efforts; or, [b] significantly influence through his/her own actions, including leadership of other employees. Consequently, in the case of an hourly supervisor, within the employee’s “control to achieve” can include being held accountable for the collective results of the group of employees working in the supervisor’s organization.)*

**“Sample” Behavioral Performance Standards (see Appendix C):** While not dictating the content of performance standards, BPA does make available some “sample” standards to assist managers and supervisors in understanding the types of measures to be covered under this element. The actual content of performance standards is determined by Rating and Reviewing Officials.

**Employee Involvement:** A performance plan is to be established by the Rating Official with the participation and input of the employee. The Rating Official has the final authority regarding the substance of the performance plan, subject only to the plan’s approval by the Reviewing Official. In establishing the performance plan, the Rating Official is responsible for ensuring that the employee understands both the substance of the performance expectations and how the employee’s performance results will be assessed. **[Note**: For hourly employees (and in some cases annual employees who are in identical positions in which duties, responsibilities, and performance expectations are the same), common performance plans may be centrally developed and used for each separate craft/function. Employee involvement in such cases will occur by means of providing affected employees an opportunity to provide comments when such plans are developed or revised**.]**

**Time Requirements:** Performance plans are to be established (signed and dated by the employee, Rating Official, and Reviewing Official) within 30 days following the beginning of: (1) the annual appraisal period; (2) any work assignment expected to exceed 120 days, for example, temporary promotion, detail, etc.; or, (3) appointment or permanent assignment to a new position more than 90 days in advance of the end of the appraisal period.

**Changes in Performance Plans:** Performance plans are not intended to be set in place and never changed. Instead, the performance plan should be reviewed during the appraisal period and should be revised whenever appropriate, such as a change in direction or strategy may trigger the need to amend, revise, or delete performance standards. At a minimum, the appropriateness of the performance plan should be reviewed during the formal progress review that is required by this PL. When a change is needed, the Rating Official should discuss the matter with the employee, both should initial any changes that are annotated on the appraisal form, and the Rating Official should share the changes with the Reviewing Official.

**Relationship to Balanced Scorecard and Core Values:** Elements within each individual employee’s performance plan are linked to organizational Balanced Scorecards because each employee’s work efforts are to be supportive of the overall efforts of an organization to accomplish its goals and objectives. Balanced Scorecards use four perspectives: Stakeholder (or Customer) perspective, Financial perspective, Internal (Systems and Processes) perspective, and Learning and Growth (or People and Culture) perspective. These perspectives are used to define **organizational** performance expectations. Individual performance plans focus on the responsibilities of the employee being rated and may not have a one-to-one correlation with Balanced Scorecard perspectives. Performance plans are, nevertheless, supportive of an organization’s overall accomplishments. Additionally, whenever possible, performance standards should reflect BPA’s core values of operational excellence, collaborative relationships, and trustworthy stewardship.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE DURING THE APPRAISAL PERIOD**

**Progress Reviews:** Performance evaluation is an ongoing process. Therefore, informal discussions of performance should be held periodically with employees. Frequent progress reviews are encouraged and are particularly appropriate when there are: (1) noteworthy accomplishments; (2) any conclusive indication of a performance problem; (3) any significant change in the nature or importance of an element, sub-element, or accompanying performance standard; and, (4) at the conclusion of a major project or assignment when the employee’s performance can be recalled easily. At a minimum, Rating Officials shall conduct at least one formal progress review, usually at about the midpoint of the appraisal period, with each employee. For an employee’s performance that spans the entire annual appraisal period, the midpoint review would occur on or around the beginning of May.

**Performance at the “Unacceptable” Level:** If performance is determined to be at the **“Unacceptable”** level, the Rating Official will initiate formal efforts to bring about improvements in keeping with the requirements in Section X. In all instances of **“Unacceptable”** performance in a critical element, managers must seek the advice and assistance of the Employee Relations staff in Human Capital Management.

**Performance that Falls Short of Meeting All Expectations at the “Meets Expectations” Level:** Although this system does not provide for a rating level between the **“Meets Expectations”** and the **“Unacceptable”** levels, Rating Officials should pay attention to performance that may be somewhat less than that envisioned in all aspects of a particular performance standard but is not deemed to be actionable at the **“Unacceptable”** level. In such cases, it is important for the Rating Official to provide informal guidance to the employee by means of suggesting actions that the employee could take in order to avoid further deterioration in their performance that could lead to an **“Unacceptable”** performance rating.

