US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
INTERIM HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

HRM LETTER 451 – 1

DATE: November 18, 2002

SUBJECT: Interim Policy on Awards and Recognition

This document establishes an interim awards and recognition program for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

1. TSA Awards and Recognition Policy Statement

   a. Purpose and Scope.

      This interim policy links the TSA awards and recognition program to organizational performance outcomes and encourages employees to work toward the Strategic Goals established by the Under Secretary.

   b. Coverage.

      This interim policy applies to all TSA employees, including members of the Transportation Security Executive Service. The policy establishes monetary and non-monetary awards unrelated to the annual performance appraisal. (A separate policy will be issued regarding performance management awards for the FY 2003 performance year.)

   c. General

      (1) The TSA awards and recognition program is a meaningful tool for sustaining and improving performance, increasing morale, and improving recruitment and retention;

      (2) The intent of this guidance is to support the linking of awards and recognition to organizational goals and to make them of real value to employees;

      (3) The judicious use of incentive awards is an integral part of good supervision and management;

      (4) Awards are in recognition of employee contributions that are both significant and beyond the scope of achievement normally expected as part of the employee’s job;

      (5) Recognition must be proportionate to the value of the contribution to TSA’s mission; and

      (6) Awards may not be used as a substitute for overtime pay, promotion, or any other purpose not compatible with the criteria for the awards described in this policy.
2 Monetary Awards

a. Special Achievement Awards

Recommendations based on a special act or service should be submitted to the appropriate approving official within three (3) months of the achievement. Such individual or group achievements may include:

(1) Scientific or technological advances;

(2) Achievements that contributed significantly to more efficient or economical operations involving tangible savings;

(3) Exemplary or courageous actions in an emergency situation related to official employment;

(4) Having articles published, presenting technical papers to professional organizations, or performing other similar personal projects that have significantly increased public understanding and interest in TSA operations or have contributed significantly to a mission of the TSA;

(5) Improving service to the public in a specific or measurable way;

(6) Notable improvement in the public relations of TSA; or

(7) Other noteworthy achievements.

b. On-the-Spot Awards

(1) An On-the-Spot Award is a monetary award of $250 or less.

(2) On-the-Spot awards are designed to reward an employee for an exemplary act or service. If a supervisor or manager grants an award of $250 or less, the employee receiving the award may receive as many On-the-Spot Awards during a 52 week period as it takes to reach a cumulative total of $500 during the year. The 52-week period starts on the effective date of the first award. A minimum justification is required to grant an on-the-spot award. When granting an On-the-Spot Award, supervisors and manager should recognize employees as quickly as possible after the act or service warranting an award.

(3) Contributions that may be recognized with an On-the-Spot Award are:

(a) Making a high quality contribution involving a difficult or important project or assignment;

(b) Displaying special initiative and skills in completing an assignment or project before the deadline;

(c) Using initiative and creativity to improve a product, activity, program, or service; or

(d) Ensuring a unit's mission is accomplished during a difficult period by successfully completing additional work or a project assignment while maintaining the employee's own workload.

3. Payment of Awards

a. Payment Responsibility

The Associate Under Secretary for Finance and Administration will allocate funds for payment of monetary awards. An Associate Under Secretary or Office Director may not authorize or approve an award unless the dollar amount of the award is within his or her allocation.

b. Award Amounts

Nominating officials should use Attachment 1 for determining appropriate award amounts.
c. Approvals

(1) Awards up to and including $5,000.

Associate Under Secretaries and Office Directors are delegated authority to grant monetary awards for amounts up to $5,000 per individual. The appropriate Associate Under Secretary may delegate authority to grant awards up to and including $2,000 to a lower level of management within his/her organization.

(2) Awards of $5,001 to $10,000.

The Under Secretary may grant monetary awards $5,001 to $10,000. This authority may be delegated no lower than to a Deputy Under Secretary.

(3) Awards over $10,000.

