

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
**Headquarters**  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



April 6,2007

Reply to Attn Of: Headquarters Human Resources Management Division

TO: Distribution

FROM: Director, Headquarters Human Resources Management Division

SUBJECT: Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS):  
2006-07 Ratings and Implementation of EPCS Changes for 2007-08

The annual performance cycle for employees covered by the Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) will end on April 30,2007. This year's rating process will be similar to last year's, and will be governed by the current EPCS policy contained in NPR 3430.1B (the three-level system). The original signed performance ratings are due to this Division by **Friday, June 8,2007**. Performance awards nominations are due by **Friday, July 13,2007**. Additional guidance for completing this year's ratings is enclosed with this memo. Additional guidance for processing performance awards will be sent separately to Administrative Contacts.

The revised EPCS, which is a five-level performance management system, will go into effect on May 1,2007. Performance plans for the May 1,2007 to April 30, 2008, cycle will be prepared on new forms that reflect the requirements of the revised system. The enclosed draft Special Announcement summarizes the features of the revised system and gives links to sources of additional information.

The revised EPCS requires that each employee's performance requirements must directly link to and support **NASA's** mission. It also stresses the responsibility of supervisors at all levels to use the performance system effectively, to make meaningful distinctions in performance, and to distribute performance awards fairly, based on employee performance ratings. To enable supervisors and employees to make full and effective use of the revised system, the Office of Human Capital Management is providing extensive training and information for all EPCS users:

- An online training tutorial in SATERN is required for supervisors of EPCS covered employees and strongly encouraged for non-supervisory employees.
- Optional coaching skills training for supervisors and managers "Maximize Performance Through Coaching: Performance Conversations Made Easy" will be available in July 2007.
- An updated and expanded website will provide easy access to all documents and guidance.

In addition to these Agency-wide offerings, this Division has partnered with the Headquarters Training Office to develop a workshop on writing performance elements and standards. The workshop will be available to your Directorates and Offices starting in May, 2007.

Performance plans under the new system must be completed by August 1, 2007, a one-time extension of the usual requirement to complete plans within 30 days of the beginning of the rating cycle. This extension will allow you and your staff to take advantage of the multiple training and opportunities before finalizing the new performance plans.

For more information on the EPCS procedures, both current and new, please call Dorothy Egbert on 358-1162; for more information about training opportunities, please call Donna Williams on 358-3624.



Leah Hollander

Enclosures:

1. Guidance for Completing 2007 Performance Ratings
2. Headquarters Special Notice on Revisions to the EPCS (Draft)

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Office of Innovative Partnerships Program/Ms. Butler  
Office of Integrated Enterprise Management Program/Mr. German  
Office of Program and Institutional Integration/Ms. Dunn  
Office of Program and Institutional Integration/Ms. Hoover  
Office of General Counsel/Mr. Harris

HRMD Staff

## **Guidance for Completing 2006-2007 Performance Ratings:**

**Applicable Policy:** NPR 3430.1B, dated March 22, 2005

**Forms:**<sup>1</sup> NF-1726 for Supervisors; NF-1727 for Non-Supervisory Employees

**Due Date:** Friday, June 8, 2007, to the Headquarters Human Resources Management Division, Attn: Dorothy Egbert

**Covered Employees:** All employees are covered by the Employee Performance Communication System (EPCS) except for: Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Scientific and Technical (ST), Senior Level (SL) Employees, and certain Students and Consultants who serve on intermittent appointments. NASA Excepted Employees (NEX) are covered by the EPCS.

**Reviewing Officials:** A higher level review is required for “Distinguished” and “Fails to Meet Expectations” ratings. This review must be completed before the supervisor communicates the rating to the employee.

**Details and Position Changes:**<sup>2</sup> Employees who have changed positions or who have served on details longer than 90 days will be rated by their current permanent supervisor. The current supervisor (Rating Official) may request written input from previous supervisors or detail supervisors. The current supervisor may also request input from team leaders, customers, and others who have interacted with employees in a non-supervisory capacity.

Similar procedures may be followed when there has been a change of supervisors for an organizational unit—even if the Non-Supervisory Employees’ positions have not changed. That is, the supervisor in place as of the end of the rating cycle prepares the employees’ ratings with input from any previous supervisors. As an alternative, the current and previous supervisor may prepare and communicate ratings jointly.

