

## **USPS Restructuring Frequently Asked Questions**

NAPS has developed a continuing series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in the NAPS Announcements section of the NAPS Forum on our website to assist our members who may have questions concerning the current USPS restructuring.

Members who have questions should send them to NAPS Headquarters at our email address: [napshq@naps.org](mailto:napshq@naps.org). Each question will be fully researched and a response will be placed on the website in the NAPS Headquarters announcement section on a daily basis.

# **Reduction-in-Force (RIF)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. When are RIFs necessary?**

RIF procedures are required when there is an organization/staffing change AND at least one employee is demoted or separated.

### **2. Are RIF procedures required when the work I perform and my position (at the same grade) are moved to a different location, and I am directed to move with my position?**

RIF procedures are required when there is an organization/staffing change and at least one employee is demoted or separated. In the example above, no employees were demoted or separated therefore RIF procedures are not required.

### **3. When are RIF procedures NOT necessary?**

If staffing goals can be achieved through attrition, the elimination of vacancies, and/or reassigning employees to equal level/grade authorized positions for which they qualify, RIF procedures are not necessary.

### **4. What is RIF avoidance and how does it differ from a RIF?**

RIF Avoidance and RIF are components of the organization change process (i.e., reorganizations, restructuring and downsizing). RIF Avoidance is a period of time that begins after the change is approved and the manager meets/notifies the employees of the change. During the RIF avoidance period, management helps employees identify vacant authorized positions for which the affected employees can apply. The RIF avoidance period ends when all employees find placement opportunities or with the issuance of the Specific RIF Notice, whichever comes first.

### **5. I served in the military, does that make me a preference eligible?**

The following criteria must be met in order for the military service to guarantee entitlement to veterans' preference for RIF purposes.

- must have served during the period 12-7-41 to 7-1-55; or
- must have served for more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred after 1-31-55, and before 10-15-76; or
- must have served during the period beginning 8-2-90 and ending 1-2-92; or

- must have served in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized.

Veterans' preference may also be awarded to:

- an unmarried spouse of certain deceased veterans; or
- a spouse of veteran unable to work because of a service-connected disability; or
- a mother of a veteran who died in service or who is permanently and totally disabled.

Note – Employees are encouraged to speak to a representative in their servicing personnel office if they are unclear on their veteran preference eligibility.

#### **6. I am a preference eligible. Can I select my assignment in a RIF?**

No, preference eligibles have a right to the highest paying positions for which they are qualified, at their current position grade level or up to three grades below. In some cases, preference eligibles who are 30% or more disabled may have rights to positions 5 grades below their current position grade, if they previously held the position. In cases where there are multiple positions of the same grade for which you are qualified, you will be assigned at management's discretion.

#### **7. What happens to my pay if I get assigned to a lower level position as a result of a reduction in force?**

Assuming you are not a preference eligible, your salary would be protected for only two years if you were assigned to a lower level position.

#### **8. What happens if I have salary protection from a previous organization/staffing change?**

If you are not a preference eligible and are reassigned to a lower level as a result of a RIF situation in your function, you will retain your current salary level for only two years.

#### **9. I am not a preference eligible, what happens to me?**

If your position is not affected by the organization change, and you are displaced by a preference eligible, then you will not be affected.

If it is determined by your function that your position is affected, you are not reassigned through RIF Avoidance, and you are displaced by a preference eligible through RIF, then you must apply and compete for vacant authorized positions for which you qualify.

**10. What is a competitive area?**

Competitive areas are organizational units under separate management authority within which preference eligible employees compete during a RIF.

**11. How are RIF computation/retention standing dates computed?**

The following four retention factors are used in computing RIF computation/retention dates, the length of service and performance rating;

1. Tenure – Rankings on retention register in three groups according to type of appointment:  
Group I – Career employees not serving a probationary period  
Group II – Career employees serving a probationary period  
Group III – Employees serving under term and non-status appointment
2. Veterans' Preference – Divided into subgroups based on entitlement to veterans preference:  
Subgroup AD – Veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 30% or more  
Subgroup A – Veterans not included in subgroup AD  
Subgroup B – Non-veterans
3. Length of Service – Includes all creditable civilian and military service.
4. Performance Rating – Additional service credit is awarded for performance based on the average of the employee's last three annual performance ratings received during the 4-year period prior to the RIF notice, i.e. Far Exceeds – 20 years; Met Expectations – 12 Years; Not Evaluated – 0 years (not calculated in the average); and unsatisfactory – 0 years (calculated in the average).

**12. If I get separated in a RIF, can I get called back?**

Employees separated by RIF procedures can request to be placed on the Reinstatement List for 2 years. The Reinstatement List is valid for vacancies for which they are qualified at or below the grade level at the time of separation within 50 miles of the competitive area from which they were separated.

