



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POSTAL SUPERVISORS

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March 24, 2011

All NAPS Members,

The Postal Service has announced a major restructuring that will include the closing of several District offices and the reduction of positions in all remaining District offices. The following is a text of that announcement:

***"Postmaster General Pat Donahoe on Wednesday, March 23, 2011, announced a newly redesigned Postal Service, one that is better positioned for growth, reflects a further redesigned Postal Service, one that is better positioned for growth, reflects further alignment within the organization to achieve core business strategies and, when fully implemented, by March 2012, will eliminate almost \$750 million in costs to the organization.***

***"Over the past 8 weeks, we have been taking a careful look at our internal structure — the way we position our people — and determining the best way to align the organization to succeed in a more competitive world," said Donahoe. "We also have been making some tough but necessary decisions that will enable us to better meet the needs of our employees, our customers and the American public."***

***Donahoe said a strong plan has been developed that will result in a leaner, less bureaucratic structure that creates greater efficiencies among managerial and administrative functions.***

***The announced redesign reduces administrative layers and achieves a 20 percent reduction in authorized administrative office complement and Postal Career Executive Service (PCES) positions.***

***Seven districts will be closing. A general announcement identifying the districts will be made March 24, after employees in those districts are notified.***

***Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) and financial incentive programs will be offered to eligible career non-bargaining employees in targeted groups at Headquarters, Headquarters-related Field Units, Area Offices and Customer Service District Offices (Administrative).***

***\* The incentive program is \$20,000 and is offered on a first come, first-served basis to eligible employees who choose to leave on the May 31, 2011, effective date through a VER, optional retirement or voluntary resignation. The incentive will be paid in two equal payments of \$10,000 distributed in November 2011 and November 2012.***

***\* To be eligible for the incentive, employees must begin the optional retirement process or submit voluntary resignation by the deadline of April 25, 2011. The same date, April 25, also is the irrevocability date for employees who accept the VER offer.***

**\* Disability retirements and Federal Transfers are not eligible for the incentive. Employees in a probationary status as of March 23, 2011, are not eligible.**

**\* Employees already in progress as of March 23, 2011, for optional retirement or voluntary resignation with a scheduled retirement or separation date on or before May 31, 2011, will be permitted to retire or separate on the scheduled date and be eligible for the incentive.**

**\* Further details of the VERA and incentive programs will be available on the Organizational Change website.**

**Donahoe said employees will be given comprehensive information to help them make the best decisions about their future. "I know change can be challenging," he said. "I thank all of our employees for their continued dedication and focus on continuing to provide high levels of customer service while the organizational redesign proceeds."**

**Efforts in the coming weeks and months will help the Postal Service become a leaner, faster and smarter organization, Donahoe said. "The redesign will improve our financial situation, ensure that we are better able to compete for customers, and provide greater value and service to the American public."**

The following timeline has been established for the restructuring process:

<b>2/24/11</b>	<b>PMG announces final structure</b>
<b>4/25/11</b>	<b>VERA Deadline Irrevocable Deadline</b>
<b>4/28/11</b>	<b>General RIF Notice Issued</b>
<b>5/25/11</b>	<b>Specific RIF Notice Issued</b>
<b>5/31/11</b>	<b>VERA Effective Date Early Out</b>
<b>6/14/11</b>	<b>RIF Process Vacancies Posted and Selections in E- Career</b>
<b>to 9/18/11</b>	
<b>9/09/11</b>	<b>RIF Effective Date</b>

#### **What If I Am Told That I Am Impacted?**

Should you have become an impacted employee as a result of this announcement, the following information has been developed to assist you in knowing what the process of a restructuring entails. Becoming an impacted employee is a shocking experience that is going to bring significant anxiety, nervousness, sleeplessness, and a general feeling of depression and hopelessness.

NAPS has previously been assured by the Postal Service that we will be provided listings of all vacancies that exist in each of the remaining Districts and positions that will remain in the field that were related to the eliminated Districts. Your NAPS Area Vice President will be a valuable resource for you as we expect that all of our field officers will have been provided with a listing of all vacancies that will be available in your District or within a commuting distance of your current location.

NAPS has developed this information to assist all of our members in understanding more about the current restructuring and what you should do if you are impacted by either an Area or District closing or a reduction of District staffing that causes you to be an impacted employee.

Once you have dealt with the initial shock of the fact that your position has been eliminated, you have to get to the next step in the process; what are you going to do?

If you are eligible to retire, or you are considering taking a Voluntary Early Retirement (VERA), review your options and contact Shared Services to get information on what your annuity will be should you decide to leave the Postal Service. If you are unable to retire or take a VERA, then you have to start looking for an available position within the Postal Service.

The first step that you should take when you are advised that you are impacted is to read everything you can in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual related to RIF, specifically, ELM 354. The entire text of ELM 354 is located at the end of this document.

### **What's Involved in a District Closing?**

In the event that your District is eliminated, by virtue of the fact that all positions have been eliminated your competitive area has also been eliminated. When a District is eliminated, both veterans and non-veterans are treated in the same manner and have to openly compete for available positions that are either within or outside of your local commuting area located at other postal facilities.

Here's the definition of a Competitive Area:

#### **ELM 354.217,3,a:**

- a. Competitive areas – organizational units that have separate management authority and geographical boundaries under which employees compete during a RIF. As an example, the Center for Employee Development in Norman, Oklahoma, is a Headquarters-related field unit; however, it is a separate competitive area because it has its own management authority and geographical boundary. Generally, a competitive area should be in effect for at least 90 days before the effective date of a RIF. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition publishes a list of competitive areas in the Postal Bulletin at least annually.*

When a District is eliminated, the competitive area is also eliminated. There may be some positions that formerly reported to the District that was eliminated that will remain in the geographical area, but will report to the gaining District. These positions may include: Labor Relations, Operations and In-Plant Support, Post Office Operations and other support functions.

A decision will be made by the gaining District whether any positions will remain domiciled in the former District geographical location or the jobs may be assigned to the gaining District's offices.

### **What's Involved in a District Consolidation?**

In a District consolidation, certain positions are eliminated while other positions remain in the District office. Individuals who lose their positions as identified by USPS headquarters will have to apply for other positions. Individual's with Veterans Preference will have the opportunity to "bump" another EAS employee if they are not successful in applying for a position should their position be eliminated. If your position is not impacted, you are safe unless there is a veteran who is impacted and could be assigned to your position, that is; if you are the lowest person listed on the retention register (see ELM 354.217).

