

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT (VER) FOR EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) INVESTIGATORS

I. OVERVIEW OF THE VER PROCESS

VER will be part of the process that will transform the Postal Service EEO investigative function. Eligible employees who occupy the EEO Complaints Investigator (0260-0013) position will be offered VER.

- Each Area will ensure that each employee in occupation code 0260-0013 has had their Official Personnel File (OPF) validated and entered in the Retirement Thrift RIF (RTR) system.
- Employees who meet the eligibility requirements for VER will be mailed a VER offer package. The VER offer package will include the VER offer letter, an application for retirement, the Irrevocability Statement, an annuity estimate, a summary of benefits, VER Q and As, and the Retirement Plan Correction Report from RTR.
- Employees who receive a VER offer package will have a 5 week window to submit and withdraw (if they reconsider) their retirement applications. At the end of the window their decision to retire becomes irrevocable.

II. VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT (VER)

The Postal Service has received approval from the Office of Personnel Management under its Voluntary Early Retirement Authority to offer VER to career employees who occupy the position of EEO Complaints Investigator (0260-0013). Eligible employees who meet the criteria below and who elect to take advantage of this VER offer will have a retirement effective date of December 31, 2003.

- **ELIGIBILITY/ANNUITY REQUIREMENTS**

- Age and Service Requirements

To be eligible to retire under this VER offer, the employee must meet one of the following age and service requirements:

Age is at least...	and Creditable Service* is at least...
50 as of January 1, 2004	20 or more years as of December 31, 2003
Any Age	25 or more years as of December 31, 2003

*Creditable service requirement must include at least five years of creditable *civilian* service (career or non-career).

- Covered Position Requirements

The employees must occupy the position of EEO Complaints Investigator as of September 26, 2003.

- Excluded Employees

The following categories of employees are excluded from this VER offer:

- Nonbargaining

Nonbargaining employees, who occupy positions *other than* EEO
Complaints Investigator.

- Bargaining Unit

All bargaining unit employees.

- Employee Communications

- The National Association of Postal Supervisors (NAPS) has been notified.
- Employees will be notified initially and updated through a series of town hall meetings which will be scheduled by local management.
- VER offer package will be mailed to the employee's address of record. Use the employee's duty station as the return address. If the VER offer package is returned, the employees supervisors will hand deliver it to them.
- Alternately, the initial distribution of the VER offer package can be hand delivered to the employees.

- VERIFYING ELIGIBILITY THROUGH THE RTR SYSTEM

Personnel offices are responsible for ensuring that employees meet the age and service requirements for this VER offer. Although our ultimate goal is to have all employee records in RTR as soon as possible, only EEO Complaints Investigators **must** have their retirement plan codes and retirement computation dates in CMS verified IMMEDIATELY through the RTR System.

Errors in RCD must be corrected immediately in CMS and a determination made as to whether the employee still meets the creditable service requirement for this VER offer. Errors in retirement plan code must be reported to HQ as outlined in SOP19, Correcting Retirement Plan Code Errors (NOA 008 and NOA 803). Employees must be advised of any corrections made to their personnel records.

Personnel offices are reminded that employees legally attain a given age on the day before their birthday. (See Compensation Letter 92-020) Under this VER offer, employees must meet the eligibility requirements on or before December 31, 2003, therefore based on the 'birthday rule', employees whose 50TH birthday falls on January 1, 2004, would be eligible for this VER offer.

- PROCESSING VER REQUESTS

- Area Offices

EEO Complaints Investigators who are found to be eligible as a result of the RTR processing will be mailed or hand delivered a VER offer package. Certain sections of the VER offer letter must be completed prior to mailing. The package will include:

- VER Offer Letter (Attachment D)
- Acknowledgement of Irrevocability of Voluntary Early Retirement Decision (Attachment E)
- Retirement History screen print or the Retirement Plan Correction Report from RTR
- Summary of Benefits (Attachment B)

- VER Questions and Answers (Attachment C)

Employees who are sent offer packages must submit a completed retirement application and irrevocability statement during the established window period. After the close of the window period, their decision to retire becomes irrevocable. Employees who are approved for early retirement will be sent a VER Approval Notice (Attachment G).

Ineligible Employees

Employees who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the VER offer listed above, must be notified using Attachment F, *VER Disapproval Letter*. The appropriate box indicating the reason for their ineligibility must be annotated prior to mailing.

- Group Retirement Counseling Sessions

Personnel offices must conduct group retirement counseling sessions during the VER window period. Eligible employees who are provided a VER offer package must be notified of scheduled sessions at the time they are given. Employees should be encouraged to review the information provided in their VER offer package prior to attending the counseling sessions and to bring their annuity estimates and Retirement History screen print or the Retirement Plan Correction Report from RTR with them when attending the sessions. These sessions should be structured along the lines of that provided in EL-502, *CSRS Retirement Guide*, and include information for FERS employees, including the reduction and postponement options for MRA+10, FERS annuity supplement, etc.

During these sessions, it should be emphasized that Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees who retire under this VER offer will have their annuities reduced by two percent (2%) for each year (or one-sixth of one percent for each full month) they are under the age of 55. This reduction also applies to the frozen CSRS component for those employees who transferred to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). There is no reduction to the FERS portion of the annuity for those who transferred, or to a FERS annuity without a frozen CSRS component, regardless of the employee's age.

At a minimum, personnel offices should cover the eligibility requirements for the VER offer, creditable service including civilian and military service, reduction for early retirement, Social Security benefits including the impact of the Windfall Elimination and Public Pension Offset provisions, and the impact of Social Security benefits on CSRS Offset employees, health and life insurance, thrift savings plan, and the process for submitting retirement applications under the VER.

- Processing Personnel Actions

- Nature of Action (NOA) Code

Personnel offices must use NOA 303 – Retirement –Special Option, when processing personnel actions for employees who elect to take advantage of this VER offer. Retirements for all excluded employees must be processed using normal procedures.

- Form 50 Remarks

The following remarks must be added on the Form 50 when processing a NOA 303 under this VER offer.

- For CSRS employees
 - 5 USC 8336(d)(2)
 - OPM authority 2004-030
 - October 14, 2003

- For FERS employees
 - 5 USC Chapter 84
 - OPM authority 2004-030
 - October 14, 2003

III. Employees on Active Military Duty

Eligible employees who are on active military duty will receive the VER Offer package. Some employees are stationed locally and will be able to participate in this process as if they were in a pay status. Others will not be able to participate because of their military obligations. When these employees return to work, they will be given the same opportunities and options that this process afforded other employees.

IV. Attachments

- Attachment A EEO Investigators VER Guidelines.doc
- Attachment B SumOfBen.doc
- Attachment C VER Q As.doc
- Attachment D EEO VER OfferLetter.doc
- Attachment E Acknowl.doc
- Attachment F Disapproval.doc
- Attachment G Approval.doc