**13. I am at the top of my grade. If I voluntarily request a reassignment to a lower level position in RIF avoidance, and I get 2 years of salary protection, am I still eligible to receive a lump sum merit payment?**

Assuming your salary at the end of the fiscal year is above the maximum salary range for your position, you would be eligible to receive a lump sum merit during the 2 years of salary protection.

**14. Using the formula for severance pay, I would be eligible for about 27 weeks of severance pay. This is based on my current 18+ years of service. If involuntarily separated, would these 27 weeks be included in my service time for CSRS annuity calculations when I get old enough to collect?**

In addition to credit for specific allowable periods of civilian and/or military service, credit for retirement computation purposes is given only for periods of time between an employee's appointment and separation from the Postal Service.

Since severance pay is an allowance for employees who are involuntarily separated not for cause from the Postal Service (in accordance with the provisions of ELM 435), the period of time covered for severance pay is NOT creditable for retirement purposes.

**15. What relocation benefits are available during RIF avoidance? If employee requests downgrade to a position outside commuting distance, does he/she get applicable relocation benefits?**

Paid relocation benefits are based on whether or not the employee is considered under the competitive or noncompetitive process.

Example 1 – Employee volunteers for equal or lower grade and is selected and considered under the competitive process (along with the competitive applications), all relocation benefits as outlined in the F-15 Travel/Relocation handbook are paid by the Postal Service.

Example 2 – Employee volunteers for equal or lower grade and is considered under the noncompetitive process (no competitive applications considered), relocation benefits may be paid based on management's discretion.

**16. I understand a postal spouse of a RIF Impacted employee will be given consideration under the normal transfer process. Will this include consideration for jobs that have been frozen for RIF impacted employees? (Example: non-impacted spouse is EAS-20 Postmaster. Will she be considered for frozen jobs level 18+?)**

The trailing spouse will be considered for jobs after it has been determined that the job cannot be filled by a RIF impacted employee. They will not receive priority consideration over the RIF impacted employee.

**17. At 53 & 23 years of service I would be eligible for VERA. However if I choose to take my chances by not taking VERA, and then the RIF period ends w/o me getting a job, would I be able to immediately begin drawing my reduced (for age and service years) annuity? Or would it be deferred until I reach some age criteria?**

Based on your years of service, 23, and your age, 53, if you elect not to take the VER, and you are not placed in a job prior to the RIF effective date, you would be eligible for an immediate annuity under the discontinued service retirement process. You are not required to wait until age 62.

**18. Is there a chance that we would be reassigned to a job if we don't get one through the application process?**

No. Employees must apply for positions competitively or request noncompetitive placement.

**19. If a function transfers (in total) from us to a new group, can any of the transferring people opt to not take the job so as to take a VERA?**

After all restructuring changes are known, VPs will announce their place for VERA offers. VERA offers are made before reassignments are made under RIF procedures. If the position you occupy is one of the positions covered by the VERA offer and you elect to choose VERA, your retirement will be effective prior to specific RIF assignments being made.

**20. If a person takes a lower level position with the 2-year salary protection, will their salary go to the lower level if they are not at the maximum of that lower level position? How is the salary calculated after 2 years?**

ELM 415.15 Protected Salary states,

An employee assigned to a lower grade position whose salary does not fall within the salary range of the lower grade position has this salary retained for a period not to exceed 2 years (104 weeks) as a protected salary. During this 2-year period, the employee may receive merit lump sums and variable pay amounts based on his or her protected salary and the policies applicable to employees at or above the maximum. If the protected salary exceeds the maximum salary for the lower grade at the end of the 2-year period, the protected salary exceeds the maximum salary for the lower grade at the end of the 2-year period, the protected salary is terminated, and the salary is automatically reduced to the maximum salary of the lower grade position.

An employee assigned to a lower grade position whose current salary falls within the salary range of the lower grade position has this salary continued, and no salary retention is applicable. Future salary increases, merit lump sums, and variable pay amounts are determined in accordance with the policies applicable to the lower grade position.

**21. Are veterans offered any different benefits/placement if they are unable to find a job during the RIF period?**

Preference eligible employees receive preference during rounds 1 and 2 of a RIF for jobs within their competitive area. In competitive area that area being eliminated, there will be no positions eligible for preference eligible employees or non-preference eligible employees. In a competitive area that is being eliminated, all of the positions with that competitive area will be abolished on the RIF effective date. Any employees (preference eligibles and non-preference eligibles) who have not successfully found another position with the Postal Service by that date will be separated.