In the instance of a District consolidation, if there is a veteran who is impacted (loses their position) every EAS employee in the District will receive a General RIF Notice. Here's the ELM section that describes a General RIF Notice:

### **354.251 Issuing General RIF Notices**

A RIF situation exists if a preference eligible employee in the competitive area undergoing a potential RIF is matched to a lower-grade position or is unplaced following the preliminary placement procedures in 354.23. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition issues a general RIF notice to all employees within the competitive area. The general RIF notice advises employees that a RIF exists within their competitive area and provides the following information:

- a. The business reasons for the RIF.
- b. The position titles, grade levels, and organizational functions that will be directly impacted by the RIF.
- c. The RIF effective date is established no less than 60 days after anticipated receipt of specific RIF notices. Generally, the RIF effective date is established at the close of business on the last Friday of a pay period.
- d. When a competitive area is eliminated such as through a District closing, all employees from that District are impacted. Veteran's in a competitive area that has been eliminated do not maintain "bumping" rights as bumping rights for Veteran's can only occur within a competitive area.

A District is a competitive area unto itself. If your District is eliminated, or suffers reductions in positions, there are surrounding post offices and stations as well as processing facilities remain in operation and vacancies in these operations may well provide you with an opportunity to be assigned to a vacancy in one of these other operations.

An important thing to keep in mind; while being impacted can make you feel very negative about the Postal Service and the upheaval that they have caused your personal life, many of the managers and leaders of the units that may be overseeing the job that you will need to get placed into will be looking to see the candidates who are not expressing their anger and disappointment towards the Postal Service through negative statements.

Remember, you are attempting to succeed in getting a new job! Why would someone want to hire you to work for them if you are negative about your situation?

### **What Happens to Veterans and How Can I be impacted by a Veteran?**

In preparation for a possible RIF, all EAS employees are identified to determine if there are impacted employees who are covered by Veteran's Preference Status:

Here is information on Veteran's Preference from ELM 354.215:

### **354.215 Veterans' Preference Status**

*Entitlement to veterans' preference for RIF purposes is based on the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, as amended, and is codified in various provisions of Title 5, U.S.C. Detailed instructions for adjudicating veterans' preference claims are contained in chapter 7 of the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, an operating manual issued by OPM. Employees who are eligible for veterans' preference for purposes of initial appointment are also eligible for veterans' preference for RIF, except for employees who are retired members of the uniformed services.*

*Employees who retired from the military must meet one of several special conditions before they can be granted veterans' preference for RIF purposes.*

*The conditions differ and depend on whether the employees retired below, at, or above the rank of major. Exhibit 354.215a shows the conditions that must be met by retired members of the uniformed services before veterans' preference for RIF is granted. Exhibit 354.215b shows the pay grades and titles (ranks) of officers of the uniformed services as defined by 5 U.S.C. 2101.*

In the instance where a District is eliminated, the entire competitive area is eliminated so a veteran does not have the opportunity to "bump" a non-veteran to maintain a position. In cases where there is a consolidation in a District, once again the USPS identifies the individual(s) who are entitled to veteran's preference.

Veterans apply for positions in the same manner that non-veterans would and must apply competitively for the position. The USPS may withhold a vacant position within the local commuting area in order to place the veteran. If the veteran does not apply for positions and remained impacted, the Postal Service may assign the veteran to a position that is at their current level or no more than two levels below their current position level.

Should a "bumping" event occur, the most junior person on the Retention Register would be impacted by the assignment of a veteran who was not selected for a position that he/she applied for or they did not apply for any position during the RIF process. The veteran does not get to select the job that he/she wants if bumping is implemented. Instead, they are assigned to the position of the most junior person on the Retention Register for a position that the veteran is qualified to perform.

### **Competing for a New Position**

When a competitive area is eliminated such as through a District closing, all employees from that District are impacted. Veteran's in a competitive area that has been eliminated do not maintain "bumping" rights as bumping rights for Veteran's can only occur within a competitive area.

When a District is eliminated, both veterans and non-veterans are treated in the same manner and have to openly compete for available positions that are either within or outside of your local commuting area located at other postal facilities.

A District is a competitive area unto itself. If your District is eliminated, or suffers reductions in positions, there are surrounding post offices and stations as well as processing facilities remain in operation and

vacancies in these operations may well provide you with an opportunity to be assigned to a vacancy in one of these other operations.

An important thing to keep in mind; while being impacted can make you feel very negative about the Postal Service and the upheaval that they have caused your personal life, many of the managers and leaders of the units that may be overseeing the job that you will need to get placed into will be looking to see the candidates who are not expressing their anger and disappointment towards the Postal Service through negative statements.

Remember, you are attempting to succeed in getting a new job! Why would someone want to hire you to work for them if you are negative about your situation?

**Here are some key points to remember if you are impacted:**

- Attend all town hall meetings or information sharing meetings to get all information available about the changes
- Don't be negative about the changes. Complaining to others or outbursts in meetings can only diminish your ability to be successful in getting a new position
- If you are having problems dealing with the changes, contact your local EAP Counselor
- Prepare the general information on eCareer on the USPS Blue Page. If you are not familiar with using eCareer, there should be several workshops held at your District to familiarize you with using the eCareer program
- Determine if someone you know has a good working knowledge of the eCareer program and have them work with you to develop your application
- Polish your image! Don't let the stress of looking for a job cause you to look less than professional. Make sure that you maintain yourself and think positively
- If you need to brush up on skills you used to have, ask for a detail to an assignment that is the same as the position that you will be applying for
- Get access to a listing of all of the vacancies that are available to you
- Visit the locations where the vacancy exists and speak with the manager and other supervisors about the work location to familiarize yourself with the operation in case you get an interview for a position in that office/facility
- Review operational data from the work location where you are seeking a position. Know what they do well and where they can make improvements. Should you get a job interview, speak

about what you have seen in your reviews of the office or your review of the facility's performance indicators

- Review how your experience on your last job relates to the job that you are seeking. Also, be ready to discuss your past experiences that may be related to the job you are seeking
- Remain positive about your situation. After all, you have years of experience that can be an asset to a manager who may select you to work in their location

Restructurings are stressful but you can get through the process. You need to identify your personal value to the Postal Service and relate that value to selecting officials. Your NAPS officers are here to assist you in getting through this process and to make sure that all of the rules that are associated with a restructuring are followed.

