

RIF Notices

What has to be in a RIF notice, how to count the 60 days, and everything that goes out with a separation

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Workforce Policy & Innovation

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As corrected by 91 FR 54794 (Aug. 25, 2026) — non-substantive; effective date unchanged

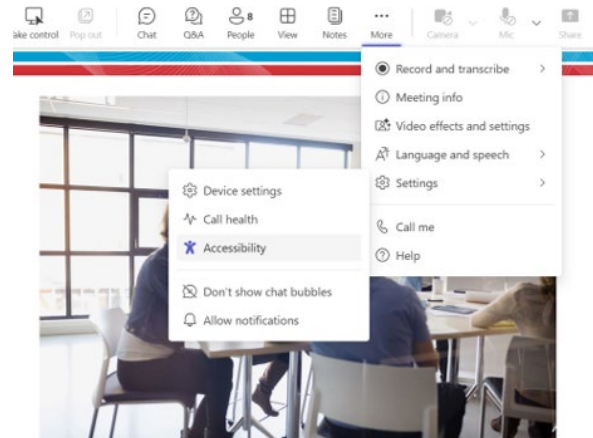
Housekeeping items

- A copy of this presentation is posted on OPM's Reductions in Force (RIF) page: opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/reductions-in-force-rif
- Ask questions in the Q&A, but please wait until a topic is covered so you are not posting a question that has already been answered.
- Time is built in at appropriate points to take questions.

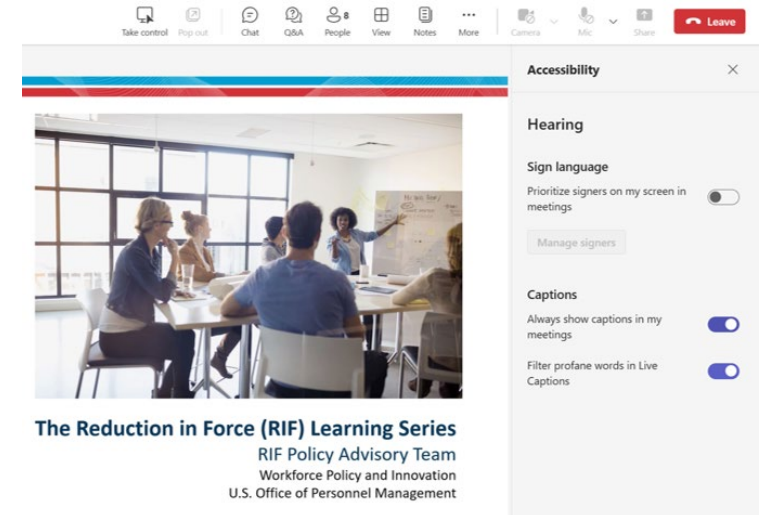
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The Reduction in Force (RIF) Learning Series
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M3

Module 3 recap

Release and assignment rights - what Module 4 puts in writing

What Module 3 covered

Step 7 of the nine-step process. Module 4 is step 8.

1 Order of release

Release noncompeting employees first, then work up from the bottom of the register.

2 Mandatory exceptions

Restoration rights after uniformed service, and annual leave to reach retirement or health benefits eligibility.

3 Temporary exceptions

One continuing exception up to 90 days, and six temporary ones. They cannot be stacked or sequenced.

4 Assignment rights

One offer to a qualifying position held by an employee with lower standing in the same competitive area.

5 Grade limits

No more than three grades or intervals below the released position; five for a 30 percent disabled preference eligible.

6 Skills assessment

A job-analysis-based assessment, unless the employee held the same or a similar position at the same level within five years.

What to carry into Module 4

Four things from Module 3 that end up in the notice.

1 Every determination becomes notice content

The ranking data, the assignment offer or the reason there was none, and the reasons for any exception all have to appear in the notice.

2 Exceptions carry their own notices

A continuing exception, or a temporary one running more than 30 days, requires separate written notice to each higher-standing employee reached for release.