**Advisory Ratings:**

Advisory ratings are assigned when: (a) an employee completes a detail or temporary promotion over 120 days; (b) an employee has served at least 90 days under a performance plan and changes positions during the annual appraisal period; or; (c) the employee’s Rating Official leaves his/her position during the appraisal period, provided the employee has completed the minimum 90-day appraisal period. Advisory ratings are documented on the appraisal form in Appendix A (specifically, in item 10 of the appraisal form). A copy of the rating must be provided to the new Rating Official and to the employee.

When an employee is detailed outside of BPA, a reasonable effort shall be made to obtain an advisory rating from the outside entity to which the employee has been detailed.

Advisory ratings shall be considered by the new Rating Official in assigning the rating-of-record.

An advisory rating issued under the provisions of this policy (as opposed to under a different performance appraisal program) may become the rating-of-record if it is issued within 90 days of the end of the annual appraisal period.

# RATING-OF-RECORD

**General Requirements:**

Ratings must be assigned in writing on the appraisal form (Appendix A) and must be discussed with employees. Rating Officials shall provide employees with the opportunity to present feedback on their performance, such as self-appraisals, if requested by the employee.

The employee’s immediate manager or supervisor normally serves as the Rating Official. If the immediate manager or supervisor position of record is vacant or if the current manager or supervisor has not supervised the employee for the minimum appraisal period, then the next higher-level manager may serve as the Rating Official, unless the prior manager or supervisor of record assigned an advisory rating within 90 days of the end of the appraisal period and it is determined that the advisory rating should be treated as the rating of record.

Ratings reflect performance during the appraisal period only. Such performance shall be considered carefully and thoroughly. This includes any feedback or other measurements used in determining the level of results achieved related to any applicable performance expectations.

For hourly supervisors, in rating performance against the Leadership, Management and Supervision element, Rating Officials will obtain feedback from direct reports and take such feedback into consideration in assessing performance. (BPA F 3430.05e, Hourly Supervisor Performance Feedback form is available for this purpose.) The feedback should be assessed carefully in conjunction with an overview of any performance or conduct problems being addressed with such direct reports. In such cases, Rating Officials may want to contact Employee Relations staff to gain insight into a possible correlation of negative employee feedback to performance/conduct problems that are being addressed within the unit by the supervisor.

**Timing Requirements:** Ratings-of-record are assigned at the end of an appraisal period and not later than 30 days after the period has ended. Under certain circumstances such ratings are also assigned in connection with within-range increase determinations and after employees have completed opportunity periods to improve performance.

**Steps in Assigning Ratings:** The following steps are followed to assign a summary rating:

**Assess Performance:** The employee’s performance under each separate element’s (critical and non-critical) performance standard is assessed and the individual element rating of **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S), “Meets Expectations” (M),** or **“Unacceptable” (U)** is entered on the appraisal form for that element (*except the generic safety element, for which only the* ***“Meets Expectations”*** *and* ***“Unacceptable” Levels are used).***

**Non-Ratable Standards:** If any performance standard is considered non-ratable, for example no opportunity for the employee to achieve the desired results, it should be noted as non-ratable on the appraisal form, with the initials of the Rating Official and the employee and the date of such determination.

**Determine Summary Rating:** The summary rating is based on all element ratings and entered in item 11 on the appraisal form:

**“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S):** Highest summary rating level is assigned only if all Critical Elements are rated **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S)** and no non-Critical Element is rated below the **“Meets Expectations” (M)** level. In the event that the generic safety element is used, it must be rated at the “Meets Expectations” level.

**“Unacceptable” (U):** This rating level is only assigned if one or more Critical Elements are rated as **“Unacceptable” (U)** (According to Federal personnel law, no number of non-Critical Elements rated below the **“Meets Expectations” [M]** level can result in a summary rating of **“Unacceptable” [U]** unless one or more Critical Elements is also rated as **“Unacceptable” [U**]).

**“Meets Expectations” (M):** All other combinations of Critical and non-Critical element ratings will result in a summary rating of **“Meets Expectations” (M)**.