The NAPS organization is ready to provide you with any assistance you may need during these difficult times. NAPS headquarters will be monitoring all aspects of the restructuring and will coordinate our assistance to members in the field through our regional and area vice presidents. Our 21 national officers in the field will be working with local branch officers to ensure that your rights under provisions of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual are followed.

Sincerely yours,

NAPS Headquarters  
[napshq@naps.org](mailto:napshq@naps.org)  
703-836-9660

Attachment: ELM 354

# Complete language of ELM 354 Assignment of Unassigned Employees

## 354 Assignment of Unassigned Employees

### 354.1 Policy

#### 354.11 Bargaining Employees

Assignment of excess bargaining employees must be in accordance with the applicable provisions of the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.

#### 354.12 Nonbargaining Employees

Assignment of unassigned career nonbargaining employees must be in accordance with the procedures described in 354.2 and 354.3, as appropriate. Postal policy provides equal opportunities for all employees without discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age. In exercising the various managerial options described in these procedures, managers are responsible for ensuring and documenting, where appropriate, that no discriminatory impact results from discussions or personnel actions implementing these procedures.

### 354.2 Assignment of Nonbargaining Unit Employees Due to a Potential or Actual Reduction in Force

#### 354.21 General

##### 354.211 Definition of Reduction in Force

A reduction in force (RIF) is a uniform and systematic way of making organizational changes resulting in the release of an employee from his or her competitive level as defined in 354.217a. A RIF action occurs in the Postal Service when an employee is released from his or her competitive level by separation, demotion, or a reassignment requiring displacement. Release from a competitive level must be caused by elimination or significant modification of existing work, creation of new work, reorganization, transfer of function, an individual's exercise of reemployment or restoration rights, or a reclassification of an employee's position based on the erosion of duties that will take effect after a RIF has been formally announced in the employee's competitive area (see 354.217b), or when a RIF takes effect within 180 days.

**Note:** With the exception identified above concerning the reclassification of an employee's position, a change to lower grade based on the reclassification of an employee's position due to a change in classification standards or a correction of a classification error is not a RIF.

##### 354.212 Legal Basis for Reduction in Force

Laws governing RIF are found in Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Sections 3501–3503. These laws are implemented in the federal government through regulations issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) (Title 5, *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), 351). In the Postal Service, these laws apply only to preference eligible employees (individuals entitled to veterans' preference status during a RIF). The legislative provisions making these laws and regulations applicable to preference eligible employees in the Postal Service are found in 39 U.S.C. 1005 (a)(2).

##### 354.213 Management Responsibility

Management must plan the work and organize the workforce to accomplish Postal Service objectives. This responsibility includes determining the type, number, and location of positions that are to be filled, abolished, or vacated. When changes are anticipated as a result of this responsibility, management determines whether a RIF is necessary and when such action will occur.

The managers of Human Resources at the district and area levels and the manager of Corporate Personnel Management for Headquarters and Headquarters-related units are designated as *placement administrators*. A placement administrator is responsible for coordinating all RIF avoidance or minimization strategies and placement activities for a competitive area undergoing a RIF. This responsibility includes close coordination with the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition, competitive area management, and other human resources personnel in other competitive areas. The placement administrator is also responsible for coordinating the activities associated with a reinstatement list (see 354.27). A placement administrator who has direct responsibility over the competitive area in which employees have been separated due to a RIF and who have requested consideration for future reinstatement to the Postal Service is considered the *primary placement administrator*.

**354.214 Coverage of Reduction in Force Procedures**

These RIF procedures apply to the assignment or separation of career nonbargaining employees who occupy positions that have the potential of being impacted by, or will be directly affected by, a RIF. These procedures apply to noncareer nonbargaining employees only to the extent necessary to terminate their employment to avoid (or minimize) the impact of a RIF on career nonbargaining employees.

**Exclusion:** Bargaining employees are excluded from these procedures. The assignment or separation of excess bargaining employees is in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement and applicable statutes.

**354.215 Veterans' Preference Status**

Entitlement to veterans' preference for RIF purposes is based on the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, as amended, and is codified in various provisions of Title 5, U.S.C. Detailed instructions for adjudicating veterans' preference claims are contained in chapter 7 of the *Guide to Processing Personnel Actions*, an operating manual issued by OPM. Employees who are eligible for veterans' preference for purposes of initial appointment are also eligible for veterans' preference for RIF, except for employees who are retired members of the uniformed services. Employees who retired from the military must meet one of several special conditions before they can be granted veterans' preference for RIF purposes. The conditions differ and depend on whether the employees retired below, at, or above the rank of major. Exhibit 354.215a shows the conditions that must be met by retired members of the uniformed services before veterans' preference for RIF is granted. Exhibit 354.215b shows the pay grades and titles (ranks) of officers of the uniformed services as defined by 5 U.S.C. 2101.

Exhibit 354.215a

**Veterans' Preference for Retired Military**

<b>Retiree <i>below rank of major</i> must meet one of the following conditions:</b>	<b>Retiree <i>at or above rank of major</i> must meet one of the following conditions:</b>
Be retired based on war or combat-incurred disability.	Be retired based on war or combat-incurred disability.

Be retired based on less than 20 years of active duty. Have continuous federal employment since November 30, 1964, without a break in service of more than 30 days.	Be retired based on less than 20 years of active duty. Have continuous federal employment since November 30, 1964, without a break in service of more than 30 days. Be a disabled veteran eligible for retired pay under 10 U.S.C. 67.
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Exhibit 354.215b

**Officer Personnel by Pay Grades and Titles (Ranks)**

Pay Grade	Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps	Navy, Coast Guard, and NOAA	Public Health Service (PHS)
<b>Below Major:</b>			
W-1	Warrant officer	Warrant officer	
W-2	Chief warrant officer	Chief warrant officer	
W-3	Chief warrant officer	Chief warrant officer	
W-4	Chief warrant officer	Chief warrant officer	
O-1	Second lieutenant	Ensign	Junior assistant
O-2	First lieutenant	Lieutenant (jg)	Assistant grade
O-3	Captain	Lieutenant	Senior assistant grade
<b>Major and Above:</b>			
O-4	Major	Lieutenant commander	Full grade
O-5	Lieutenant colonel	Commander	Senior grade
O-6	Colonel	Captain	Director grade
O-7	Brigadier general	Rear admiral (lower half) or commodore	Assistant surgeon general
O-8	Major general	Rear admiral (upper half)	Assistant surgeon general
O-9	Lieutenant general	Vice admiral	<b>(Note: PHS does not use O-9 or O-10)</b>
O-10	General	Admiral	

