

POLICY ISSUE INFORMATION

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FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: William D. Travers
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SUBJECT: STATUS OF THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To inform the Commission of the status of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program at the NRC.

BACKGROUND:

The Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, as amended, requires the NRC Executive Director for Operations (EDO) to report to the Commission, at semi-annual public meetings, on the problems, progress, and status of the agency's EEO Program. For the next briefing, scheduled for June 2, 2004, the staff will provide a discussion of new and existing activities of the agency's EEO and diversity management (DM) program: (1) enhanced management accountability and training on EEO and diversity management, (2) the draft Comprehensive Diversity Management Plan (CDMP), and (3) affirmative employment initiatives including significant demographic changes since the last briefing. Our discussion will also include a status on meeting No FEAR Act requirements and a summary of the agency's Federal procurement preference achievements.

Program objectives and accomplishments remained centered around the basic framework of the four guiding principles listed in the NRC's Affirmative Employment Plan (AEP): (1) create a discrimination-free work environment; (2) ensure that agency policies, processes, and procedures provide employees the opportunity to participate in the agency's mission and enable fair and equitable competition for career enhancement and advancement; (3) employ a

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competent, highly skilled, and diverse workforce in a positive work environment; and (4) recognize and value diversity, thereby demonstrating trust, respect, and concern for the welfare of all employees within the agency.

Following the last briefing on December 9, 2003, the Commission requested, through a Staff Requirements Memorandum (SRM), dated December 18, 2003, that the staff: (1) develop a comprehensive plan to ensure continued progress in reaching NRC's diversity goals, (2) provide a progress report at the next EEO meeting on agency efforts to establish performance measures for EEO initiatives, (3) accelerate the projected schedule for all NRC managers to complete required EEO and diversity training, and (4) consider ways to improve marketing of the NRC Intern Program to prospective candidates. Response for items 1 thru 3 are provided as part of the discussion in this EEO briefing paper. Response to item number 4 is included in Attachment 1.

This report includes a Joint Statement from the Advisory Committee for African Americans, Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee, Federally Employed Women Advisory Committee, Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee, and Committee on Age Discrimination (Attachment 2).

DISCUSSION:

(1) Management Accountability

Creating an inclusive and discrimination-free work environment is our central EEO and diversity management objective. Strategies that continue to support this objective include: practicing sound management and leadership that supports effective communication, valuing differences and diverse approaches to problem solving leading to continuous improvement and innovation, respecting differences, fostering teamwork, and facilitating early resolution of issues.

The newly established Senior Performance Officials are charged with assessing performance results for senior executives. Input from the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR) on office-specific EEO and diversity management accomplishments will assist these officials in fulfilling this government-wide requirement.

Managers play a key role in formulating and implementing EEO and diversity management strategies. SBCR and the Office of Human Resources have worked closely to provide management with tools to assist them in these efforts. For example, additional sessions of the required *EEO and Diversity Management* course have been scheduled. The course is designed to enhance management awareness and understanding of current EEO laws and management responsibilities and the concept and impact of managing diversity. As noted during the last EEO briefing, 287 managers, supervisors, and team leaders had not completed this training since 1999. So far in fiscal year 2004, 100 employees (79 current managers, supervisors, and team leaders and 21 non-supervisory employees) have taken the training.

A sufficient number of sessions are scheduled this year to facilitate providing this training to the remaining managers, supervisors and team leaders who have not completed the training. A session will also be included as part of the training curriculum for all future SES Candidate Development Program and Leadership Potential Program participants.

The EEO Advisory Committees continue to work closely with SBCR and management to identify and address agency-wide concerns that may impact EEO and diversity management, provide input regarding office-specific EEO and diversity management strategies, and improve communications and the overall work environment. The Joint Statement, included as Attachment 2 to this paper, identifies the Committees' most critical issues and recommendations.

(2) Draft Comprehensive Diversity Management Plan

It is critical that NRC diversity management be part of a comprehensive framework that provides NRC managers and staff the tools and guidance needed to create an environment that values different perspectives and ideas. Managing NRC's diversity by allowing employees to fully participate and succeed will increase the agency's capacity to achieve its mission.