BPA does not require Rating Officials to provide narrative documentation of employee’s specific accomplishments to support individual element ratings or the overall summary rating.

**Employee Signature on Receipt of Rating:** An employee shall be requested to sign the appraisal form when s/he receives the form. The employee’s signature indicates only that s/he has seen the summary rating and was given the opportunity to discuss the element ratings. A performance rating is valid even when the employee refuses to sign the form. If the employee refuses to sign the form, the Rating Official will annotate the form accordingly. A copy of the completed form will be provided to the employee. Employees may provide written comments on element rating(s), and such comments will be retained with the appraisal form as part of the formal record.

**Review and Approval of Ratings:** Reviewing Officials approve performance appraisal ratings to ensure ratings reflect actual performance and result in appropriate and meaningful distinctions among performers when warranted. If the Rating and Reviewing Officials do not agree on an employee’s rating for any element, the Reviewing Official’s judgment will prevail. If necessary, the Reviewing Official shall annotate the appraisal form accordingly, discuss the rating with the employee, and ensure that the employee receives a copy. Reviewing Officials may require that Rating Officials confer with them on expected ratings before Rating Officials meet with employees to assign ratings.

**Review and Submission of Completed Ratings:** Completed ratings are forwarded in keeping with the process established by each organization to HCM for official filing.

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL RECORDS**

**Types of Records:** Official performance appraisal records consist of the Performance Plan and Appraisal Form (BPA Form 3430.03e).

**Maintenance:**

Managers and/or supervisors are responsible for sending completed ratings-of-record, to include the performance plans on which the ratings are based, to the HCM office in a confidential and sealed envelope. Completed performance ratings-of-record, including the performance plans on which the ratings are based, and other performance-related documents, are filed separate from the Official Personnel Folders (OPFs) in the HCM office.

All advisory ratings should be sent to the gaining manager or supervisor responsible for assigning the next rating-of-record.

The HCM office is responsible for entering ratings-of-record into HRMIS and generally will use common “effective” dates in doing so. However, for purposes of a Reduction In Force (RIF), the official date for a rating will correspond to the date that the appraisal was signed by the Reviewing Official.

**Availability:** The Privacy Act covers performance appraisal records. The HCM office shall provide access to any performance appraisal document to the employee, the employee’s representative designated in writing, or another official having a need for the document. All requests for performance appraisal documents made to managers or supervisors should be referred to the HCM office.

**Retention:** Completed performance ratings-of-record, including performance plans on which they are based and other performance-related documents are retained for four (4) years.

**DEALING WITH “UNACCEPTABLE” PERFORMANCE**

At such time during the rating period that a Rating Official regards an employee’s performance to be **“Unacceptable”** in one or more critical elements in his/her performance plan, the Rating Official will, in consultation with the Employee Relations staff, promptly initiate special efforts to assist the employee in improving performance. See BPA Manual 400/700 for BPA’s policy on unacceptable performance, and see Personnel Letter 432-1 for specific instructions on dealing with unacceptable performance, including issuing a performance-improvement plan (PIP) and providing the employee with an opportunity to improve his/her performance.

**RELATIONSHIP OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL TO OTHER PERSONNEL ACTIONS**

**Within-Range Increases (WRIs – formerly referred to as “with-in grade increase” (WGI))**

To receive a WRI, in addition to meeting other requirements listed in 5 CFR, Part 531, a current rating-of-record of **“Meets Expectations” (M)** is required (i.e., performance at an Acceptable-Level-of-Competence [ALOC] or higher).

If an employee’s rating-of-record is **“Meets Expectations” (M)** or higher but the employee’s performance is not at an ALOC at the time a WRI is otherwise due, a new rating-of-record must be prepared to support the decision to withhold the WRI. However, if an employee is due to receive his/her WRI during an opportunity period for improving **“Unacceptable” (U)** performance (see Personnel Letter 432-1, Taking Action Based on Unacceptable Performance); the ALOC determination may be postponed until the end of the opportunity period. In all cases of performance below the ALOC (i.e., the **“Meets Expectations” [M]** level), managers must seek the advice and assistance of the Employee Relations staff in HCM.

If the current rating-of-record is below an ALOC, the HCM office will not process a WRI that is otherwise due unless a new rating-of-record is assigned reflecting an ALOC. See Personnel Letter 531-1 for specific requirements and procedures for granting and denying WRIs.