**354.216 Veterans' Preference Entitlement**

Veterans' preference eligible employees are entitled to the following:

- a. *Higher Retention Standing.* A preference eligible employee is entitled to a higher retention standing (seniority) on a retention register (see [354.217c](#)) than a nonpreference eligible employee during a RIF.
- b. *Assignment Rights.* A preference eligible employee in tenure group I or II with a current merit performance rating of *Met Expectations* or higher, who is released from his or her competitive level during a RIF, may displace another employee with a lower retention

standing under certain circumstances. The assignment of a preference eligible employee to a position with an appropriate representative rate (see 354.217g) held by an employee with lower retention standing can occur either through bumping or retreating.

1. *Bumping.* A preference eligible employee may replace an employee in the same competitive area who has a lower retention standing and occupies a position that is no more than three grade levels (or appropriate grade interval or equivalent) lower than the position from which the preference eligible employee is released.
2. *Retreating.* A preference eligible employee may replace an employee in the same competitive area, tenure group, and veterans' preference subgroup who has a lower retention standing and occupies a position identical to a position previously held by the preference eligible employee, that is no more than three grade levels (or appropriate grade interval or equivalent) lower than the position from which the preference eligible employee is released. A preference eligible employee with a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more can retreat to a position that is up to five grade levels (or appropriate grade interval or equivalent) lower.
- c. *Appeal Rights.* A preference eligible employee may file an appeal with the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) under the provisions of 5 CFR 351.901.

### **354.217 Definitions and Explanations**

Definitions and explanations relevant to RIF procedures are as follows:

- a. *Competitive level* – one or more positions in a competitive area that are:
  1. In the same rate schedule code (e.g., EAS and PCES) and grade level.
  2. In the same job classification series and leadership code (i.e., type of contribution made to the organization as an executive, mid-level manager, initial-level supervisor, or individual contributor).
  3. Similar enough in duties, qualification standards (knowledge, skills, and abilities), and working conditions so that the incumbent of one position can successfully perform the critical elements of any other position in the level upon assignment to it, without any loss of productivity during a 90-day orientation period beyond that normally expected of a new employee who is otherwise qualified.
- b. *Competitive areas* – organizational units that have separate management authority and geographical boundaries under which employees compete during a RIF. As an example, the Center for Employee Development in Norman, Oklahoma, is a Headquarters-related field unit; however, it is a separate competitive area because it has its own management authority and geographical boundary. Generally, a competitive area should be in effect for at least 90 days before the effective date of a RIF. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition publishes a list of competitive areas in the *Postal Bulletin* at least annually.
- c. *Retention register* – a list of employees by competitive level ranked in descending order based on their retention standing within a specific competitive area. The retention standing for each competing employee is based on his or her tenure group, veterans' preference subgroup, and RIF service date. Employees are listed on the retention register in the following order:
  1. By tenure group I, group II, and group III (see 354.217d).

2. Within each tenure group, by veterans' preference subgroup AD, subgroup A, or subgroup B (see 354.217e).
  3. Within each veterans' preference subgroup, by RIF service date (see 354.217f).
- d. *Tenure groups* – the groups into which employees are separated for retention standing purposes during a RIF, based on their employment status. There are three tenure groups:
1. *Tenure group I* – career employees who have completed their probationary period.
  2. *Tenure group II* – career employees who are serving their probationary period and who will not complete it before the RIF effective date.
  3. *Tenure group III* – noncareer employees serving under indefinite appointments, temporary appointments pending establishment of a register, status quo appointments, term appointments, and any other nonstatus nontemporary appointments that meet the definition of provisional appointments contained in 5 CFR 316.401 and 316.403.
- e. *Veterans' preference subgroups* – the subgroups into which employees are placed based on veterans' preference entitlement. The three preference eligible subgroups are defined as:
1. *Subgroup AD* – employees entitled to veterans' preference based on a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more.
  2. *Subgroup A* – all other preference eligible employees not included in subgroup AD.
  3. *Subgroup B* – employees who are not preference eligibles.
- f. *RIF service date* – the date used in conjunction with the tenure group (see 354.217d) and preference eligible subgroup (see 354.217e) to determine an employee's retention standing on a retention register (see 354.217c) during a RIF. The RIF service date is derived by subtracting the additional years of service credit based on performance ratings from the employee's leave computation date.
1. *Leave computation date* – a date based on total creditable service – generally including all creditable Postal Service, federal civilian service, and active military service (see 512.2). For an employee who is a retired member of the uniformed services (see 354.215), the leave computation date is adjusted by the amount of service credit based on the rank at which an employee retires and the circumstances of the retirement. The specific methodology used to calculate the leave computation date is provided in Exhibit 210d of Handbook EL-301, *Guidelines for Processing Personnel Actions*.
  2. *Performance ratings* – the three most recent merit performance ratings of record received during the 4-year period before the issuance date of the specific RIF notices. Based on these performance ratings, nonbargaining employees are entitled to additional service credit towards their RIF service date, as follows:
    - a. Merit performance ratings are used as follows:
      - i. If an employee has received three merit performance ratings of record during the period, the values of the ratings are added together and divided by three (rounded in the case of a fraction to the next higher whole number) to determine the amount of additional service credit.

