



# The Extra ½ % Firefighter & Law Enforcement Officer Special Retirement in the Department of the Interior

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### Upcoming FF/LEO Retirement Training Sessions

FLERT is continuing to host FF/LEO retirement training sessions. There are two sessions available. One is designed specifically for Human Resources Specialists and managers/supervisors of firefighters and law enforcement officers. The purpose of this training is to familiarize or re-familiarize Supervisors, and Managers, and HR Specialists with the special retirement rules under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The second training is designed for firefighter and law enforcement employees. This training is an orientation to the Federal Employees Retirement System, with a major emphasis on the special retirement as it pertains to firefighters and law enforcement officers. The training provides guidance to employees regarding special retirement coverage and the rules for eligibility. Employees will be shown how to calculate their annuities under the enhanced retirement system. Finally, guidance and basic information will be provided for other retirement planning topics such as Medicare, Health Benefits, Social Security, and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

At this time, one session on March 13, 2007, is scheduled for employees in conjunction with the FWS spring pre-season fire meeting. This session will be held in Sacramento, CA.

For information on, or to schedule or enroll in either training session, please email Toni Orth at [Toni\\_Orth@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Toni_Orth@ios.doi.gov). Information is also available online at <http://flert.nifc.gov/training.htm>.



### Position Description List Updates

As of December 19, 2006, we have updated the PD listings on our website, available at [http://flert.nifc.gov/Position\\_Descriptions.htm](http://flert.nifc.gov/Position_Descriptions.htm). This list is intended to be comprehensive of all the covered FF/LEO PDs on file at FLERT. Over the past few months we have

endeavored to ensure that our database contains a record of each covered firefighter or law enforcement officer position from every DOI bureau. As you peruse your bureau's PD listing, you may notice that it contains information on PDs that are no longer in use. FLERT maintains information on all PDs that are currently covered, or have ever been covered, for tracking purposes.

We welcome your input if you find any discrepancies between your records and our list. Please also let us know each time you make any changes to a covered position. Any changes to title, series, grade, position number, classification date, or major duties affect position coverage! For questions about position description coverage, call Toni Orth at (208) 334-1554.



### Special Point of the Quarter – Paying Deposits Under FERS

If you are a FERS employee and you had temporary service (also known as non-deduction service, which means that retirement deductions were not taken) prior to January 1, 1989, you may pay a deposit to receive retirement credit for that service. Paying a deposit means that you pay 1.3% of your salary at the time into the retirement fund, just as if you had been subject to retirement deductions. Regardless of whether your temporary service is approved for special retirement, paying the deposit will give you credit for that service, which means it will be able to count toward your total retirement benefit.

The FERS annuity consists of the first 20 years of covered FF/LEO service multiplied by the enhanced annuity rate of 1.7% and your high-three average salary **plus** the regular annuity rate of 1% multiplied by any additional years of service you have over 20 and your high-three average salary. So, you can see how paying the deposit for creditable temporary service can enlarge your annuity.

Now, the question is: Is the cost of paying the deposit worth the benefit(s) you will receive from it? Here are some things to consider: Paying the deposit for temporary service that is creditable for special retirement may allow you to reach your 20 years of covered service sooner. If you already have 20 years of FF/LEO service without your temporary service, or if your temporary service is not





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approved for FF/LEO coverage, paying the deposit can still increase the total annuity you will receive. It is important to note that if you do decide to pay the deposit, you will be charged interest on the amount that you owe, which will be calculated as what accrued from the date(s) that you performed the temporary service. The longer you wait to pay the deposit, the more you will owe. At some point, you will have to decide whether the amount that you will have to pay will justify the amount you will receive back in the form of service credit and annuity computations.

Finally, remember that you may only pay a deposit for temporary service performed *before January 1, 1989*. Any service performed *after December 31, 1988*, for which no retirement deductions were made, is not creditable, and can never be creditable for retirement purposes or annuity computations. If approved, this service *can* be used to count toward the three years of primary/rigorous FF/LEO coverage you need before transferring to a secondary position. It also counts toward your SCD for leave purposes.



## Using Standard Position Descriptions

Approving position descriptions for special retirement coverage could likely be a never-ending process. Likewise, regulations on special retirement give employees the *right* to request a coverage determination if they are placed in a non-covered position. But, by using standard position descriptions that have already been approved for coverage, Bureaus can minimize the occurrence of requests for coverage on a case-by-case basis. All bureaus have some standard law enforcement and fire positions that have been approved for coverage by the Department. Also, DOI has more than thirty approved standard fire positions. These position descriptions have been written as broadly as possible to allow them to be widely used, thus reducing the need to submit numerous position descriptions for coverage.

Remember, **no changes may be made to the standard PD title, grade, series, or major duties.** Bureaus may assign their own position number to a standard PD so long as (1) the standard PD number is referenced in the Agency Use block of the OF-8, (2) the bureau submits the PD with the new number to FLERT for tracking purposes, and (3) no other changes are made. If a bureau standard PD is amended to the next lower grade, the amendment needs to be submitted to FLERT for DOI approval. Amendments to DOI standard PDs must be approved by Linda Erwin,

Chief, Position Classification and Pay, Main Interior Building, 1849 C Street NW, Washington D.C. 20240. If an amendment is created to provide for a duty station-specific requirement of the position, such as a collateral duty or required occupancy, and this amendment does not significantly affect the percentage of time spent in the major fire or law enforcement duties, no approval is required. However, please make sure to send FLERT a copy of any such amendment so that we can stamp it as being approved under the standard PD and enter it into our database for tracking purposes.

Standard PDs should be used when possible. If no standard PD exists to satisfy the position being created, bureaus may certainly continue to submit new position descriptions for approval. When writing new PDs, please **do not** include any language in the PD that states “this position is an approved special retirement position” or “this position is a primary or secondary position within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 8336(c) or § 8412(d).” All positions are not covered when they are first created. A position is not approved for special retirement coverage until it has been signed as being covered by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Performance, Accountability and Human Resources. Therefore, such statements in a PD are, at first, erroneous, and later, unnecessary, as all approved position descriptions are distributed with the Certification of Position Approval signed by DOI as evidence of coverage. The OF-8 is also stamped and signed by a FLERT representative, indicating the type of coverage approved.



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## Happy New Year!