3 One offer, and a better offer if one appears

The employee gets a single offer, but a higher-rated position opening before or on the effective date triggers a new offer and an amended notice.

4 The assessment sits on the critical path

Assessment design has to be finished before offers are made, and therefore before notices go out.

WHERE MODULE 4 PICKS UP

Module 3 decided who is released and what they are offered. Module 4 is step 8: putting that into a notice - what it must contain, how to count the 60 days, and what goes out with a separation.

What you will be able to do

Step 8 of the nine-step process.

1 Draft a complete notice

Include all eight required elements, including the ranking data that is new under this rule.

2 Count the notice period

Apply the 60-day minimum and the counting rules correctly, first time.

3 Know when to reissue

Tell the difference between a new notice and an amended notice.

4 Handle modified notices

Notify employees who do not compete, and employees in an abolished competitive area.

5 Assemble the separation package

Severance, WIOA, RPL, CTAP, ICTAP, unemployment insurance, and the outside notifications.

! The rule of thumb

If it is not in the notice, the employee did not receive it.

Administrative leave during notice: Agencies may place employees released through a RIF on administrative leave during the 60-day notice period when it serves agency interests, such as preventing workplace disruption.

WHAT CHANGED

The notice now shows your math

The biggest practical change in this module.

60

Minimum days of written notice

3

Ratings of record the notice must list

50

Separations from one area that trigger outside notices

1

What is new in the notice

It must now state the employee's competitive area, competitive level, veterans preference subgroup, tenure group and subgroup, service date, and their three most recent ratings of record from the last four years.

2

Plus how to see the records

A link to 5 CFR part 351 and information on how to access the agency records used in the RIF. On request you must also give the employee a copy of the regulations.

3

Why this matters to you

An employee can now recompute their own score from the notice. Reconcile every notice against the register before anything goes out.

What is and is not a RIF notice

Only one document starts the clock.

A specific RIF notice

- Written, from an agency official, to an individual employee
- States that the employee will be reached for a RIF action
- Required only for a RIF reason and a RIF action
- Starts the notice period the day after the employee receives it
- Goes to the union at the same time it goes to the employee

These are not RIF notices

- A notice of position abolishment issued for discontinued service retirement purposes
- A Certification of Expected Separation
- An advance informational notice that a RIF may be coming
- None of them counts toward the 60 days, and none satisfies the employee's right to a formal notice

Questions

What every specific notice must contain

- 1 The action**
Separation, demotion, or furlough for more than 30 days.
- 2 The reasons for it**
Why the action is being taken.
- 3 The effective date**
You may not take the action before this date.
- 4 The ranking data**
Competitive area, competitive level, veterans preference subgroup, tenure group and subgroup, service date, and the three most recent ratings of record from the last four years.
- 5 Access to the rules and records**
A link to 5 CFR part 351 and how to access the agency records used in this RIF.
- 6 Assignment rights**
What the employee is entitled to, and the offer being made.
- 7 Any exceptions used**
The reasons for retaining a lower-standing employee under a mandatory, continuing or temporary exception.
- 8 Appeal or grievance rights**
Appeal to OPM under 5 CFR part 351 subpart I, the filing deadline in § 351.902(b), and the electronic filing system on OPM's website - plus any limits from a bargaining agreement. Module 5.

TIMING

Counting the 60 days

Use a calendar, not arithmetic.

1 Sixty days, every action

Separation, demotion and furlough alike. Your agency may require more; the rules set no maximum.

2 Start the day after receipt

Do not count the day the employee receives the notice, and do not count the effective date.

3 Not a weekend or holiday

The last day of the minimum period cannot be a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday.

4 Exceptions do not shorten

An employee retained beyond the RIF effective date under any exception still gets at least 60 days of written notice.

5 But the exception caps it

For an employee under a continuing or temporary exception, the action happens when the exception expires - the notice period cannot run past the retention period.

6 Duty status

Active duty when possible. In an emergency with no work or funds: annual leave, with or without consent; LWOP, only with consent; nonpay status, without consent.

Asking OPM for a shorter period

Rare, narrow, and never below 30 full days.

