U.S. Department of Transportation
United States Coast Guard

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United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 12351.1

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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 12351.1

Subj: ASSIGNING PERFORMANCE CREDIT FOR REDUCTION-IN-FORCE (RIF)

Ref: (a) Competitive Areas of the United States Coast Guard, COMDTINST 12351.2 (series)
(b) Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations Parts 351, 430 and 531

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction sets policy governing the assignment of performance-based retention service credit in a civilian reduction-in-force (RIF). It establishes a Coast Guard-wide method for crediting service where employees have been rated under different performance management systems.

2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and chiefs of special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.

4. COVERAGE. This Instruction applies to appropriated fund civilian Coast Guard employees serving in competitive and excepted service positions. It does not apply to the Senior Executive Service (SES) or to the Coast Guard Academy Faculty.

5. DEFINITIONS.

a. An **adjusted service computation date** is the date which reflects an employee's total creditable Federal civilian and military service with additional service credit for the three most recent annual performance ratings of record received during the 4-year period (look-back period) prior to the date of issuance of a RIF notice (e.g., if RIF notices are issued 1 August 2001, the three most recent performance ratings of record received between 1 August 1997 and 1 August 2001).

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b. A **look-back period** is the 4-year period prior to the date of the issuance of a RIF notice (for example, if RIF notices are issued on 1 August 2001, the look-back period is between 1 August 1997 and 1 August 2001).

c. A **competitive area** defines the organizational and geographic boundaries in which civilian employees compete in a RIF. Reference (a) sets policy governing the establishment of competitive areas in the U. S. Coast Guard for civilian employees.

d. A **competing employee** is defined as an employee, subject to RIF procedures, whose tenure is either in Group 1 (Career), Group II (Career-Conditional), or Group III (indefinite, term, and status quo employees), with the exception of those having a written decision of removal under 5 CFR Part 432 or 5 CFR Part 752. The Coast Guard does not permit reemployed civil service annuitants to hold status as competing employees.

e. A **summary rating** is the single performance level that summarizes the employee's overall performance during an annual rating period.

f. A **common rating** is the summary rating level assigned most frequently to employees within the Coast Guard within a competitive area during the 12-month period preceding the date of issuance of RIF notices.

g. A **performance rating system** defines the number and associated value of performance levels in an employee's performance appraisal which determine an employee's summary rating. There are eight different possible performance rating systems types used Federal-wide. (The Excellence, Achievement, and Recognition System (EARS) uses a 3-level performance rating system.)

h. A **mixed performance rating system** occurs when employees in a competitive area receive summary ratings under more than one performance rating system. Since April 2000, employees rated under EARS may have received ratings of record under more than one performance rating system, e.g. possibly two ratings of record under the EARS 3-level system, and one rating of record under the prior 5-level performance rating system.

i. A **service computation date (SCD)** is the date used to determine benefits that are based on how long the person has been in the Federal service. It may be the date of original appointment or it may be a constructed date to include periods of prior creditable civilian and/or military service.

j. An **equivalent rating of record** is a performance rating of record issued by an agency not subject to the performance appraisal provisions of reference (b), but meets the criteria in paragraph 12(a) of this Instruction, and can be used to grant additional retention service credit in a reduction-in-force.

6. BACKGROUND. Reference (b) requires Federal agencies to:

   a. Develop a plan for assigning service credit in cases where an employee or group of employees in a RIF competitive area, received performance ratings of record under more than one performance rating system.

   b. Assign additional service credit:

      (1) Based on the actual ratings of record employees received during the 4-year look-back period; or

      (2) To employees who have not received a performance rating of record during the 4-year look-back period; or

      (3) To employees who received performance ratings of record in Federal agencies whose performance rating systems are not covered under 5 CFR Part 430.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES. Commandant (G-WPC):

   a. Formulates policy and program guidance governing the administration of RIF actions throughout the Coast Guard, and:

   b. Ensures reduction-in-force actions are accomplished in accordance with Coast Guard directives.

   c. Determines the performance rating system(s) that apply to the employee's summary rating(s).

   d. Enters into the Civilian Personnel Management Information System (CIVPMIS) the summary rating that applies to the relevant performance rating system.

   e. Determines, when needed, the common rating for each competitive area undergoing a RIF.

   f. Determines whether a rating of record previously given to an employee from an agency whose performance rating system is not covered under 5 CFR Part 430 is an equivalent rating of record.