SBCR, along with the SBCR-led EEO and Diversity Management Task Force, proposed three EEO and diversity management goals, with accompanying outcome and output measures. These goals align with NRC Organizational Values, the Strategic Plan, the Performance Plan, the Performance Management System and the Affirmative Employment Plan. The draft CDMP focuses on developing performance measures that help foster an environment that maximizes the productivity and values the contributions of all employees for the sake of the agency's mission. It also defines diversity in the broader context of managing and capitalizing on differences in people. The draft CDMP was provided to the Commission Offices via a Commissioners Assistant note on May 12, 2004.

To facilitate finalizing and implementing this Plan a series of meetings with the EDO and program office managers will be held as part of the agency-wide communication and coordination of this initiative. This will allow opportunity for managers to provide feedback on the proposed goals and reach agreement on what measures will be employed at the office level. The office-level measures will be included in the final version of the Plan.

(3) Results of Affirmative Employment Initiatives on EEO

Hires - Several initiatives are in place to attract and retain highly qualified and diverse applicants. The agency continues to use a successful recruitment model to attract applicants at the entry-level and the mid-level. This model includes focused recruitment at universities and at professional career fairs and conferences, diverse recruitment teams, advertising in engineering and scientific publications, advertising via NRC's automated NRCareers network, and maintaining liaison with institutions that have significant representation of women and minority students.

The table below shows a demographic breakout on hiring.

**Agency FY 2003 & FY 2004
Hiring Activity (Permanent Employees)**

	FY 2003 Hires As of 3/31/03		FY 2004 Hires As of 3/31/04		Total On Board As of 3/31/04	
Total	100	100%	97	100%	3027	100%
African American	8	8%	11	11%	405	13%
Asian Pacific American	8	8%	4	4%	219	7%
Hispanic	8	8%	1	1%	135	4%
Native American	2	1%	0	0%	11	.36%
White Female	19	19%	24	25%	741	24%
White Male	56	56%	57	59%	1516	50%

When compared to hires as of March 31, 2003, the number and percent of women and minorities hired as of March 31, 2004, is lower for minorities and slightly higher for white women and white men. Additionally, while the agency continues to address increased workload and FTE challenges, the percent representation of on-board staff, including women and minorities, has remained relatively constant (minorities 25%, white women 24%, and white men 50%).

Targeted Entry-Level Recruitment - NRC participated in 34 events, including 21 college career fairs and 13 professional and commercial recruitment events focused on minorities. Interviews targeting minority applicants and NRC information sessions/classroom presentations were conducted on five college campuses, including Howard University, Alabama A&M, University of Puerto Rico, Morgan State University, and South Carolina State University.

Nuclear Safety Development Program Hires - A total of 906 applicants applied for the FY 2004 Nuclear Safety Development Program and offers were made to 54 applicants: 11 minorities, 11 white women, 19 white men, and 13 unidentified. A total of 28 offers have been accepted: 7 minorities, 7 white women, 11 white men, and 3 unidentified. Twenty have declined. This program remains a vital source for increasing representation of women and minorities in engineering, scientific, and administrative entry-level positions.

Targeted Feeder Pool (GG-13-15) Hires - NRC placed additional focus on enhancing the agency's ability to target and attract women and minorities at the GG-13 through 15 mid-levels. As of March 31, 2004, there were 1381 GG-13 through 15 scientists and engineers on board: 283 (20%) minorities, 135 (10%) white women, and 963 (70%) white men. New hires as of March 31, 2004, include 72 engineers and scientists at the GG-13-15 grade level: 12 (17%) minorities, 13 (18%) white women, and 47 (65%) white men. Sixty-six technical hires are pending: 9 (14%) minorities, 6 (9%) white women, and 51 (77%) white men, and these employees are expected to enter on duty by June 30, 2004. These are experienced employees with the necessary skills to strengthen the pipeline from which first-line supervisory positions are filled.

Staff Development and Retention - NRC seeks to attract and retain a highly qualified and diverse staff at the senior level. Over the past year, several strategies were implemented to increase the potential for enhanced diversity for developmental and advancement opportunities for senior level positions. Initiatives to support these strategies included enhanced management accountability, continued focused recruitment, use of diversity management principles in conducting workforce and succession planning, and continued use of the SES Candidate Development Program (SES CDP) and the Leadership Potential Program (LPP) processes. During the recent SES CDP implementation, 120 applicants applied including 14 African Americans, 10 Asians, 3 Hispanics, 1 Native American, 15 white women, and 68 white men. Selections are pending. These candidates will increase the potential for enhanced diversity at the SES level. During FY 2004, the numbers of SES managers increased from 146 to 152: Asians increased from 6 to 7, white women increased from 19 to 22, and white men increased from 111 to 113. All other minority groups remained the same. Additionally, as noted in the last briefing, of the 25 participants of the FY 2004 graduating LPP class, 44% are minorities, 20% are white women and 36% are white men. We anticipate implementing the next LPP class in FY 2005.