1 The threshold is unforeseeable circumstances

Some common examples include earthquake or other unexpected natural disaster; an unexpected lapse in appropriations; or requirements of an executive order or other presidential directive.

2 The floor is 30 full days

No approval can take the notice period below 30 full days before the effective date.

3 Who signs the request

The head of the agency or a specific designee in the headquarters.

4 What to include

The organization and geographic location; the RIF effective date; how many employees will get notices; how many days shorter you are asking for; why; and a named contact with title, email, and phone number.

5 Where to send it

WPIntake@opm.gov - the same address for the notification when 50 or more employees are separated from a competitive area.

New notice, amended notice, or neither

Getting this wrong either wastes 60 days or invalidates the action.

You need a NEW notice when

- You are taking a more severe action than the notice stated - for example, separation instead of a one-grade demotion
- A new period of at least 60 days applies, or 30 days if OPM approved a shorter period
- You want to act earlier than the date in the notice - cancel it and issue a new 60-day notice
- You do NOT need a new notice for the same, or a less severe, action

You need an AMENDED notice when

- The effective date moves later. This alone does not require you to recalculate retention standing
- A better offer of assignment - a higher representative rate - becomes available before or on the effective date, whether or not the employee already accepted or declined
- Either way, if you find an error in retention standing you must still correct it

EXPIRATION

The notice expires once you take the action it specified, or a less severe action than it specified.

Two shorter notices you may need

Reduced content - not a reduced process.

1 Employees not competing

An excluded employee separated, demoted, reassigned or furloughed over 30 days for a RIF reason gets a notice with the action, reasons, effective date, access to the rules and records, reemployment information, and appeal rights to OPM under subpart I, plus a statement that they were not ranked. No ranking data.

2 Abolished competitive area

The same shorter set, plus identification of the area being abolished and a statement that the employee was not ranked because every position in the area is being abolished. Also address severance or retirement benefits and how to apply for unemployment insurance.

3 What never shrinks

The 60-day minimum, notice to the union at the same time, the separation package, and appeal rights.

NO NOTICE NEEDED

A temporary or time-limited appointment that simply expires on its own terms does not require a part 351 notice at all.

Notices when a competitive area is abolished

Reduced content, not a reduced process.

What the notice must contain

- The competitive area being abolished, the action, and the effective date
- A statement that the employee was not ranked, because all positions in the area are abolished
- Access to 5 CFR part 351 and to the agency records used in the RIF
- Appeal rights to OPM under subpart I, the § 351.902(b) deadline, and the e-filing system
- Reemployment information, severance or retirement benefits, and unemployment insurance

What does not shrink

- The 60-day minimum notice period, and notice to the union on the same day
- The three outside notifications if 50 or more employees are separated from the area
- The separation package - severance, WIOA, RPL, CTAP, ICTAP, unemployment insurance
- Every position in the area must actually be eliminated within 180 days, including those held by employees who do not compete
- A list of all employees in the area, so everyone receives the notice they are owed

RESTORATION RIGHTS STILL BIND

You cannot separate an employee with restoration rights during the protection period. Reassign them, or request OPM placement assistance at WPIntake@opm.gov (5 CFR 353.110(a)(1)).

Notices for employees who do not compete

Excluded from the register, but not from the notice requirement.

What the modified notice contains

- The action, the reasons for it, and the effective date
- A statement that the employee was not ranked on a retention register
- Access to 5 CFR part 351 and to the agency records used in the RIF
- Appeal rights to OPM under subpart I
- No ranking data and no assignment information - an excluded employee has no RIF assignment rights

When no RIF notice is required

- A temporary or time-limited appointment that simply expires on its own terms
- A termination for failing to complete a probationary or trial period - that runs under 5 CFR part 11, not part 351
- Any action not taken for a RIF reason.
- If you end the appointment early for a RIF reason, use the modified notice - do not call it a routine expiration

WHO IS EXCLUDED

Employees serving an initial probationary period (5 CFR 11.2) or a trial period (5 CFR 11.3), temporary or time-limited appointments of one year or less, and Schedule C and Schedule G appointments.