8. ADJUSTED SERVICE COMPUTATION DATES (SCD).

   a. In any RIF, an employee's retention standing is determined in part by his or her performance as an "adjustment" to the SCD.

   b. This adjusted SCD is the date derived after the employee is given additional retention service credit by averaging the three most recent performance ratings of record from the 4-year "look-back" prior to the date RIF notices are issued. Under the 5-level performance rating system in place before the advent of EARS, employees were previously assigned credit for ratings of record as follows:

      (1) Level 1- Unacceptable – 0 years

(2) Level 2- Needs Improvement – 0 years

(3) Level 3- Fully Successful –12 years

(4) Level 4- Meritorious –16 years

(5) Level 5- Distinguished – 20 years

The total years earned were then averaged to determine the additional service credit for RIF. For example, an employee who began Federal service on 1 June 1980 (and has an SCD of that date), each of whose three most recent ratings of record during the 4-year "look-back" were Level 4, will have an adjusted SCD of 1 June 1964 because the employee is given 16 years of additional service credit (16 years + 16 years + 16 years = 48 years which is divided by 3 = 16 years).

9. ACTUAL RATINGS OF RECORD. In the past, employees who had not received three actual ratings of record during the 4-year look-back period were given an "assumed fully successful" rating which provided 12 years credit for any missing ratings of record. Assumed ratings can no longer be used in lieu of actual ratings. Only actual ratings of record received during the 4-year look-back period can be used as follows:

   a. If an employee has received only two actual ratings of record during the look-back period, the value assigned to each rating is added together and divided by two (and rounded to the next higher whole number if the result is a fraction) to derive the amount of additional service credit.

   b. If an employee has received only one actual rating during the look-back, the value assigned to that rating determines the additional service credit.

10. COMMON RATING. Employees who have not received any actual ratings of record during the 4-year look-back period are given additional retention service credit based on the most common rating. Within the Coast Guard, the common rating is the summary rating assigned most frequently among the actual ratings of record within a RIF competitive area for the last rating cycle prior to the issuance of RIF notices. For example, if 4 employees out of 50 in a particular competitive area did not receive any ratings of record during the look-back period, the common rating would be determined as follows:

    a. Assume that in the competitive area, 21 employees were rated level 5 and 25 employees were rated level 3. Since the summary rating level assigned most frequently was level 3, the common rating for that particular competitive area is level 3. All four employees who did not receive a rating during the look-back period will be given a rating of level 3 and assigned the years of additional service credited to level 3.

    b. Assume that in the competitive area, 23 employees were rated level 5 and 23 employees were rated level 3. In the rare occurrence that summary ratings are equally distributed, the higher level shall be assigned as common for that competitive area.

11. MIXED PERFORMANCE RATING SYSTEMS.

a. When the ratings used for crediting RIF are based on different (that is, multiple) performance rating systems, the ratings systems are said to be "mixed." A mix of rating systems can result from several different circumstances. For example, a mix can occur if employees transfer from other Federal agencies where they received one or more ratings under a different performance rating system, or when an agency changes its performance rating system (e.g., from a traditional 5-level system to a 3-level system). This occurred in the Coast Guard when in the year 2000 it completed its first rating cycle under EARS. At that point, most Coast Guard employees had a history of being rated under mixed rating systems: the traditional 5-level system used prior to 2000, as well as the new 3-level system presented by EARS.