- ii. If an employee has received at least one but fewer than three merit performance ratings of record, the employee receives additional service credit for performance based on the amount derived when the values of the ratings received are added together and divided by the number of ratings actually received (rounded in the case of a fraction to the next higher whole number).
  - iii. If an employee has received no merit performance ratings of record, the employee receives additional service credit for performance based on the modal rating. The modal rating is determined based on the most prevalent merit performance rating received postal-wide during the most recent performance evaluation period.
- b. Values are assigned to each merit performance rating of record (or the modal rating) as follows:
- i. 20 additional years of service are credited for an adjective rating of Exceptional Contributor (EC).
  - ii. 16 additional years of service are credited for an adjective rating of High Contributor (HC).
  - iii. 12 additional years of service are credited for an adjective rating of Contributor (C), Not Rated (NR), or No Score (NS).
  - iv. No additional years of service are credited for an adjective rating of Non-Contributor (NC) or Excluded (EX).
- g. *Representative rate* – the hourly pay rate of a position that is used to determine a preference eligible employee’s assignment rights during a RIF. The representative rate is calculated by dividing the annual base salary for a position by 2,087 hours (number of hours in a government year). The annual base salaries used to derive the representative rates for career nonbargaining positions are based on the 25th percentile of annual base salary range for each grade level in the EAS, Structured Management Development (SMD) Schedule, A–E Postmaster (EPM) Schedule, and the Attorney Pay Schedule (APS). Level 01 positions under the PCES are subject to a market maximum that is used to cap salaries for each position. The market maximum is used to calculate the appropriate representative rate for PCES–01 positions. PCES–02 positions (corporate officers) are not covered by the RIF procedures.

## **354.22 Processing Requests for Organizational Change**

### **354.221 Evaluating the Need for Change**

Requests to change a Headquarters or field organizational structure are initiated by functional organization management with approval of the functional organization vice president. Such requests are processed as follows:

- a. The manager of Organizational Design and Management reviews and evaluates plan requirements; determines the appropriate categories, numbers, and grade levels of positions; and, if appropriate, develops job descriptions to support new positions and establishes reporting relationships for positions within the competitive areas impacted by the proposed change.
- b. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition evaluates how the proposed

changes will affect specific competitive areas and determines whether a RIF may be necessary. If a RIF potential exists, the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition provides functional organization management with a preliminary placement plan that, if possible, outlines the strategies to minimize or avoid the need for a RIF.

#### **354.222 Implementing the Change**

Following completion of the evaluation process and final approval by functional organization management of any revisions to the initial organizational change request and the placement plan, the following actions are taken:

- a. The manager of Organizational Design and Management notifies the functional organization vice president and the competitive area management of the new or modified structure and staffing changes to be implemented.
- b. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition develops qualification standards (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for any new positions and assigns the positions to the appropriate competitive levels. If placement of competitive area employees into the new organization based on competitive levels and qualification standards does not result in a potential RIF situation, the functional organization vice president and competitive area management are advised to proceed to fill any vacant positions under the normal EAS selection procedures. If the organizational change does result in a potential RIF, the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition is responsible for coordinating RIF avoidance or minimization strategies, conducting the RIF process, and, if necessary, coordinating with competitive area management other placement opportunities that may be available.

#### **354.23 Implementing RIF Avoidance or Minimization Strategies**

To minimize or avoid the impact of a RIF, the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition, in coordination with the functional organization vice president and competitive area management, may implement some or all of the following actions, either in the competitive area proposed to undergo the RIF or in additional specified competitive areas:

- a. Freeze hiring and promotion actions.
- b. Separate contract employees, temporary employees, and reemployed annuitants.
- c. Reassign employees out of a competitive area for which a RIF may be required and into vacant positions in competitive areas where a RIF is not being contemplated.  
Reassignments may be made to positions within or outside the commuting area and may be voluntary (e.g., where an employee has responded to a vacancy announcement) or directed by management. Such assignments are not subject to RIF procedures as long as preference eligible employees are not involuntarily placed into lower grade positions.
- d. Cancel all detail and temporary promotion PS Forms 50, *Notification of Personnel Action*.
- e. Terminate probationary employees.
- f. Approve employee requests to voluntarily change to vacant positions at lower grades within the competitive area, including bargaining positions.
- g. Provide voluntary resignation incentives.
- h. Obtain approval from OPM to offer a voluntary early retirement option.
- i. Provide voluntary early retirement incentives.
- j. When circumstances warrant, implement other RIF avoidance measures, provided such measures are in compliance with regulations and, if appropriate, the applicable collective

bargaining agreements.

### **354.24 Providing Initial Notification and Making Preliminary Placements**

#### **354.241 Notifying Employees of a Potential RIF**

If a potential RIF situation exists, management at the competitive area must meet with employees to advise them of the situation, either individually or in groups. This meeting occurs after approval is received from Organizational Design and Management and Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition, but before issuance of the general RIF notice. The information provided to employees includes, if applicable:

- a. A description of the new organization, including the job title and number of any new positions added, their grade levels, and reporting relationships.
- b. The number of positions by title and grade level in the organization being abolished.
- c. The position titles, grade levels, or organizational function that will be directly impacted by the RIF.
- d. The options available to potentially impacted employees, including any RIF avoidance or minimization strategies that will be used (see 354.23).

#### **354.242 Establishing Employee Qualifications**

Employees who may be impacted by a RIF must provide updated pages 1 and 2 of PS Form 991, *Application for Promotion or Assignment*, to establish their qualifications for any vacant positions that remain in the new organization at the same grade level.

#### **354.243 Making Preliminary Placements**

Management at a competitive area, in coordination with the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition, matches employees to positions, including any vacant positions at the same grade levels, if any, in the new organization, based on employee qualifications and position requirements.

### **354.25 Implementing RIF Procedures**

#### **354.251 Issuing General RIF Notices**

A RIF situation exists if a preference eligible employee in the competitive area undergoing a potential RIF is matched to a lower-grade position or is unplaced following the preliminary placement procedures in 354.23. The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition issues a general RIF notice to all employees within the competitive area. The general RIF notice advises employees that a RIF exists within their competitive area and provides the following information:

- a. The business reasons for the RIF.
- b. The position titles, grade levels, and organizational functions that will be directly impacted by the RIF.
- c. The RIF effective date is established no less than 60 days after anticipated receipt of specific RIF notices. Generally, the RIF effective date is established at the close of business on the last Friday of a pay period.

#### **354.252 Issuing Specific RIF Notices**

The manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition issues specific RIF notices to all employees within the competitive area no less than 30 days after the issuance of the general RIF notice. Each specific RIF notice either advises an employee that he or she has been placed in the new organization, giving the position title, grade level, occupational code, and duty station location, or that he or she did not receive a placement offer and will be separated from the

Postal Service. The specific RIF notice also contains the following:

- a. Information used to determine an employee's assignment rights in the RIF, including the competitive area, competitive level, tenure group, veterans' preference subgroup, RIF service date, and the four most recent merit performance ratings of record.
- b. A statement that all employees are entitled to review the OPM retention regulations (5 CFR 351) at their personnel services office.
- c. If the employee is a preference eligible, a copy of the MSPB regulations (5 CFR 1201) and appeal form.
- d. If the employee did not receive a placement offer and was notified that he or she would be separated from the Postal Service:
  1. A Postal Service document titled *Explanation of Compensation Programs* that would be sent with the letter of notification.
  2. PS Form 999, *Application for Reinstatement List*.
- e. If the employee is a preference eligible who is changed to a lower grade level as a result of the RIF, information concerning Veterans' Preference Saved Grade NTE and Veterans' Preference Retained Salary under the provisions of 415.12.