(4) No FEAR Act Requirements

As noted in our last EEO briefing paper, the No FEAR Act requires agencies to post on their public websites, information on EEO complaint activity for fiscal year 2004 and for the five preceding fiscal years. NRC's complaint activity for FY 1999 through the second quarter of FY 2004 can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/who-we-are/civil-rights/dca.html>. The No FEAR Act also requires agencies to train their managers, supervisors, and employees on their responsibilities regarding EEO. As stated earlier, a total of 79 managers and supervisors have taken EEO and diversity management training this year.

Federal Procurement Preference Program

The strategy developed last year to improve the status of our small business accomplishments has led to some positive gains in the small business procurement area. Improved communications with the major program offices, expanded training of key staff, and closer monitoring of office accomplishments led to dollar increases in FY 2003 for 4 of the 6 small business categories. The data show that for FY 2003, the NRC met and exceeded 3 of its 6 small business goals and narrowly missed meeting a fourth. Only two of the goals had been achieved in FY 2002. We're confident that these gains will continue for the current fiscal year as program offices become more aware of the importance of their individual procurement actions to the NRC's overall performance.

Summary

Since the last EEO briefing, several initiatives have been implemented to improve our ability to achieve our EEO and diversity management goals. They include (1) enhanced management accountability in support of EEO and diversity management initiatives to create a work environment that is free of discrimination; (2) implementation of a draft Comprehensive Diversity Management Plan to provide managers with tools and guidance to help create a model agency that values differences; (3) implementation of affirmative employment initiatives to attract, develop, and retain highly qualified and diverse employees at all levels; and (4) implementation of minority outreach efforts to enhance the agency's ability to meet and/or exceed its small business goals. These initiatives, linked with other key activities and agency systems such as the Strategic Plan, Performance Plan, Performance Management System, and the Affirmative Employment Plan will enhance our ability to increase our organizational capacity in pursuit of the agency's mission while providing employees an equal chance to succeed in a positive work environment.

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Attachments: 1. Copy of the SRM and our response
2. Joint Statement

Marketing Strategy for the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program

To showcase the NRC as the 'Federal Agency of Choice' for a select group of highly qualified engineers and scientists, in addition to highly qualified support applicants.

NRC will attend over 60 recruitment events predominantly at universities and professional organizations during FY04. These institutions have produced highly qualified candidates in the past, with skills and disciplines needed to function as NRC employees. The organizations selected provide a cross section of minority and women students and professional applicants nationwide. Also, student-led organizational activities, recruitment events for people with disabilities, search firms, employment databases; and advertisements are placed in selected periodicals throughout the year to inform highly qualified individuals of NRC employment opportunities. During FY 04 the Interviewing Skills and Techniques for Recruiters training course was developed for recruiters to enhance their recruiting skills and techniques.

NRC vacancies are posted on the OPM's job website at www.usajobs.opm.gov.

Current marketing strategies used for the FY 2004 NRC Intern Program yielded 1262 applications from applicants nationwide. Out of the 1262 applicants, 362 were best qualified.

To address confusion among applicants created by use of the term "intern," the name of the program has been changed to Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program.

**Joint EEO Advisory Committee Statement
June 2, 2004**

The Joint Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee is composed of the following five authorized committees: Advisory Committee for African Americans (ACAA); Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee (APAAC); Committee on Age Discrimination (CAD); Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee (FWPAC); and Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee (HEPAC). The EEO Committees work in concert with the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR) to contribute to the agency goal of creating "a work environment that provides opportunity for all employees to optimally use their diverse talents in support of NRC's mission and goals." The EEO Advisory Committees contribute to achieving this goal by providing advice and recommendations to the Director, SBCR regarding factors that may impact policies, procedures, and practices related to the selection, promotion, placement, training, upgrading, and career development of NRC employees or selection of applicants for employment.

This Joint Statement represents the interests, concerns and recommendations of each individual group and emphasizes areas where our concerns overlap. NRC has made significant advancements but many challenges remain. The agency has demonstrated commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity and managing diversity in the following areas.