Questions

Notices to people other than the employee

Three parallel obligations. All of them are same-day.

1 The union

At the same time you notify an employee, notify the exclusive representative of each affected employee. This does not relieve you of any bargaining obligation or contract requirement.

2 Higher-standing employees reached for release

If you use a continuing exception, or a temporary exception for more than 30 days, notify in writing each higher-standing employee in that level who is reached for release - the reasons, and for temporary exceptions the projected end date.

3 Fifty or more separations from one competitive area

At the same time you issue the separation notices, notify the State WIOA program, the chief elected official of each affected local government, and OPM at WPIntake@opm.gov - with the number of separations, the effective date, and anything else OPM requires.

The separation package

In the notice, with it, or as an attachment.

1 Severance pay

Whether the employee is eligible, with an estimate.

2 WIOA benefits

What is available through the State dislocated worker program.

3 Resume release

How to authorize release of their resume to potential employers.

4 Reemployment priority list

How to register. Registration is timely within 30 days after separation, and you must register the employee within 10 days of receiving it.

5 CTAP and ICTAP

Your agency plan and the interagency program. A certification of expected separation supports CTAP and RPL, but not ICTAP.

6 Unemployment insurance

How to apply through the State. Coordinate retirement counseling with your agency's benefits officer.

Certification of Expected Separation

Helpful, but it is not a notice and cannot substitute for one.

1 What it is for

It lets an employee start using State dislocated worker services under WIOA early. You may issue it up to six months before the expected RIF date.

2 Four conditions must all be met

The employee is likely to be separated by RIF; similar jobs in the local commuting area are limited or nonexistent; placement opportunities in your agency and other Federal agencies in that area are limited or nonexistent; and, if eligible for optional retirement, the employee has not applied or stated in writing an intent to retire.

3 What it must say

Addressed to the individual, signed by an appropriate official, with the expected RIF date, confirmation each condition is met, and a description of WIOA programs and your agency's RPL, CTAP and ICTAP.

4 Two limits

You may not issue it because an employee might be separated for declining a geographic relocation. And it gives priority within an agency through CTAP and the RPL, but not interagency priority through ICTAP.

Review every notice against this list

1 Does it match the register?

Subgroup, tenure group and subgroup, service date and the three ratings must match exactly. A mismatch is an error in writing.

2 Did you count on a calendar?

Day after receipt, not counting the effective date, and not ending on a weekend or holiday.

3 Can the employee get the records?

A working link to the regulations and concrete instructions for reviewing the records - not a vague offer to answer questions.

4 Is the assignment statement there?

Everyone entitled to an offer must be told what they are entitled to, including whether the agency is also making an alternative offer.

5 Are the exceptions disclosed?

Reasons for keeping any lower-standing employee, plus the separate written notice to higher-standing employees reached for release.

6 Did the parallel notices go out?

Union on the same day, and the three outside notifications if 50 or more employees are separated from the area.

NEXT MODULE

Next: Module 5, RIF Appeals - where an appeal goes, by when, and what you have to produce.

What's next

A short look at what Module 5 covers.

5

RIF appeals

Where an appeal goes and by when, what the agency has to produce, and the other routes an employee may use - grievance, EEO, OSC, RPL appeal.

THE COMMON THREAD

The notice now discloses the ranking data, so an employee can check your arithmetic. Build the register as though it will be read line by line, because it will be.

Questions

Contact & Resources

Workforce Policy and Innovation (WPI)

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

RIF policy questions and technical assistance: WPIntake@opm.gov

Key Resources

- RIF Resources and Templates — opm.gov/workforce-restructuring
- RIF Quick Reference Guide — 5 U.S.C. Chapter 35 and 5 CFR Part 351
- CHCO Council memoranda — chcoc.gov

Thank You

Please take a moment to complete a short survey to provide your feedback on today's session:

<https://surveys.opm.gov/se/5B5534D4484D6F29>