Awards over $10,000 must be forwarded from, and endorsed by, the Under Secretary to the Secretary through the Departmental Director of Human Resource Management. The Departmental Director will review and forward the recommendation to the Secretary for approval.

5. Non-Monetary Recognition

a. Time Off Awards.

(1) A Time Off Award is an excused absence granted without charge to leave or loss of pay. This award may be granted for superior accomplishment and special acts or services in the public interest related to official employment.

(2) Contributions that may be recognized with a Time Off Award are the same as those for monetary awards in paragraph 2a. above.

(3) Time Off Awards may be used in combination with cash and/or honorary awards.

(4) Individual employees may receive Time Off Awards for contributions that have not been recognized or considered for performance related awards under TSA's Performance Management System.

(5) A Time Off Award must be recommended and justified in memorandum form. The written determination will:

(a) State the name and position of the employee;

(b) Describe how the employee met the required criteria described in paragraph 2a above;

(c) Justify and state the number of hours of time off granted by describing the benefits realized by the TSA from the employee's contribution; and

(d) Indicate whether the employee previously received a Time Off Award during the same leave year and, if so, how many hours were granted.

(6) A copy of the written justification should be retained by the approving official and the original document and a completed Standard Form 52 (SF-52) will be forwarded to the servicing Human Resources Management office. The amount of time granted shall be documented on a Standard Form 50 (SF-50) to be retained in the employee's Official Personnel Folder.
(7) Immediate supervisors may approve Time Off Awards for a period up to one (1) workday. A level of management higher than the recommending official must approve awards for more than one workday.

(8) The total amount of time off as incentive awards that an employee may be granted during any one (1) leave year is eighty (80) hours. In the case of part-time employees or employees with uncommon tours of duty, the average number of hours of work in the biweekly scheduled tour of duty is the maximum amount that may be granted as a Time Off Award during the leave year. For example, an employee with a part-time tour of thirty-two (32) hours a week may receive sixty-four (64) hours in a leave year.

(9) A minimum of four (4) hours to a maximum of forty (40) hours per recognition shall be granted as a Time Off Award. A part-time employee shall be granted a maximum of no greater than one-half the total hours allowed during a given leave year. For example, an employee with a part-time tour of thirty-two (32) hours per week may receive a total of sixty-four (64) hours in a leave year but may receive only up to thirty-two (32) hours per individual recognition.

(10) Time off shall be granted, and must be used in whole hour increments.

(11) A Time Off Award does not convert to cash under any circumstances.

(12) When physical incapacitation for duty occurs during the Time Off Award period, sick leave may be granted for the period of incapacitation.

(13) The award is documented on the Time and Attendance Report under time not worked by Code 22.

(14) Time off must be used within one (1) year after the award is granted. Time Off Award hours do not transfer outside the Department of Transportation.

(15) Time Off Award balance hours are transferable between modal administrations within the Department of Transportation, but still must be used within one year of the date the award is granted.

(16) Time Off Awards and annual leave are distinct in the way they are earned and administered. Time off earned as an award may be carried over from one leave year to another provided it is taken within one (1) year after the award is granted. Time off as an award has no effect on the annual leave carryover limitation.

b. TSA Preparation Award (TPA)

(1) The purpose of the TPA is to provide timely, informal recognition by the Under Secretary to TSA employees who demonstrate outstanding achievement as a result of thorough preparation. The award consists of a personal letter from the Under Secretary and a TPA paperweight.

(2) Action.

(a) The Under Secretary will screen all TPA nominations and select awardees.

(b) Associate Under Secretaries and Office Directors shall actively promote the TPA by:

   (1) Publicizing the TPA within their organizations;

   (2) Identifying worthy recipients; and

   (3) Submitting nominations to facilitate prompt recognition (See attachment 2).
c. Career Service Recognition.