**Quality Step Increase (QSI):** Employees are eligible for a QSI, provided that:

They receive **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S)** rating-of-record; and,

Are approved for a QSI by management, as documented in a justification statement that demonstrates sustained high quality performance that substantially and consistently exceeds the **“Meets Expectations” (M)** level.

(See PL 531/451, Quality Step Increase, for specific instructions regarding awarding a QSI.)

**Performance Awards:**

Subject to funding availability, except as noted in paragraph C. 4 below, all employees receiving a summary rating of **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S)** shall receive a performance award, provided such awards are funded by BPA.

Subject to funding availability, employees receiving a summary rating of **“Meets Expectations” (M)** are eligible to receive a performance award under the following conditions:

At least 50% of all Critical Elements in the employee’s performance plan, exclusive of the generic safety element, if used, are rated at the **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S)** level; and,

No performance element in the employee’s performance plan is rated below the **“Meets Expectations” (M)** level.

Performance Award Payout By Summary Rating Level - The average Performance Award amount (expressed as a percentage of the recipient’s base pay) for those who receive a Significantly Exceeds Expectations rating must be at least double the corresponding average award amount for those rated Meets Expectations. In making Performance Award decisions and ensuring compliance with this requirement, award amounts for employees who receive Significantly Exceeds Expectations ratings, and are also granted (or will be granted) Quality Step Increases on the basis of those ratings, are not included. Refer to PL 451-1, BPA Recognition System for more information on how this requirement is administered.

Performance awards are discretionary for employees rated **“Significantly Exceeds Expectations” (S)** if they receive a Quality Step Increase (QSI). In addressing such situations, managers should give consideration to both the ongoing value of the QSI and the amounts of performance bonuses given to other employees, including those rated **“Meets Expectations” (M)**.

Policy and procedures governing performance awards for employees covered by the provisions of this issuance are contained in PL 451-1.

**Reduction-in-Force (RIF):** Entitlement to additional service credit and to assignment rights for RIF purposes is based, in whole or in part, on performance. Determinations of such credit are to be made consistent with PL 351-1. A rating-of-record will not be assigned for the sole purpose of affecting competitive standing in a RIF. In the event of a RIF, scheduled ratings-of-record may be postponed if all of the following conditions are met:

The BPA Chief Executive Officer determines that the RIF cannot be postponed for specific, related reasons;

The scheduled rating dates for employees in the competitive area are such that it will not be possible to process all ratings before the date that specific RIF notices are to be issued;

There are persuasive reasons why ratings cannot be processed prior to the scheduled rating date so that all ratings can be processed before the date that specific notices are issued; and,

Issuance of general RIF notices, reducing the time required for specific notices (and, therefore, extending the time available to process ratings) will not resolve the problem.

**Promotions:**

**Career Promotion:** An employee must have a current rating-of-record of **“Meets Expectations”** to receive a career promotion.

**Merit Promotion:** PL 335-1 requires that candidates be appraised on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position to be filled, rather than performance in the candidate’s present position. Thus, there is no direct link between a candidate’s overall performance rating level in their position of record and the merit promotion position for which they have applied; however, selecting officials should give due weight to current performance ratings of job applicants as an indicator of the quality of prior experience in making selection decisions.

**Training:** Subject to internal controls, Rating Officials may authorize training to improve an employee’s performance in the employee’s present job as well as for developmental purposes. The performance appraisal process should identify areas where remedial training may be necessary for an employee to meet or surpass specified performance standards.

**Probationary Periods:**

**New Employee Probationary Period:** New employees must be carefully observed and appraised during their probationary periods to determine whether they can perform their assigned duties acceptably and have the qualities needed to become successful career employees. Information generated during the performance appraisal process may provide a basis to determine progress during the probationary period and will assist Rating Officials in deciding whether to retain an employee in the Federal Service. (Additional information is provided in PL 315-2, Probationary or Trial Periods for New Employees.) Managers and supervisors must seek advice and assistance from the Employee Relations staff prior to removing an employee during his/her probationary period.

**Supervisory Probationary Period for Hourly Supervisors:** New supervisors must be carefully observed and appraised during their probationary periods to determine if they can perform their duties acceptably and have the qualities needed to become successful supervisors. Information generated during the performance appraisal process will provide a basis for deciding whether to retain these employees in supervisory positions. Additional information is provided in PL 315-1, Probationary Period for New Managers and Supervisors.