b. When mixed systems exist, agencies are required to establish a consistent method for assigning service credit across the varying, often incompatible, systems – in essence, to tailor a means of comparing "apples to apples" rather than "apples to oranges." Within the Coast Guard, for the purposes of RIF, the following table shall be used for crediting service whenever mixed rating systems are found:

How to Credit Performance for Mixed Ratings Systems

Rating System Type	No. of Levels	Common Descriptive Titles for Traditional 5 Level Rating System				
		Fails/ Unacceptable/ Unsuccessful	Minimally Successful	**Meets/** Fully Successful/ Proficient	Exceeds Fully Successful/ Meritorious	**Exceeds/** Outstanding/ Distinguished
A	2 (Pass/ Fail)	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)		
B	3 (EARS)	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)
C	3	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)	
D	3	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 2 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)		
E	4	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 4 (18 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)
F	4	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 2 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)		Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)
G	4	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 2 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)	
H	5 (Before EARS)	Treated as Level 1 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 2 (0 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 3 (16 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 4 (18 Yrs Credit)	Treated as Level 5 (20 Yrs Credit)

c. The table shows that, within the Federal Government, eight different types of rating systems (A through H) may be found. Type A is the 2-level system commonly known as "Pass/Fail." Type H is the traditional 5-level system in place at the Coast Guard prior to instituting EARS. Three-level

rating systems are represented by Type B (EARS), C, and D, while 4-level systems are shown in Types E, F, and G. The table provides a uniform, consistent treatment across the Coast Guard regardless of which rating system or systems may apply to employees. Ratings levels shown as 1 or 2 in the table receive no additional service credit for performance; level 3 ratings receive 16 years service; level 4 ratings receive 18 years service, and level 5 receives 20 years service credit.

d. If a RIF competitive area includes an employee who has received at least one rating of record during the 4-year look-back period under a different performance rating system, table 11(b) will apply to all employees in that competitive area.

e. Beginning in April 2003, Coast Guard RIF competitive areas may include employees, all of who will have received ratings of record under the same performance rating system (EARS) for their three most recent ratings of record during the 4-year look-back period. For those employees, service will be credited as follows:

(1) Level 1- Unacceptable – 0 years

(2) Level 3- Meets – 12 years

(3) Level 5- Exceeds – 20 years

f. Employees and managers should understand that, since there is no longer a common, Federal-wide plan for crediting service based on performance, employees transferring into or out of the Coast Guard may find their past performance records to be treated differently, depending on the policy of the employing agency. Thus, regardless of the value assigned to a specific performance rating of record in the Coast Guard, when an employee transfers to another agency, the employee may not know how many years of additional service will be given for a specific rating of record until the agency is getting ready to run a RIF or has an established policy on how service will be credited when a mix of performance rating systems exists.

12. EQUIVALENT RATINGS OF RECORD.

a. Equivalent ratings of record are performance evaluations by Federal agencies whose performance rating systems are not covered under 5 CFR Part 430 (for example, General Accounting Office, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation). Previous regulations on RIF restricted the application of additional service credit based on covered performance rating systems. When an employee moved from an agency that was not covered to one that was, and that employee was part of a competitive area undergoing a RIF, the employee could not be assigned additional retention service credit for some of his/her Federal performance. To help alleviate this problem, and to be able to assign credit based on all of an employee's performance evaluations, reference (b) gives agencies the basic guidelines by which they can review the performance evaluations employees bring with them from other Federal agencies and decide whether they qualify as equivalent ratings of record that can be

used for assigning additional retention service credit in a RIF. To qualify as an equivalent rating of record, the performance evaluation must have:

(1) Been issued as an officially designated performance evaluation under the employing agency's performance evaluation system;

(2) Been derived from the appraisal of performance against expectations that are established and communicated in advance and that are work related; and

(3) Identified whether the employee performed acceptably.

b. If any employees in a competitive area have performance evaluations that meet the criteria stated above, the Coast Guard must credit those ratings for RIF purposes in accordance with 11(b).

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