(1) The TSA shall recognize employees for their total creditable service with the Federal Government. The service does not have to be continuous. Military service creditable toward an employee’s service computation date and Federal service with other agencies will be included.

(2) Career recognition will be granted at the completion of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50 years of service.

(3) All TSA employees retiring under any provision of the Civil Service Retirement or Federal Employees Retirement Acts are eligible to receive a retirement certificate. The Under Secretary of Transportation for Security usually signs retirement certificates. However, if the Secretary’s signature is desired on a retirement certificate, it must be submitted to the Transportation Administrative Service Center at least two weeks prior to anticipated presentation. The certificate must be pre-inscribed with the retiree’s name and years of service, and must clearly show where the Secretary is to sign.

d. Distinguished Career Service Award.

(1) This award may be granted by the Secretary of Transportation or the Under Secretary of Transportation for Security to retiring employees with more than 20 years of Federal service who are deemed to have made significant contributions to the Federal service during their careers. Military service creditable toward an employee’s service computation date is creditable time for this award.

(2) Criteria for Distinguished Career Service Award.

(a) Clear identification of specific accomplishments throughout the employee’s career, not just while in TSA; and

(b) Service previously recognized by two or more of the following:

i. Outstanding Performance Rating or the equivalent.

ii. Quality Step Increases (if ever under a Title 5 pay system), or the equivalent.

iii. Special Achievement Awards.

iv. The Secretary of Transportation’s Award for Outstanding Achievement or Meritorious Achievement or the equivalent.

v. The Award for Superior Achievement (Bronze Medal) or the equivalent.

(c) Associate Under Secretaries/Office Directors, or their designees, must provide the servicing Human Resources Management Office written justification for the award.

(d) When desired, the Distinguished Career Service Award may be granted by the Secretary. Nominations shall be submitted in four copies and forwarded to the Secretary through the appropriate Associate Under Secretary or Office Director and Departmental Office of Human Resources Management (M-10), at least four weeks prior to the anticipated presentation date in the following format:

i. Name of nominee;

ii. Title, series, and pay band of current position;

iii. Brief biographical sketch;

iv. Listing of previous honors and awards;

v. A statement describing the employee’s career achievements; and
vi. The endorsement of the Under Secretary.

5. Thanks a Million Award

a. Award.

This award consists of a letter from, and photo opportunity with, the Secretary, and recognition from the Executive Management Team.

b. Eligible employees.

Federal, State or local government employees can be nominated for the Thanks a Million Award.

c. Nominations.

A memorandum must be processed through the appropriate Associate Under Secretary or Office Director, and signed by either the Under Secretary or Deputy Under Secretary. The memorandum must identify in the subject line, "Request for a "Thanks a Million" Award", and be sent to the Thanks a Million Coordinator in the Office of the Secretary, Human Resources Management Office (M-10). The request must include the following:

1. Name of the Department, Secretarial or Administration program, project or initiative;

2. Short statement of the background and accomplishment;

3. Name and contact information of the nominating official;

4. Proposed verbatim language for the Secretary's letter to the employee, not to exceed two short paragraphs, as an attachment; and

5. In alphabetical order, the full name(s) of the employee(s) who will receive the award (the full name is the name the employee wants on the Secretary's letter).

The memorandum, name(s) and attachment(s) need to be provided in both paper and Word electronic file format (through e-mail).

d. Ceremony.

Thanks a Million ceremonies will be held in headquarters once every two months at the Executive Management Team meeting, and may be held in the field whenever the Secretary is scheduled to be at a specific field activity.

- Robert W. Gardner
  Associate Under Secretary for Finance and Administration

Attachments

Filing Instructions: File with HRM 575 Letters, Bulletins, and Guidance
Distribution: TSA affiliated HR Offices, Associate Under Secretaries, Office Directors
POC: TSAHR/Jan Kitchener (202) 385-1234
Nomination for
TSA Preparation Award (TPA)

From: (Nominating Associate Under Secretary or Office Director)
To: The Under Secretary

Name of Nominee:

Organization/Unit/Location:

Desired Date of Award Presentation:

POC and Phone Number: (Person designated by nominating official)

Reason for Nomination: (No more than two or three sentences specifying specific preparation, the resulting action, and the significance of the action.)

