

Annual Leave

The use of annual leave is a right of the employee. Annual leave is earned leave that is taken for approved absences on workdays, exclusive of holidays. It is to be used for vacations and personal purposes including emergencies. An employee has a right to take annual leave, subject to the right of the supervisor to schedule the time at which annual leave may be taken. An employee will receive a lump-sum payment for accumulated and accrued annual leave when he or she separates from Federal service or enters on active duty in the armed forces and elects to receive a lump-sum payment.

The amount of annual leave an employee earns depends on length of service and the employees' work schedule/tour of duty. All federal civilian service and creditable military service are counted in determining the employee's length of service.

An employee begins earning leave during the first FULL pay period of employment as long as the initial appointment is for 90 days or more. If the initial appointment is for less than 90 days, but is subsequently extended or converted to one of 90 days or more (or two or more successive appointments without a break in service of 1 day or more and the combined appointments exceed 90 days), the employee accrues leave retroactively to the initial date of appointment and may begin using it immediately.

Annual leave accrual rates are as follows:

Employee Type	<i>Less than 3 years of service*</i>	<i>3 years but less than 15 years of service*</i>	<i>15 or more years of service*</i>
Full-time employees	½ day (4 hours) for each pay period	3/4 day (6 hours) for each pay period, except 1¼ day (10 hours) in last pay period	1 day (8 hours) for each pay period
Part-time employees**	1 hour of annual leave for each 20 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 13 hours in a pay status	1 hour of annual leave for each 10 hours in a pay status
Uncommon tours of duty**	(4 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided by 80 = biweekly accrual rate.***	(6 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided by 80 = biweekly accrual rate.***	(8 hours) times (average # of hours per biweekly pay period) divided by 80 = biweekly accrual rate. ***

* See [Creditable Service for Leave Accrual](#)

** Leave is prorated for part-time employees and employees on uncommon tours of duty.

*** In computing leave accrual for uncommon tours of duty, the accrual rate for the last full pay period in a calendar year must be adjusted to ensure the correct amount of leave is accrued. Click to find information on: [Annual Leave Accrual Rates for Senior Executive Service, Senior Level and Scientific or Professional Positions, or Equivalent Pay Systems](#)

The **MAXIMUM** amount of annual leave that may be carried over from one leave year into the next is 240 hours. Employees who have worked overseas may have accrued up to 360 hours they may carry over, and there are some employees who accumulated another maximum carryover under other legislation – they carry over the amount to their credit at the beginning of the leave year (or 240 hours, whichever is greater). If one of these employees ever “uses down” their leave balance, it is limited to the new balance, or 240 hours, whichever is greater. SES, SL, ST employees may carry over 720 hours and do not “use down” leave balances.

Forfeited annual leave may be restored under the following circumstances:

- **Administrative error.** Examples include: Retroactive correction to (service computation date (SCD); failure of system to change to a different leave accrual, or delay in transferring leave records from another agency.
- **Sickness of the employee.** If the annual leave was requested, approved, and scheduled in writing before the start of the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year.
- **Exigencies of the service.** If the leave was required, approved and scheduled in writing before the start of the third biweekly pay period prior to the end of the leave year.

There are really two conditions that have to be met – each one separately (except when leave is lost due to mobilization).

The first condition relates to a balance between the employee's need to take leave and the work situation. Two questions must be answered to make the determination:

- a. Is the operational demand so important that employees cannot be excused from duty for the duration? For instance, let us assume the investigation of a recent aircraft accident revealed a fault in a piece of equipment. As a result, all such aircraft worldwide are grounded until the equipment is replaced. At your base it will take 2 full weeks to accomplish with all the Mechanics working. In this situation there is a legitimate exigency for that 2-week period.

The second question that must be answered is:

- b. Is there any reasonable alternative to cancellation of the scheduled leave or the assignment of employees who will forfeit leave because of work generated by the exigency? Here, let us assume 2 of 15 Mechanics actually have leave scheduled which, if not taken, would result in forfeiture. Since we have already said that ALL Mechanics would have to work, there is little flexibility left to the supervisor without delaying the accomplishment of the mission. Obviously, delay in this case is not an alternative, because we are talking about delaying the readiness of our fighting forces.

Since both parts favor requiring the employees to work and lose their leave, restoration of the forfeited leave could be approved. Note: This is a judgment left to the management chain. This usually means the Wing Commander, Center Commander, Mission Partners, or designee.

The second condition is whether leave had been properly scheduled in advance or rescheduled, if necessary.

Also, if this exigency had occurred at some time other than the end of the leave year, it would be incumbent on both the supervisor and employee to reschedule the leave and use it to avoid forfeiture.

Once the annual leave is restored, the employee and supervisor must insure it is scheduled and taken, along with the annual leave accrual for the New Year. Restored annual leave must be used by the end of the leave year ending 2 years after the date of the exigency.

It is recommended that employees request leave and supervisors approve/disapprove leave in writing on an OPM Form 71; this protects both the employee and the supervisor in event of conflict and is necessary to meet the requirements for restoration. Approval/disapproval of leave should not be based on arbitrary minimum or maximum amount of leave requested.

The decision should be based solely on the needs of the mission and the amount of leave available for use. Specific language/requirements may have been negotiated – check contract for specific language.

In granting leave managers must consider the needs of the Air Force and the welfare of the employees. Authority to approve leave requests is normally delegated to the lowest supervisory level having personal knowledge of the work requirements and the employee's leave record.

Supervisors must balance the organizations' work load against the interest of the employee in using annual leave, supervisors may find it necessary from time to time ask employees how they will use the requested annual leave so that they can make an informed decisions about scheduling the leave. In such cases, employees are not required to provide the supervisor with this information, but should understand that in the absence of such information, their request for annual leave may be denied based on project related deadlines or the workload. However, supervisors should not make it a standard practice to require that employees inform them how the annual leave will be used

Disciplinary action can be taken against an employee who disobeys a valid denial of a leave request, or does not follow established procedures for requesting leave, which will be discussed in detail in Constructive Discipline and Adverse Action module.

Supervisors should have employees request projected leave and use or lose leave within the first three pay periods of the year. Use or lose leave must be requested in

writing and approved before the beginning of the third full pay period prior to the end of the leave year before eligible for restoration due to exigencies of the service. Leave lost due to mobilization should be restored.

Supervisors requesting projected leave not only allows them to schedule his/her vacation but also allows employees an opportunity for a reasonable vacation, and to use any leave they would otherwise forfeit at the end of the leave year.

Check negotiated agreements for language about resolving conflicts and/or clauses impacting leave approval/denial.

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