**New Employees:** The NASA minimum appraisal period is 90 days. Employees who have been on a performance plan for less than 90 days as of April 30, 2007, will have their performance period extended until the 90-day period has been completed, at which time they will be rated on the plan that was in effect during that period. They will then be given a new performance plan (under the new 5-level system) that will be in effect from the end of their 90-day extended performance period through April 30, 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> New forms will be used for the cycle that starts on May 1, 2007. They are: NF-1762 for Supervisors and NF-1763 for Non-Supervisory Employees.

**Distinguished Ratings:** There is no predetermined limit on Distinguished ratings. Every employee should have the opportunity to demonstrate performance that significantly exceeds the requirements in his or her individual performance plan.

However, the intent of the EPCS policy is that Distinguished ratings should be used to recognize performance that is truly above and beyond the normal expectations. employees who accomplish all that is expected of them, who respond to challenges and adapt to changing work situations, are exhibiting performance that “Meets or Exceeds Expectations.” Performance that reaches the Distinguished level may reflect, for example:

- Highly unusual creativity, initiative, or innovation;
- Accomplishments/results that far exceeded the norm;
- Development of techniques or processes that established a precedent for future endeavors, or a model for other employees to follow;
- Anticipation and prevention of potential problems (in contrast to effective response to problems once they have occurred);
- Exceptional customer service in difficult situations; and
- Voluntary assumption of demanding additional tasks—while continuing to achieve all expectations for regular duties.

This is not an exhaustive list or a set of absolute criteria, but rather a set of examples of the sort of performance that could justify a Distinguished rating.

**Fails to Meet Expectations Ratings:** As always, please consult with Headquarters Human Resources Management Division (HRMD) before assigning a “Fails to Meet” rating. We will assist you with procedural requirements and corrective actions.

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<sup>2</sup> Revised procedures for rating employees who have been detailed, or who have changed positions, are contained in the new EPCS NPR, and will apply to ratings given in Spring of 2008.

## Special Notice Input

### Revisions to the Employee Performance Communications System and Agencwide Training Effort

This Special Notice announces The Employee Performance Communications System (EPCS) revision NPR 3430.1C, which is the performance management system for all employees except Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Scientific and Technical (ST), and Senior Level (SL) employees.

These changes will become effective at the beginning of the next appraisal period, May 1, 2007, and to learn more about the revised system please review: <http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/perform/index.htm>.

#### Major Revisions

\*Effective at the beginning of the next appraisal period, May 1, 2007

- Moving from a three-level performance management system to a five-level system
- New five-level adjective labels for performance element summary ratings
- Required performance elements
  - Employees
    - Program/Project/Functional Objectives (PPFO) (the only mandatory, critical element)
    - Communications
    - Collaboration and Teamwork
  - Supervisors (both are critical)
    - Program/Project/Functional Objectives (PPFO)
    - Supervisory Competencies
- Requirement that monetary performance awards directly link to the performance ratings. Guideline established as to the percentage of salary or range of percentage of salary that must be used for each performance summary rating.

#### Headquarters' Training Plan

- An online training tutorial in SATERN is **required** for supervisors and strongly encouraged for employees
- Coaching Skills Training for Supervisors and Managers (July 2007)
- Writing Performance Standards and Elements Workshop (date to be determined)
- An updated and expanded website to provide written examples of elements and performance standards, helpful hints on having quality conversations, and checklists and worksheets to help both Supervisors and Employees with the performance management process.

***The on-line tutorial and coaching skills training for Supervisors and Managers is expected to roll-out in April 2007.*** More information about these training courses will be forthcoming.

The Headquarters Point of Contacts:

EPCS procedures: Dorothy Egbert, Labor Relations Officer, Headquarters Human Resources Management Division, 358-6112/email: [dorothy.s.egbert@nasa.gov](mailto:dorothy.s.egbert@nasa.gov),  
Training information: Donna Williams, Manager, Leadership and Supervisory Development, 358-3624/email: [donna.a.williams@nasa.gov](mailto:donna.a.williams@nasa.gov)