United States
Office of
Personnel Management
The Federal Government's Human Resources Agency

Benefits Administration Letter

Number 14-105   Date: February 04, 2014

Subject: Updates to the Data Exchange Gateway and Important Reminders

Purpose: The purpose of this Benefits Administration Letter (BAL) is to provide updates to the Data Exchange Gateway (DEG), give some important reminders on data submission, and ~~to~~ introduce the revised DEG Data Set Starter Kit.

Background: The DEG is an electronic gateway for agencies and payroll offices to submit data to OPM's Retirement Operations (RO). In 1994, RO launched a new program to enhance the service we deliver to retiring federal employees called the Automated Front End Program (AFEP). Under the AFEP, agencies submit data via the DEG that is used by RO to automatically load OPM's financial system with financial data and our annuity roll systems with retirement-related data. This system automatically establishes the unique record and initiates its tracking. For retirees, the AFEP establishes the retirement claim, generates the annuitant identification card, transfers the health benefits enrollment to ~~us~~ OPM and authorizes interim annuity payments for entitled claimants.

What's New: First, we would like to point out a few new items in the DEG Data Set Starter Kit (Attachment 1). These are:

- Phased Retirement – New retirement codes have been developed to implement Phased Retirement. Two new codes have been added to the DEG Annuity Case Type, position 210:
    - 0 – Phased Initial for initial Phased Retirement claims
    - 9 – Phased Final for final Phased Retirement claims
- FERS-RAE – No changes to the DEG were required for FERS-RAE. The DEG reflect only CSRS or FERS
- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – A new question and answer was added to the Q&As to help agencies maximize the amount of interim pay that is authorized for their employees based on the DEG data set:
    - ***How do I improve the likelihood of the maximum accurate interim pay for my former employee?*** Interim pay may be systematically processed as part of the AFEP. To increase the likelihood of the maximum accurate interim pay for former employees there is one major action you can take: verify the data you will submit to OPM.

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- Do all required fields have data entered?
- Is all data entered accurately?
- Verifying the data will assist in obtaining an accurate calculation result for cases that can be calculated as part of the AFEP. It also prevents the AFEP from calculating interim pay for cases that need an OPM employee review to verify certain situations. These cases are reviewed by an OPM employee and manually placed into interim pay. An example of this is a case with a special calculation – Air Traffic Controller or Fire Fighter. This case type needs to be excluded from cases that have interim pay calculated by AFEP. They need a different rate paid, just like their final annuity is paid at a different rate.

Discussion: The DEG and AFEP have recently been updated to add information and data needed to implement Phased Retirement, among other things. We have updated the DEG Data Set Starter Kit to reflect these changes. The revised DEG Data Set Starter Kit is an attachment to this BAL. The following are important reminders about providing accurate data to the DEG:

Employee versus Retirement data: The data submitted should represent data that is updated for the applicant's **retirement**. We use this information to make annuity payments, withhold taxes, transfer in health benefits enrollment and send correspondence to the recent retiree. In at least 50% of the cases, this happens before we even look at the retirement application package. If outdated employment data is submitted rather than **retirement** data, the recent retiree may need to contact OPM after receiving a claim number to update information such as tax withholding and payment and correspondence address. Here are some examples:

Position Number	Data Element Name	Information
68-153	Employee Address: Street Address Lines 1, 2 and 3; City; State; Zip Code; and, Zip Code Suffix	For retirements, submit the address the employee requests on the retirement application
220-222	Health Benefits Code	This item needs to reflect the coverage the **employee** has in effect on the retirement date. If eligible to continue FEHB into retirement, submit the code in effect on the retirement date. If there is an Open Season change or other change at retirement that will be effective after the retirement date, place the flag sheet (Attachment 2) with the election information in the hard copy documents being sent to OPM
232-235	Tax Withholding; Tax Marital Status Code; and,	Submit the withholding status the employee request for retirement

	Tax Exemptions Claimed	
236-262	EFT: Address Routing Number; Address Check Digit; Account Type; and, Account Number	Submit EFT information for the account the employee selects for retirement

Data Quality: Several data elements have a significant impact on interim pay processing and the amount of interim pay authorized. Please be sure to use the appropriate indicators if any of the situations apply. A few examples are:

Position Number	Data Element Name	Information
210	Annuity Case Type	4 = Law Enforcement Officer & Firefighter; 8 = Air Traffic Control
229	Additional Optional Life Insurance	If a mixed election is made (some multiples at Full Reduction and some at No Reduction), code the total number of multiples elected as No Reduction. For example, if the election is 2 multiples at Full Reduction and 2 multiples at No Reduction, enter 4 multiples at No Reduction
230	Family Life Insurance	If a mixed election is made (some multiples at Full Reduction and some at No Reduction), code the total number of multiples elected as No Reduction. For example, if the election is 2 multiples at Full Reduction and 2 multiples at No Reduction, enter 4 multiples at No Reduction
231	Survivor Election	If any amount is elected, use **Y**
267	Part-Time	CSRS: Part time service after 4/7/86: Y or N; FERS: ANY Part time service: Y or N
268	Current Receipt of OWCP	Received any OWCP in past 2 years? Y or N
269	CSRS Offset	Are they retiring under CSRS Offset? Y or N
270	Court Order Awarding Survivor Benefits with Application	Is there a Court Ordered Survivor benefit? Y or N

There are some additional items that also impact data quality. Please review the following:

Position Number	Data Element Name	Information
13-16	Register Number	Do not repeat register # in the same

		year or use it for both CSRS and FERS at any time in the year
130-149	Employee Address: City; State; and, Zip Code	**Please note:** the City, State, and Zip Code are <u>required for all submissions, *including Type Claim 03 (position 11)*</u>
156-161	Payroll Office	Should match the number on the hard copy register **and** the hard copy IRR
210	Annuity Case Type	5 = OPM Approved Disability (use for Type Claim 3)

Final Note: All hard copy registers and records must be sent to OPM the same day the electronic DEG data set is transmitted to OPM. If they are not, the processing of retirement claims (including the authorization of the initial interim payment) may be delayed.

If you have any questions concerning this BAL, you may contact Sherri Krupa, Management and Program Analyst at 724-794-2005, Extension 3906 or sherri.krupa@opm.gov.

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