#### **354.253 Placing Unplaced or Displaced Employees**

Procedures for placing employees before the RIF effective date are as follows:

- a. Preference eligible employees who are not placed based on their RIF rights and nonpreference eligible employees who are considered for any appropriate and available vacant positions remaining in their competitive area as follows:
  1. Following the issuance of the specific RIF notice, the manager of Selection, Evaluation, and Recognition provides the placement administrator with a list of employees not placed during the specific RIF action (see 354.252), and a list of vacant positions within the competitive area undergoing the RIF, if any. In the case of closure of an entire competitive area, all positions are abolished and no placement opportunities remain within the competitive area.
  2. Any vacant positions that exist in the competitive area are used as placement opportunities during a 2-week period beginning with the date of receipt of the lists. During this 2-week period, qualified employees are matched to these vacant positions. If warranted by the number of vacant positions and individuals impacted by the RIF, the placement administrator, with the help of a committee, if desired, may review PS Forms 991 and establish employee referral lists of individuals who meet the basic qualifications for available vacancies. If not, directed reassignments may be made. PS Forms 50 for these selections bear the same effective date as the RIF effective date.
  3. Selecting officials must return the entire placement file to the placement administrator, including the referral list and PS Forms 991, with a written list of selected employees in rank order, within 1 week. Selecting officials should list more than one acceptable selection for each vacancy, if possible.
- b. Career bargaining employees displaced in order to afford a preference eligible his or her RIF assignment rights are reassigned in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

#### **354.254 Advising Employees of Options**

During the week before the effective date of the RIF, the placement administrator meets, individually or in groups, with employees who remain unplaced. The administrator discusses in detail the following options with the employees:

- a. *Nonpay, Nonduty Status.* Employees who do not expect to be placed by the RIF effective date may request to be placed in a 30-day nonpay, nonduty status, an extension to the RIF effective date. The placement administrator must receive this request before the RIF effective date. During the 30-day extension, employees may continue to seek a position with the Postal Service based on the conditions specified in 354.26.
- b. *Compensation Alternatives.* Generally, information provided about compensation alternatives that may be available to employees upon separation should include:
  1. An overview of the compensation programs available to separated employees and answers to any questions employees may have concerning the information previously provided in the Explanation of Compensation Programs attached to the specific RIF notice.
  2. Assistance in identifying and completing the forms necessary to apply for any compensation to which individuals may be entitled.
  3. A reminder for those individuals who have not indicated an interest in being reinstated that they are eligible to apply for placement on the reinstatement list (see 354.27).

#### **354.255 Separating Remaining Employees**

Employees who decline or fail to request a 30-day extension in a nonpay, nonduty status by the RIF effective date are separated on that date.

#### **354.26 Making Post-RIF Employee Placements**

Employees placed on a 30-day extension in a nonpay, nonduty status have the following options:

- a. *Noncompetitive Consideration.* Employees may apply noncompetitively for any vacancy at or below their current grade within the commuting area. Employees assigned to a lower grade position are entitled to grade and salary treatment in accordance with 415.4.
- b. *Voluntary Bargaining Position Placement.* If employees meet the qualifications for vacant bargaining positions, they may volunteer for placement into these vacancies subject to the approval of the manager where the vacancy exists. Seniority and pay provisions governing such placements are in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

#### **354.27 Establishing a Reinstatement List**

##### **354.271 Providing Priority Consideration to Employees**

A reinstatement list (RL) identifies for priority consideration for reinstatement to the Postal Service those eligible career nonbargaining employees who have been separated due to a RIF.

The RL is established on the 31st day following the RIF effective date, provided one or more employees have been found eligible for placement on the RL. The RL remains in effect for 2 years following its establishment, or until no eligible employees remain on the RL, whichever is earlier.

**Note:** Acceptance of an employee's PS Form 999, *Application for Reinstatement List*, and placement on the RL does not guarantee former employees reinstatement to the Postal Service.

### **354.272 Determining Employee Eligibility**

Employees are eligible to be placed on a RL if the following occurs:

- a. They received a specific RIF notice indicating that they will be separated from the Postal Service and are subsequently separated on their RIF effective date. Employees who retire on or after their RIF effective date are eligible for placement on the RL, provided they meet all other eligibility requirements.
- b. Their last merit performance rating of record before separation was above *Unacceptable*.
- c. They submit their PS Form 999 no later than 30 days after their RIF effective date.
- d. They are found at least *minimally qualified* by the primary placement administrator for one or more of the positions identified on their PS Form 999.

### **354.273 Considering Employees on a Reinstatement List**

Provisions for reinstatement list consideration are as follows:

- a. Eligible RL applicants are provided initial consideration before advertisement of a vacant position within their competitive area and all other competitive areas within commuting distance not undergoing a RIF action (the reinstatement list area of consideration (RLAC)). Consideration is limited to those applicants who have been found at least *minimally qualified* for the vacant position by the primary placement administrator.  

**Note:** A vacant position does not include positions that are filled through other special programs such as the restoration of individuals who served in the uniformed services and the reemployment or reassignment of employees injured on duty.
- b. Positions identified by eligible RL applicants on their Form 999 for which they have been found at least *minimally qualified* by the primary placement administrator must be:
  1. Authorized positions within the RLAC.
  2. At the same or lower grade level (or representative rate for PCES employees) as the positions held before separation due to a RIF action.
- c. After initial consideration, eligible RL applicants may either be given further consideration for the identified vacant position on a competitive or noncompetitive basis, or not be considered further. A decision to *not consider* an applicant further for a particular vacancy does not impact the applicant's standing on the RL. This decision does not prevent the applicant from being considered for a similar vacant position at a later date or for any other position that the applicant has been found eligible to be considered for on the RL.

