



# ARMY BENEFITS CENTER - CIVILIAN (ABC-C)

At Fort Riley, Kansas

# ABC-C News

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## Federal Benefits Open Season is Coming!

The Federal Benefits Open Season begins on Monday, November 14, 2011 and ends on Monday, December 12, 2011. The programs that participate in the Open Season are the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Program, Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.

If you are already enrolled in FEHB or FEDVIP, your enrollment will continue, but your coverage and premiums may change.

The list of FEHB plans that are leaving the FEHB program, reducing a service area, or are terminating options is available at: <http://www.opm.gov/retire/pubs/bals/2011/11-405attachment2.pdf>

The 2012 rates for FEHB are available at: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/rates/nonpostalhmo2012.pdf>

The 2012 dental insurance rates are available at: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/dental/rates/>

The 2012 vision insurance rates are available at: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/vision/rates/>

If you already have an FSA, you must reenroll. It will not automatically continue for 2012.

## National Guard and ABC-C 1-Year Anniversary

The ABC-C is pleased to announce that we are celebrating our first year anniversary of servicing the Army and Air National Guard Title 32 Technicians. ABC-C started providing benefits support to over 56,000 National Guard Technicians on October 1, 2010.

In the first year, ABC-C processed over 740 retirements, 654 retirement estimates, 424 disability retirements and 1,526 military deposits. National Guard technicians also took full advantage of the automated benefit process, Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS), by completing over 20,000 benefit transactions for the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Federal

Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI), Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and TSP-Catch Up (TSP-C).

The Chief of Branch 4 (National Guard) at ABC-C states the reason for the early successes of the program is due to National Guard Bureau, National Guard Human Resources Officers' and Employee Benefits Specialists' support, and being good stewards of the phrase "Starting From YES!"

## Use or Lose Annual Leave and Your Retirement Date

What is "use or lose" annual leave? Most employees can carry a maximum of 240 hours of annual leave from one leave year to the next. "Use or lose" annual leave is the accrued annual leave above the maximum carry over amount.

When does a new leave year start? The leave year starts the first day of the first full pay period in a calendar year. The current leave year ends December 31, 2011, and the new leave year starts January 1, 2012.

How does this apply to you as you consider retirement? If you are retiring at the end of the current leave year, December 31, 2011, and have use or lose leave, you will be retiring with all of your annual leave, including the excess over 240 hours. However, for those retiring on January 1, 2012 or after, you will be retiring with no more than 240 hours, as you will lose all hours in excess of 240. This applies to both CSRS and FERS employees!



Example 1: You retire December 31, 2011 with 360 hours of annual leave. You will receive a lump sum payment for 360 hours of annual leave.

Example 2: You retire January 1, 2012 with 360 hours of annual leave. You will only receive a lump sum payment for 240 hours of annual leave.

One day can make a difference in the amount of your lump sum annual leave pay out at retirement.

## Did You Know?

If you are a newly hired eligible employee or a newly eligible employee, you cannot enroll in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for the current (2011) Benefit Period after September 30, 2011. Normally you have 60 days from your hire/eligibility date to enroll, but you cannot enroll later than September 30.



Of course, you can enroll during the Federal Benefits Open Season, with coverage effective January 1, 2012. Alternatively, you can enroll on/after January 1, 2012 (with coverage effective the day after you enroll), as long as your 60 days hasn't ended by then. Information on enrollment for new hires or those newly eligible is at <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/Popup/NewHireEnrollment.asp>

If you are currently enrolled you MUST re-enroll if you wish to participate in the 2012 Benefit Period. Enrollments DO NOT carry over year-to-year.



## Financial Focus

If you only go to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) website to check your TSP account balances, you are missing out on good information on saving for retirement.

Saving for retirement sounds daunting, but finding the money might be easier than you think. It's important to remember that even small contributions can add up to big savings thanks to compound interest

For some simple ways to save a few dollars every day – and an idea of how that money can grow over the years, visit the TSP website at <http://www.tsp.gov>. To complete your TSP checkup, visit the “Planning & Tools: Investment Strategy” section of the website.



## The DFAS Corner

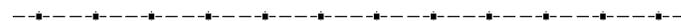
Now is a good time to review your tax withholding information. Please verify that your deductions are being withheld for the correct state and locality. Ensuring the information is correct is your responsibility. Changes can be made through myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx>.



## Social Security Scoop

We know how overwhelming it can be to try to sort through your retirement benefits from both the civilian and Social Security side. In order to try to assist Federal employees in obtaining critical information on their Social

Security benefits and how they relate to their federal retirement we recently added some valuable links for Social Security information on our website. The links can be found on the ABC-C home page, <https://www.abc.army.mil>, under “Benefit Topics” by clicking on “Social Security.” From these links employees can calculate a Social Security benefit estimate, learn how Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) may affect their retirement benefits as well as view Social Security Webinars. We believe these links will be beneficial in assisting you in your preparation for retirement.



## From the Editor:

### ARE YOU READY FOR THE ZOMBIES?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared October to be “Zombie Preparedness Month.” No matter what the disaster, the preparations are the same: make an emergency kit that will allow you and your family to survive for a minimum of three days until help can arrive, devise a home emergency plan and practice it so that everyone knows what to do if a disaster strikes – even zombies.

Just like the zombies can sneak up on you when you are not prepared, so can retirement. You may be years from your planned date of retirement, but then your activity offers early retirement with a \$25,000 separation incentive. Are you prepared to make the decision to retire early – usually with a very short time frame to do so? Have you paid your military deposit, or any civilian deposit or redeposit? Have you been contributing as much as possible to your Thrift Savings Plan account? Have you received a retirement estimate so you have an idea of what your retirement annuity might be?

For more information on how to prepare for an emergency, including a zombie attack, check out the information on the CDC website at:

[http://emergency.cdc.gov/socialmedia/zombies\\_blog.asp](http://emergency.cdc.gov/socialmedia/zombies_blog.asp).

For information on how to prepare for retirement, go to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) “Planning for Retirement” web page at:

<http://www.opm.gov/retire/pre/planning/index.asp>.

“Be prepared...for anything.” ~Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of Boy Scouts

Send comments or suggestions to:

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