**ORIENTATION**

During initial orientation, all new BPA annual and hourly employees will be presented with a copy of this Personnel Letter and be informed about supervisory and employee participation in, responsibilities under, and the impact(s) of the Performance Appraisal process.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The application of the policy contained in this Personnel Letter should be reviewed annually. The Executive Vice President for Internal Business Services is responsible for issuing a report prior to February 1 of each year to the Chief Operating Officer. The report may contain statistical information regarding the previous year’s application of this policy throughout BPA, an analysis of any identified problems, and recommendations for changes in the policy and/or implementation/application processes associated with the policy.

**REFERENCES AND RELATED INFORMATION**

5 U.S.C., Chapter 43, Performance Appraisal

5 CFR, Parts 293 and 297, Personnel Records and Privacy Procedures for Personnel Records, respectively

5 CFR, Part 430, Performance Management

BPA Manual, Chapter 400/300, Employment

BPA Manual, Chapter 400/430, Performance Appraisal

BPA Manual, Chapter 400/451, BPA Recognition System

BPA Manual, Chapter 400/700A, Employee Relations Program

Personnel Letters No. 335-1 and No. 335-2, regarding BPA Merit Promotion Plans for Annual and Hourly Jobs

Personnel Letter No. 351, Reduction-in-Force

Personnel Letter No. 430-2, Performance Appraisal Program for Managers

Personnel Letter No. 432-1, Unacceptable Performance

Personnel Letter No. 451-1, BPA Recognition System

Personnel Letter No. 531/451, Quality Step Increase

Personnel Letter No. 531-1, Requirements for Granting and Denying Within-Range Increases

DOE Memorandum dated November 30, 2006, subject: Safety Performance Standards for All Employees

Guy Kyle

Acting Chief Human Capital Officer

Appendix A - Performance Plan and Appraisal Form

Appendix B - Avoiding Common Errors in Writing Performance Standards

Appendix C - Sample Behavioral Performance Standards

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Beginning on page 3, parts of this form is protected. The unprotected areas provide more flexibility to paste information from other documents. Note, pasting information with different formatting, may alter the design of the form.

This form in its basic layout contains “**CRITICAL PERFORMANCE ELEMENT # 1** –Technical Performance Expectations” and “**CRITICAL PERFORMANCE ELEMENT # 2** – Behavioral Performance Expectations”.

The following elements can be added by positioning the cursor where you want to insert the element and pressing the appropriate Insert button located on the menu bar:

**Critical Performance Element #3 – For Hourly Supervisors Only** with all sub-elements.

**Performance Element #?**

**Critical Element – Works Safely.**

## AVOIDING COMMON ERRORS IN WRITING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

# Reasonableness of Performance Standards

Performance standards must be applied in a reasonable manner and should be based on objective criteria, which is communicated to the employee in advance. Standards that allow for no errors (i.e., absolute performance standards) might not be considered reasonable, except when a single failure to perform under a critical element would result in loss of life, injury, or breach of national security, or great monetary loss.

### Avoid “Backwards” Standards

MSPB case law requires that an employee understand the level of performance needed for retention in the position. A common error to avoid is describing a performance standard in terms of work that does not get done instead of what must be done to meet the standard for retention. Describing such negative performance is considered by MSPB to actually portray Unacceptable performance. For example, a standard that states “fails to meet deadlines” or “performs work inaccurately” allow an employee to do virtually no work or to do it poorly and still meet the performance standard. Hence, MSPB considers such “backward” standards to be invalid.

**Sample Results-Based Behavioral Elements and Standards**

Please note that the following are samples, not finished products, and will not pertain to every job. These samples are meant to be a starting point and stimulate thinking about behaviors that are critical in your organization, and will need to be altered to fit your situation if you choose to make use of them. As with all standards written for your employees, these are to be written with the input of the employee. You should begin by effectively communicating and discussing your performance expectations with your staff, then coaching throughout the year.

Performance Element Title: Effective relations with land owners

Performance Standard Description: Supervisors would measure the success of this standard by tracking logged complaints, and reviewing comments received from landowners.