The agency committed itself to promoting a discrimination-free work environment and practicing EEO and diversity management principles when making recruitment, staffing, and placement decisions based on merit. Much progress has been made, especially in the area of minority recruitment for entry level positions at the grade levels GG-5 thru GG-12. The EEO Advisory Committees are working diligently with SBCR to ensure that the agency realizes its goals.

NRC continues to support diversity in career development activities such as demonstrated in the current Leadership Potential Program Class of 2004. This class is composed of 44% minorities, 36% white males and 20% white females. The agency has diversified its corps of first-line supervisors. It is our hope that this will continue, and be extended into the senior management ranks. The upcoming SES Development Program provides an excellent opportunity for the NRC to continue to demonstrate its commitment to diversity.

NRC offers several family friendly programs to allow employees to balance between the demands of work and personal lives such as day care services, fitness center, flexible work place, and adjustable work schedules. These programs create a supportive environment for employees and have a positive impact on morale, productivity, retention, and promotion of a healthier workforce.

However, other challenges remain:

- 1) The primary challenge facing the agency is the limited number of qualified minority applicants in feeder groups for management positions. For example, the last SES Candidate Development Class was 86% white, with white men constituting 59% and white women 27%. The scarcity of minority men and women in the feeder group, especially Asians and Hispanics is troubling. Unfortunately, the recent success in hiring minority entry-level employees will not

begin to address this inequity and imbalance for years to come. Consequently, other strategies, such as recruitment of experienced personnel from outside the NRC and active employee development, must be emphasized to address the historical under-representation of minorities in feeder groups.

Additionally, challenges remain with respect to active employee development and improvement in the work culture. All EEO groups identified career development for technical and administrative employees as a major concern. The perceived obstacles to career development include factors such as discrimination in quality of work assignments, the lack of mentorship, limited exposure to senior management, and exclusion from informal networks resulting in professional isolation.

The career development effort should stress the mentoring relationship between senior managers and minority staff. It is well established that good advice, sound guidance, coaching and inspiration are keys to success at the NRC. Unfortunately, many minority employees lack such a positive and enriching relationship with senior managers.

We understand that recruitment of experienced personnel is often dictated by financial concerns that may limit management's decision to have an immediate impact on career advancement. However, active employee development is a remedy that can be implemented immediately.

2) Administrative employees, in the regions and at headquarters, perceive that their contribution to the success of the agency's mission is marginalized. Without question, the NRC is a technical agency. However, approximately 30% of the NRC workforce is comprised of administrative staff. This portion of the workforce is overwhelmingly female and contains a high percentage of African-Americans. Unnecessary limits on opportunities for administrative personnel to improve their skills hinders the progression of the agency, creates acrimony in the workplace, and prevents the agency from enjoying the full potential of a large percentage of its staff.

3) In the December 2003 EEO Briefing, the Joint EEO Advisory Committee raised the issue of correlation between performance appraisal ratings and age. A study was conducted by Dr. Dan Lurie, NRC statistician, and the results confirmed that (1) older non-supervisory engineers and scientists received lower performance appraisal ratings than their younger colleagues and (2) as some employees got older their performance ratings decreased. The cause for any of the findings cannot be determined from the study. The analysis performed by CAD suggested that the performance appraisal ratings of older engineers and scientists were about twice as likely to decline as those of younger staff. There is a concern that declining performance of some older scientists and engineers may represent ineffective and inefficient utilization of critical staff resources.

To address the issues stated, we recommend the following actions.

A. Make management accountable for the development of all employees. Managers should consider all employees equally when assigning work to ensure that all groups are provided an equal opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities to receive and perform tasks of increased complexity and responsibility. Consider diversity when identifying highly qualified candidates to senior positions.

B. Make a commitment to better support the developmental needs of administrative employees with both internal and external training.

C. Involve senior staff in the important work of the agency and utilize them as mentors to transfer valuable knowledge, skills, and experience. Advise and remind supervisors that only work related issues may be considered in evaluating staff performance i.e., age is not to be considered as a factor. Provide age data on the Leadership Potential Program for both applicants and selectees; and initiate collection of age data for job applicants, especially applicants for promotion. Conduct an independent study to ascertain the reasons for lower performance appraisal ratings for older (50 years of age or older) non-supervisory scientists and engineers.

In conclusion, the EEO committees are heartened by the efforts made by the agency thus far, and have every confidence that progress will continue. We challenge the agency to continue its exemplary effort in diversity and offer our assistance in any way possible to help the NRC achieve its safety mission and reach its diversity goals.