DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE
JOINT FORCES HEADQUARTERS – ALASKA
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE
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22 May 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD TECHNICIANS AND SUPERVISORS

FROM: AKNG-HRO

SUBJECT: Technician Awards and Recognition Program (HRO Policy 12-03) - Updated

1. **PURPOSE.** This policy requires ATAGs, Air and Army Chiefs of Staff (CoS) and/or Wing Commanders to establish objective award criteria to ensure a recognition program is fair and reinforces the agency's vision, mission, goals and principles. This policy letter brings the Alaska Air and Army Guard under the same procedures. Each Air Wing and the Army Guard will have an awards panel to determine awards as noted below. This policy supersedes AKNG-HRO Memorandum, subject Technician Awards and Recognition Program (HRO Policy Letter 06-06), dated 1 Dec 05 and 12-03, dated 1 May 12.

2. **REFERENCES.** TPR 451, Title 5 CFR Part 451 and Title 5 U.S.C. Sections 4503, 4505a.

3. **DISCUSSION.** It is the Alaska National Guard's policy to promptly and equitably recognize employees who perform in an outstanding manner or make significant contributions to the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, and honor those who have served the Government well. World class organizations effectively use a performance management and awards program to achieve pre-determined, yet evolving, and quantifiable organizational goals and objectives. A fully communicated awards program reinforces desired behavior, further enhances performance and productivity and fosters morale. Each employee should understand the criteria for an award. Supervisors need to utilize MyWorkplace/MyBiz to include an awards history review for each nomination. HRO will advise for an awards panel, upon request.

4. **TYPES OF AWARDS.** Regulations provide four types of awards that can be given to Federal employees for their performance **in technician status**: cash, honorary, informal recognition, and time off. The awards may be granted on the basis of a suggestion or invention, superior accomplishment, special act or service, performance, or length of service and retirement. Awards involving cash or time-off must be approved through command channels to HRO for processing. Justification must be related to the employee's official technician employment. An approved performance-based cash and/or time-off award cannot be processed within the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS), for the awarded technician, if a current appraisal has not been entered in the system. Supervisors must have accomplished their subordinate's required technician appraisals/AGR evaluations in order to be considered for an award; this ensures supervisors are in compliance with their assigned duties and responsibilities. Awards submitted on supervisors not in compliance will be disapproved.

a. **Cash Awards.** Cash awards include sustained superior performance (SSP) awards, quality step increases (QSI), on-the-spot awards and 'suggestion' awards. Performance awards are restricted to no more than 10 percent of the employee's annual rate of basic pay. Command will determine funding levels for each type of cash award. Awards in the amount of $10,000.00 or greater require OPM approval. Cash awards must be considered at an awards board and approved through command channels.

(1) **Superior Performance Awards** are typically linked to the annual performance appraisal. Employees receiving such awards must have clearly demonstrated superior performance in all rated elements (latest appraisal must have a pass if in a pass/fail rating system or a minimum rating of a 3 in a 5-tier rating system). Justification must be provided if the superior performance isn't clearly demonstrated in the appraisal.

(2) A **Quality Step Increase** (QSI) is a faster than normal within-grade increase used to reward General Schedule (GS) employees at all grade levels who display high quality performance which is expected to continue in the future. A QSI increases an employee's rate of basic pay, it represents an increased cost to the agency on an ongoing basis, unlike a lump-sum cash award. Managers should know QSIs increase retirement and Thrift Savings Plan expenses. To be eligible for a QSI, employees must be currently paid below step 10 of their grade level and not have received a QSI within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks.

(3) **Special Act or Service Cash Awards** are awarded for a special act or service in the public's interest in connection with or related to the employee's official technician employment.

b. **Time-off Awards.** This is an excused absence awarded to an employee without charge to leave. Time-off awards are intended to increase productivity and creativity by rewarding contributions to the quality, efficiency, or economy of government operations. The minimum time-off recognition is one hour and the maximum is 40 hours for a single contribution. The total amount of time-off for one individual will not exceed 80 hours during a leave year. By regulation, time-off awards shall not be converted to cash and must be used within one year from the effective date. Time-off awards must be approved through command channels to HRO for processing.

c. **Honorary and Informal Recognition Awards.** Honorary awards (such as engraved plaques or medals) are generally symbolic and usually do not use monetary recognition at all. They are a gesture of respect given to employees to recognize their performance and value to their organization. Informal recognition awards, on the other hand, are used to reward performance that otherwise might not merit an award such as cash, time-off or an honorary award. These awards can be used to ensure more frequent and timely informal recognition to employees and are typically low-cost and casual, such as certificates. HRO will manage the length-of-service recognition program and Certificates of Retirement signed by the Adjutant General. The length-of-service recognition program includes certificates and/or pins awarded beginning at the 10-year anniversary and further awarded in 5-year increments throughout an individual's technician career. Supervisors should contact the HRO to confirm if an employee is due or may be past due for the length-of-service award.

5. **PANEL MEMBERSHIP**. A panel will consist of three diverse members plus a recorder. The panel must be permanent supervisors or commanders and must be diverse as it applies to gender, race, and nationality. The Wing Commander or Chief of Staff approves panel membership, how the panel is conducted, what the members are allowed to consider, and the convening date. For consistency and TPR compliance, supervisors will provide an awards history review from MyWorkplace/MyBiz for each nomination. If necessary, HRO will provide award data upon request.

6. **PROCESSING.** An SF-52, Request for Personnel Action is required for processing a cash or time-off award. Include with the SF-52 the full written justification and approval of the awards panel (if applicable). All SF52's must be signed off by the CoS for the Army Guard and the Wing Commander for each Air Guard Wing. HRO will quality check the SF-52 for final approval and processing.

7. Questions may be addressed to Employee Benefits Section at (907) 428-6475 or DSN 384-4475.

FOR THE ADJUTANT GENERAL:

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