Meets: No more than \_\_\_valid and avoidable landowner complaints.

Exceeds: Favorable comments from landowners, colleagues and others with knowledge of employee’s relationships.

Performance Element Title: Emergency situations are handled in a calm manner.

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor is satisfied that emergency situations are handled

In a calm and safe manner

In accordance with regulations and established procedures.

Performance Element Title: Engaged employees.

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes and receives feedback from the team that the employee regularly solicits ideas and suggestions

from the rest of the team, when appropriate,

when others are involved in the project and/or

when the employee needs additional information.

Performance Element Title: Self-directed employee

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes that

The employee works effectively with minimum supervision

Supervisory instructions rarely need to be repeated.

Performance Element Title: Well-planned projects

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes that the employee uses

Appropriate project management techniques

The employee regularly checks with others on deliverables

An up-front analysis of the project is completed before undertaking project/assignment.

Performance Element Title: High priority jobs are accomplished before lower priority jobs

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes that the employee

Solicits information regarding priority of project, if necessary

Discusses priority of jobs with supervisor, as circumstances change

Performance Element Title: Effective crew member

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes that the employee

Meets:

Shares technical knowledge with co-workers

Regularly attends team meetings regularly

Volunteers useful ideas and information;

Demonstrates clear purpose and a positive approach on work assignments, even on undesirable and/or difficult jobs;

Fosters a positive work environment by ensuring that any criticism is constructive and is focused on an individual’s behavior, not personalities.

Exceeds:

Is sought out by others as a resource due to willingness to share technical knowledge and expertise.

Volunteers to take on tasks for the team. Delivers what is promised.

Performance Element Title: Customer focus and satisfaction

Performance Standard Description: The supervisor observes and receives feedback from customers, Account Specialists and field staff that the employee

Resolves customer inquiries and problems, taking ownership of the situation on initial call or within agree-upon time, meeting commitments, using professional and proper telephone etiquette.

Keeps field staff updated and informed of pertinent information relating to agreement renewal and solicits their involvement when needed.

Provides Account specialists with clear, concise and accurate information regarding agreements on their accounts and transmits the appropriate reports weekly or monthly, depending on requirements

Performance Element Title: Informed Supervisor

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor:

Is kept informed by the employee of major problems, issues and status of projects

Can locate the employee when necessary and in a reasonable timeframe

Performance Element Title: Responsibility and Accountability

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor observes or receives feedback that employee

Sets well-defined and realistic professional goals; displays initiative, effort and commitment towards completing assignments in a timely manner while maintaining the integrity of the organization

Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives and to make recommendations.

Willingly accepts personal responsibility and accountability for individual contributions and those made as a member of a team

Completes professional development requirements and opportunities to maintain state-or-the-art skills.

Adheres to relevant government and organization policies and regulations

Performance Element Title: Effective Communication

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor observes or receives feedback that employee

Shares information openly and regularly with others

Presents complex/technical information in a logical, understandable and persuasive manner, where appropriate.

Written/oral communications are clear, accurate, concise, and well-organized.

Listens to other’s ideas and points-of-view, and seeks to clarify for understanding.

Performance Element Title: Effective Teamwork

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor observes or receives feedback that employee

Builds and maintains collegial, effective relationships that facilitate achieving desired goals

Uses collaborative decision making techniques to facilitate teamwork

Exhibits willingness to support others in the accomplishment of their assignments

Actively contributes to accomplishment of organizational goals.

Supports organizational decisions once they are made

Shares knowledge, expertise, information and credit freely across levels and functions

Performance Element Title: Innovation/Quality Improvements

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor observes or receives feedback that employee

Initiates and/or supports quality improvements in systems, services, or work processes

Recommends alternatives to established thinking, policies, practices, methods and approaches designed to achieve organizational efficiency, cost savings/avoidance, etc.

Is cooperative, constructive, and adaptable in response to new ideas, to changing situations, and to technological innovations.

Performance Element Title: Effective Customer Service

Performance Standard Description: Supervisor observes or receives feedback that employee

Responds appropriately and in a timely fashion to customers/stakeholders concerns and requests, reacting constructively to changes in needs and priorities

Consistently helps customers and partners overcome problems or difficulties

Keeps customers and partners up to date on progress

Designs and adapts products and services to meet customer needs

Meets schedules and commitments