**22. If I'm RIFed, what happens to my outstanding TSP loan?**

The following scenarios apply:

- Employee remains with the USPS in a lower grade level. No change would occur with the amount of the TSP loan payments or the length of the loan unless the employee needs to reduce the payments. He or she could then request a one-time re-amortization of their loan. However, the rules for minimum and maximum repayment periods still apply.
- Employee transfers to another Federal Agency. No change would occur with the amount of the TSP loan payments or the length of the loan. The employee must inform his or her new personnel office of the TSP loan and ask the office to continue the TSP loan payments. If the new payroll office does not begin allotments promptly loan payments will be missed with possible significant adverse tax consequences to the employee.
- Employee separates from the USPS. The terms of the TSP loan include a requirement that the employee repay the loan in full, including interest when they leave Federal service. After the employee leaves the USPS he or she will be sent a notice with instructions to repay the loan.

**23. Will preference eligibles have to apply for the new positions, or will they receive a written offer for a position within three grades prior to the position being posted?**

During the RIF avoidance period all employees are encouraged to apply for positions for which they are qualified that are posted either internally or on the Job Opportunities web site ([hrishq.usps.gov/vmi/placementopps/index.cfm](http://hrishq.usps.gov/vmi/placementopps/index.cfm)). If RIF avoidance is not successful and a RIF is necessary, employees, including preference eligibles, will receive a Specific RIF Notice. This notice identifies the position to which the employee will be assigned or indicates that there are no positions to which the employee can be assigned and specifies that the employee will be separated.

If a preference eligible does not apply for any position and a RIF occurs, will he/she have bump and retreat rights to a position within three grades given to a non-preference eligible?

Preference eligible employees who have been released from their positions in round 1 can BUMP to:

- Positions Held by Employees in a Lower Tenure Group/subgroup
- Positions in the Same Grade or 3 Below
- Must Be Qualified

Preference eligible employees who have been released from their positions in round 1 can RETREAT to:

- Positions Held by Employees in the Same Subgroup with Lower Retention Standing
- Positions in the Same Grade and 3 Below (for 30% disabled veterans, 5 Below)
- Must have Held Position in the Past

**24. When does the clock begin running for preference eligibles for the 30 day MSPB appeals? Does it begin with the RIF letter, the RIF Impact notice, or the RIF Avoidance notice?**

The 30 day calendar-day period for filing an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board commences on the effective day of the RIF. Information regarding the appeals process is provided with the Specific RIF Notice issued 60 days prior to the RIF effective date.

**25. I am a 23 specialist with almost 20 years but not a veteran. If they cut out 23 specialist jobs (there are only 4 positions in the new organization) and if there are 4 veterans, I assume they get slotted. Since I am not a veteran, does that mean I am out of a job? Can I apply for other positions, lower levels, etc.?**

In the scenario that you present, the 4 EAS -23 specialists who are preference eligible employees will remain in their positions in the new organization. (All veterans are not preference eligibles for RIF purposes.) The non-preference eligible employee will be released for processing in Round 3 of the RIF. In Round 3, competitive area management will make selections from the unplaced employees for positions remaining vacant.

While it is unclear at this time how you would be placed under the RIF process as other similar employees may exercise their options, you should consider vacancies offered on the web for which you are qualified.

**26. I am a reservist. If I am activated for 30 days in one year, how will I be able to apply for current postings when on active duty? Upon my return, I know the Postal Service must place me in a position similar to the one I vacated. Like my colleagues, I want to be able to select the type of work and work location, if possible. Can you provide me with some information or refer me to a source where this info can be found?**

Our policy for nonbargaining employees is that you can submit completed Forms 991 for specific position descriptions to human resources reflecting the desired positions and locations. Human resources will activate the application where appropriate as soon as the desired position of location has a vacancy. Reservists who are RIF impacted can access the web site for job opportunities from remote locations. Also, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that pertain to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) can be accessed on the Intranet ([http://blue.usps.gov/hrisp/ser/documents/userra\\_faq.doc](http://blue.usps.gov/hrisp/ser/documents/userra_faq.doc)).

**27. My main concern in this RIF is the vacant positions that have been frozen for those being RIF'd. There are vacancies that I would like to competitively bid on. While I do sympathize with the RIF'd, I too have put many years in the service and have done all the things necessary to fill a station manager or postmaster position; i.e., OIC, additional training, mundane details, etc. I lost out on opportunities to bid on positions closer to home and of a higher level a couple of years ago when our district HQ personnel were RIF'd. Had the positions been competitively filled, I am sure I would have found a position to my liking. If there is a need to find a position for the RIF, they could have my former position once I was awarded another job**



Every time that a RIF is conducted, the life-long objective of someone who was looking for their “dream” job in their hometown can be sidelined due to the placement of an impacted employee. At the conclusion of the RIF process, any positions that remain vacant will be posted for application by all career employees, not just those who have been RIF impacted. Hopefully, the position that you have been waiting for will still be available for you to apply for consideration.