### **354.274 Removing Employees From a Reinstatement List**

Names of former employees are taken off the RL, if they:

- a. Accept a career appointment with the Postal Service or other federal agency.
- b. Voluntarily request, in writing, to have their names removed from the RL.
- c. Decline or fail to reply to a written or telephone notification concerning an employment opportunity to a specific position identified on the RL.
- d. Decline an interview or fail to appear for a scheduled interview, provided they are notified in advance of the interview, and do not take reasonable action to reschedule the interview.

- e. Fail to provide the placement administrator with any changes in their address or telephone number and thus prevent contact concerning potential employment opportunities.

### **354.3 Actions for Nonbargaining Employees in Connection With the Discontinuance and Consolidation of Post Offices**

#### **354.31 Background**

Statutory and regulatory requirements mandate consideration of the effects of closing or consolidating a Post Office on Postal Service employees in that office, and making a public record and analysis concerning the effects on these employees.

#### **354.32 Definition of Terms**

District manager refers to the manager who is proposing the discontinuance of a Post Office within his or her district under *Domestic Mail Manual* (DMM) G011.1.2 and G011.1.3.

Discontinuance of a Post Office includes the consolidation of the Post Office with another Post Office and replacing it with a community Post Office, or a classified or contract station or branch, as well as the discontinuance of a Post Office without establishing another facility to replace it.

#### **354.33 Planning Considerations**

The dual objectives of minimizing the impact on individual employees, and maximizing the economies to be affected by consolidating or discontinuing Post Offices, can best be achieved through careful planning and judicious placement of impacted employees. Management keeps employees informed at each step of the process and identifies positions appropriate for reassignment and for which employees are willing to accept reassignment voluntarily.

#### **354.34 Postmaster and Supervisors**

##### **354.341 Postmasters**

When the district manager proposes to recommend the discontinuance of a Post Office where there is an incumbent postmaster, each of the following alternatives, as applicable and appropriate, are discussed with the incumbent postmaster, and the district manager prepares a memorandum stating which alternative is recommended. The following alternatives are available:

- a. *Reassignment to Another Postmaster Vacancy.* The district manager may recommend that the established procedures for the selection of postmasters be waived and that the postmaster be reassigned to an existing postmaster vacancy located within the same district. The district manager includes in the memorandum a statement that the postmaster meets the requirements and qualifications of the vacant postmaster position to which reassignment is recommended and can satisfactorily perform the duties of that position. A signed statement from the postmaster that the reassignment recommended by the district manager, if approved, will be accepted, must also be obtained for the record.
- b. *Unavailable Postmaster Vacancy.* In the event there is no postmaster vacancy to which an affected postmaster may be reassigned, the district manager notifies the postmaster in writing. If the affected postmaster accepts a nonpostmaster assignment, that postmaster retains the right, for 104 weeks from the date of reassignment, to be offered a vacant postmaster position located within the district at his or her former level, when one occurs. Declination of an offer in writing, voluntary acceptance of a lower level postmaster position, or promotion to a higher level postmaster position terminates the

right to be offered a postmaster vacancy at the postmaster's former level.

- c. *Reassignment to a Supervisory Vacancy.* If there are no postmaster vacancies available for possible reassignment, or if it is determined and documented that the postmaster does not meet the requirements and qualifications of the vacant postmaster positions available and cannot satisfactorily perform the duties, the district manager may recommend that the postmaster be reassigned to an existing supervisory vacancy within the district. The vacancy can be a station or branch manager of the classified station or branch established as a result of a consolidation. The district manager documents that the postmaster meets these requirements and qualifications of the vacant supervisory position to which reassignment is recommended and can satisfactorily perform the duties of that position, and includes a signed statement from the postmaster that the reassignment as recommended by the district manager will, if approved, be accepted.
- d. *Reassignment to Another Position in the Postal Service.* If there are no postmaster or supervisory vacancies within the district to which the postmaster can be reassigned, because either the vacancies do not exist or it is determined and documented that the postmaster does not meet the requirements and qualifications of the positions that are available for possible reassignment and cannot satisfactorily perform the duties of those positions, the district manager recommends that the postmaster be reassigned to another position in the Postal Service. As appropriate, postmasters at noncity delivery offices may be offered available full- or part-time clerk or carrier positions or other available craft positions for which qualified. In all such cases, the individual's seniority is established in accordance with the applicable provisions of the National Agreement. In recommending reassignment to another position in the Postal Service, every effort is made to recommend a position for which the annual pay that the postmaster can expect to receive is as nearly equal as possible to the pay received during the last year as a postmaster. A signed statement from the postmaster that the reassignment recommended by the district manager, if approved, will be accepted, must be obtained for the record.
- e. *Voluntary Retirement.* Eligibility for voluntary retirement is established if, by the anticipated date of discontinuance of the Post Office, the postmaster has been employed under the Civil Service Retirement System for at least 1 year within the 2-year period preceding the discontinuance, and:
  1. Has at least 30 years of creditable service and is at least 55 years of age.
  2. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 60 years of age.
  3. Has at least 5 years of creditable service and is at least 62 years of age.

If the postmaster is employed under the Federal Employees Retirement System, one of the following conditions must be met:

- d. Has at least 30 years of creditable service and is at least the minimum retirement age (MRA) (see 583.14).
- e. Has at least 10 years of creditable service and is at least the MRA. This is a reduced annuity retirement, without a reduction of 1/6 of 1 percent for each month the employee is under age 62.
- f. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 60 years of age.
- g. Has at least 5 years of creditable service and is at least 62 years of age.

The district manager advises the postmaster of the eligibility for voluntary retirement. Under no

circumstances may the district manager attempt to coerce the postmaster into taking voluntary retirement in lieu of reassignment to a postmaster, supervisory, or any other position in the Postal Service. The decision to take voluntary retirement in lieu of reassignment must be made by the postmaster, and this alternative may not be recommended by the district manager, unless the postmaster has chosen it.

☐ *Discontinued Service Annuity.* Eligibility for a discontinued service annuity is established if, by the recommended date of discontinuance of the Post Office, the postmaster has been employed under the Civil Service Retirement System for at least 1 year within the 2-year period preceding the discontinuance (see 563.21), and:

1. Has at least 25 years of creditable service regardless of age.
2. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 50 years of age.

The district manager advises the postmaster of the eligibility for a discontinued service annuity and of the fact that under present law this type of an annuity requires a reduction of 1/6 of 1 percent for each month the employee is under 55 years of age at the time of retirement.