Under Secretary Action:

☑ Approved ☐ Disapproved

Comments:
**TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

**CASH AND TIME-OFF AWARD RECOMMENDATION**

(Not to be used for Honorary Awards or the TSA Preparation Award (TPA))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Employee:</th>
<th>Social Security Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Series and Pay Band:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Division:</td>
<td>Amount/Hours:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of Award Recommendation:**

- **On-the-Spot Award** (Maximum $250.00)
- **Special Act Award** (Recommended dollar amount must be supported by written justification)
- **Time-Off Award** (Limited to 40 hours per award, with a maximum of 80 hours in a leave year)

**3. Title/Grade/Step:**

**5. Type of Award Recommended:**

- On-the-Spot Award $\_
  (Maximum award amount $250.00)
- Special Act Award $\_
  (Recommended dollar amount must be supported by justification)
- Time-Off Award Hrs \_
  (Limited to 40 hours per award, with a maximum of 80 hours in a leave year)

**6. Award Justification:** (Only a short narrative is required for an On-the-Spot Award. For all other awards, attach additional sheet if more space is needed.)

**7. Approvals:**

- **Recommending Official’s Signature**
  (Typed Name, Title of Recommending and Date, Official, and Date)

- **Endorsing Official’s Signature**
  (If necessary)
  (Typed Name, Title of Endorsing Official, if necessary)

- **Approving Official’s Signature**
  (Typed Name, Title of Approving Official, and Date)

**For Cash Awards Only**

- **Fund Administrator’s Signature**
  (Typed Name of Fund Administrator and Date)

  **Accounting Classification**

**8. For On-The-Spot Awards Only**

- **Certifying Officer’s Signature**
  (Typed name of Certifying Officer, Financial Services Office and Date)

  **Date Processed and Award Amount**

**9. Effective Date of Award (Date that will appear on SF-50):**
General Information on Cash Awards

1. **On-the-Spot Awards** - To provide timely recognition, of an accomplishment or successful completion of a special project or task of a one-time, short-term nature. In addition, this award can be used to recognize an employee for performing above and beyond the call of duty or for an act demonstrating special significance for providing high-quality service. The accomplishment(s) to be rewarded in this category are more limited in scope or duration than accomplishment(s) that would be recognized under the Special Act award.

   The maximum dollar amount that can be awarded is $250.00. No more than two $250.00 on-the-spot awards can be granted per year. If an award is less than $250.00, the employee may receive as many on-the-spot awards during the year as it takes to reach a cumulative total of $500.00 during the year.

   This award is paid by the Office of Financial Services and is either mailed to the employee’s home address or directly deposited into their bank account; whichever has been established by the employee with the Office of Financial Services. The award is not paid by the payroll office; however, appropriate taxes will be withheld in a subsequent paycheck.

   Once this award is processed by the Office of Financial Services the money is paid to the employee within 2 business days by direct deposit or within 5 to 7 days by check. The nominating supervisor will be advised by e-mail when the money should be expected by the employee. This should enable the supervisor to inform the employee of the award and make appropriate presentation.

2. **Special Act Award** - To recognize employees for superior accomplishment(s) that contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork, or performs a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment.

3. **Time-Off Award** - This award is granted to an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave. This award can be used to recognize recent accomplishments and as an incentive to motivate future performance. It may be granted in recognition of superior accomplishment or other personal effort that contributes to the quality, efficiency, or economy of Government operations.

   This award can never be converted to cash or transferred if an employee separates to another Federal agency. The time off must be used within one calendar year.

   The maximum hours granted in a leave year is limited to 80 hours and no more than 40 hours can be granted per award.