If the postmaster is under the Federal Employees Retirement System, the same age and service requirements must be met, but there is no reduction for being under age 55 (see 583.21).

Under no circumstances may the district manager attempt to coerce the postmaster to accept a discontinued service annuity in lieu of assignment to a postmaster, supervisory, or any other position in the Postal Service. The decision to accept a discontinued service annuity in lieu of reassignment must be made by the postmaster, and the district manager may not recommend this alternative, unless the postmaster has chosen it.

### **354.342 Supervisors**

When the district manager proposes to recommend the discontinuance of a Post Office at which a supervisor is stationed and whose position would be abolished, each of the following alternatives, as applicable and appropriate, is discussed with the affected supervisor, and the district manager prepares a memorandum for the record stating which alternative is recommended. The following alternatives are available:

- a. *Reassignment to a Postmaster Vacancy.* The district manager may recommend that the established procedures for the selection of postmasters be waived, and that the supervisor be reassigned to an existing postmaster vacancy. The district manager includes a statement that the supervisor meets the requirements and qualifications of the vacant postmaster position to which reassignment is recommended and can satisfactorily perform the duties of that position, and a signed statement from the supervisor that the reassignment as recommended by the district manager will, if approved, be accepted.
- b. *Reassignment to a Supervisory Vacancy.* The district manager may recommend that the supervisor be reassigned to an existing supervisory vacancy, including that of a station or branch established as a result of a consolidation. The district manager includes a statement that the supervisor meets the requirements and qualifications of the vacant supervisory position to which reassignment is recommended and can satisfactorily perform the duties of that position, and endorses a signed statement from the supervisor that the reassignment as recommended by the district manager will, if approved, be accepted.
- c. *Reassignment to Another Position in the Postal Service.* If there are no postmaster or supervisory vacancies to which the supervisor can be reassigned, either because the

vacancies do not exist or it is determined and documented that the supervisor does not meet the requirements and qualifications of the positions that are available and cannot satisfactorily perform those duties, the district manager recommends that the supervisor be reassigned to another position in the Postal Service. Supervisors may be offered available full- or part-time clerk, carrier, or other craft positions for which they are qualified. In all such cases, the individual's seniority is established in accordance with the applicable provisions of the National Agreement. A signed statement from the supervisor that the reassignment to another position in the Postal Service as recommended by the district manager will, if approved, be accepted, must be obtained for the record.

- d. *Voluntary Retirement.* Eligibility for voluntary retirement is established if, by the expected date of discontinuance of the Post Office, the supervisor has been employed under the Civil Service Retirement System for at least 1 year within the 2-year period preceding the discontinuance, and:
1. Has at least 30 years of creditable service and is at least 55 years of age.
  2. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 60 years of age.
  3. Has at least 5 years of creditable service and is at least 62 years of age.

If the supervisor is under the Federal Employees Retirement System, one of the following conditions must be met:

- d. Has at least 30 years of creditable service and is at least the MRA (see 583.14).
- e. Has at least 10 years of creditable service and is at least the MRA. This is a reduced annuity retirement, without a reduction of 1/6 of 1 percent for each month the employee is under age 62.
  - f. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 60 years of age.
  - g. Has at least 5 years of creditable service and is at least 62 years of age.

The district manager advises the supervisor of the eligibility for voluntary retirement. Under no circumstances may the district manager attempt to coerce the supervisor into taking voluntary retirement in lieu of reassignment to a postmaster, supervisory, or any other position in the Postal Service. The decision to take voluntary retirement in lieu of reassignment must be made by the supervisor, and this alternative may not be recommended by the district manager unless the supervisor has chosen it.

*Discontinued Service Annuity.* Eligibility for a discontinued service annuity is established if, by the recommended date of discontinuance of the Post Office, the supervisor has been employed under the Civil Service Retirement System for at least 1 year within the 2-year period preceding the discontinuance (see 583.21), and:

1. Has at least 25 years of creditable service regardless of age.
2. Has at least 20 years of creditable service and is at least 50 years of age.

The district manager advises the supervisor of the eligibility for a discontinued service annuity and that under present law this type of an annuity requires a reduction of 1/6 of 1 percent for each month the employee is under 55 years of age at the time of retirement.

If the supervisor is under the Federal Employees Retirement System, the same age and service requirements must be met, but there is no reduction for under age 55 (see 583.21).

Under no circumstances may the district manager attempt to coerce the supervisor into accepting a discontinued service annuity in lieu of reassignment to a postmaster, supervisory, or any other position in the Postal Service. The decision to accept a discontinued service annuity in

lieu of reassignment must be made by the supervisor, and the district manager may not recommend this alternative, unless the supervisor has chosen it.

#### **354.343 Reassignment to Higher Grade Position**

In situations where the proposed reassignment would be to a higher-grade position and a promotion procedure is prescribed by regulation, that promotion procedure must be followed.

#### **354.344 Salary Protection**

See 415.12 for information on salary protection.

#### **354.345 Relocation Expenses**

Any postmaster or supervisor who is reassigned as a result of the discontinuance of the Post Office where employed is entitled to reimbursement of approved relocation expenses consistent with Handbook F-15, *Travel and Relocation*.

#### **354.346 Discussions With Postmasters and Supervisors**

When possible, the district manager must discuss with the affected postmasters and supervisors the alternatives available to them incident to the discontinuance of their Post Office of employment. In isolated instances where the district manager cannot personally discuss this with the affected postmasters and supervisors, a manager at the district as designated by the district manager performs it.

#### **354.347 Subsequent Personnel Actions**

Employees who voluntarily accept lower-grade positions may subsequently be assigned to positions that do not exceed the grade from which they were downgraded. The normal promotion procedures may be waived. However, employees must meet the prescribed minimum qualification requirements for the positions to which they are assigned. Eligibility for special placement in postmaster positions described in 354.341 is limited to 104 weeks.

#### **354.348 Refusal of Reassignment Offer**

If a postmaster or supervisor is offered reassignment to a postmaster, supervisory, or any other position in the Postal Service and refuses to accept any of these alternatives, RIF procedures are instituted. The postmasters or supervisors must apply for any retirement benefits for which they are eligible. If the postmaster or supervisor is separated from the Postal Service and is not eligible for either voluntary retirement or a discontinued service annuity, severance pay is paid if provided for in the relevant Postal Service rules and regulations.