



U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board

SUBJECT: GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS) AWARDS AND INCENTIVE PROGRAM

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1. **PURPOSE.** This order establishes policies and standard operating procedures for administering an awards program for the employees of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB). The program provides for recognizing and rewarding employees and groups of employees for their performance and contributions to the core values, mission, and strategic goals of the CSB.
2. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This order is effective upon passage by the Board.
3. **SCOPE.** This order applies to all CSB General Schedule employees.
4. **REFERENCES.**
 - a. 5 U.S.C. § 45 – Incentive Awards;
 - b. 5 C.F.R. Part 451 – Awards;
 - c. 5 C.F.R. Part 430 – Performance Management;
 - d. 5 C.F.R. Part 531, Subpart E – Quality Step Increases;
 - e. 5 C.F.R. § 534.405 – Performance Awards; and
 - f. 5 U.S.C. § 5384 – Performance Awards in the Senior Executive Service (SES).
5. **POLICY.** It is the policy of the CSB to encourage employees to achieve superior performance in their jobs and to actively seek ways to improve CSB operations. The awards program will be used to recognize and reward eligible employees who have made significant contributions beyond what is normally expected as part of their regular duties. Actual awards and recognition will be commensurate with the purpose and intent of the award granted and provide for special acknowledgement of the accomplishments.
6. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Award** – something bestowed or an action taken to recognize excellence in performance and reward an individual or team achievement that contributes to meeting organizational goals or improving efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of the Government or is otherwise in the public interest.
 - b. **Career Service Award** – non-monetary recognition of career service that includes both length of Federal Service and retirement recognition.
 - c. **Contribution** – (used in connection with On-the-Spot awards, and Special Act or Service Awards) an accomplishment achieved through an individual or group effort in the form of an invention, or a special act or service in the public interest connected with, or related to, official employment which contributes to the efficiency, economy or other improvement of the Government operations or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork.

- d. **Honor Award** – an agency award granted to an individual or group for their contribution or achievement in support of the organization’s mission or goals.
- e. **Monetary Award** – a cash payment to an employee for a qualifying performance rating or an exceptional or special contribution not associated with a performance rating.
- f. **Non-monetary Award** – a medal, certificate, plaque, citation, challenge coin, or other memento or any other item that has the connotation of an award or honor when presented.
- g. **On-the-Spot Award** – an award that is designed to provide immediate recognition for exceptional contributions that benefit agency operations.
- h. **Performance Award or Performance-Based Cash Award** – a cash payment to an employee based upon the employee’s rating of record and a written justification authorized by 5 U.S.C. § 4505(a) and 5 C.F.R. § 451.104.
- i. **Quality Step Increase (QSI)** – an increase in an employee’s rate of basic pay from one step or rate of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade or next higher rate within the grade (as defined in 5 C.F.R. § 531.403) for high quality performance in accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 5336 and with 5 C.F.R. Part 531.
- j. **Special Act or Service Award** – a special contribution or accomplishment in the public interest which is a contribution either within or outside of job responsibilities.
- k. **Time-off Award** – an excused absence granted to an employee without charge to leave or loss of pay, granted to a Federal employee as a form of incentive or recognition. Time-off awards may be granted as an incentive or recognition for an invention, superior accomplishment, productivity gain or other personal effort that contributes to efficiency, economy or other improvement of the Government operations including validated cost savings and productivity improvements; or a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. **Board** – Approves budget line-item amount for awards and incentive program.
- b. **Chairperson** is responsible for approving all monetary awards, QSIs, Special Act or Service Awards, and time-off awards greater than forty (40) hours. This authority may be redelegated as deemed appropriate.

- c. **The Office of Human Resources** is responsible for the following:
 - (1) Providing training, information, and assistance on the Program for managers, supervisors, and employees;
 - (2) Ensuring that awards and recognition are used appropriately to reward employees and in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and OPM guidance;
 - (3) Serving as the point of contact for the receipt, review, and control of approved award nominations and justifications;
 - (4) Inputting monetary and time-off awards for processing, controlling, and distribution of award items/supplies, and forwarding documentation for upload to employee's electronic personnel folder (eOPF);
 - (5) Tracking all employees for length-of-service awards and ensuring award supplies are on hand for timely presentation; and
 - (6) Annually reviewing the awards program to assess whether the program is commensurate with CSB accomplishments and budget.
- d. **Reviewing Officials**, or the second level Supervisor, are responsible for reviewing and approving supervisory award recommendations if they have been given delegated authority by the Chairperson to approve awards, prior to submission to the Office of Human Resources.
- e. **Supervisors** are responsible for the following:
 - (1) Recommending awards for an employee or group of employees whose contributions and achievements warrant recognition;
 - (2) Considering input from appropriate sources when making award recommendations;
 - (3) Reviewing nominations to ensure that recognition is merited, appropriately justified, and linked to the contribution and/or accomplishment; and
 - (4) Using non-monetary recognition as an alternative to monetary recognition for specific achievements or when monetary recognition is not authorized.
- f. **Employees** are responsible for maintaining a high level of performance and contribution to CSB operations.

8. GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

- a. All awards must be approved within delegated levels of authority. The Approving Official must be at a higher supervisory level than the Recommending Official, unless the award is recommended by the Chairperson, who also serves as the Approving Official.
- b. In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 4502 and 5 C.F.R. Part 451.106, the Chairperson is responsible for reviewing and approving all cash award recommendations in excess of \$10,000 (either as an individual award or as a result of the combination of awards in a fiscal year). The Chairperson may recommend an individual award in excess of \$10,000, but not exceeding \$25,000; however, the award must be approved by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
- c. Recognition should be given for significant performance that advances office and agency goals and should be tied to a specific accomplishment(s).
- d. All awards and recognition require written justification to support the accomplishment(s) being recognized.
- e. Recognition should not be used as a substitute for supplies, support services, or training.
- f. Recognition is most effective when it is meaningful to the individual.
- g. Awards are discretionary, not entitlements, and are not required to be given every year. Awards are contingent on adequate funding.
- h. Monetary awards are paid in a lump sum, not considered a part of an employee's base pay, and are subject to all applicable tax rules.
- i. Employee performance awards should be applied in a fair and equitable manner across the CSB.

9. BASIC ELIGIBILITY. Unless otherwise specified within an individual award category, all CSB employees meeting the basic requirements noted below are eligible for consideration for awards under this program.

- a. Performance rating of record must be *Fully Successful* or above;
- b. No disciplinary actions within the previous 12 months; and
- c. Additional award eligibility criteria are set forth in the descriptions of individual award categories and in the attached table.

10. AWARDS AND RECOGNITION CRITERIA.

- a. **Performance Award.** Performance-based awards are intended to recognize sustained levels of successful performance over the course of the rating period. Employees who receive a rating of record of no less than *Fully Successful* are eligible for a performance-based award.¹ Performance-based awards may not exceed 10 percent of the employee's rate of basic pay. For exceptional accomplishments, the Chairperson may authorize a performance-based award not to exceed 20 percent of the employee's rate of basic pay. An employee may be granted no more than one performance-based award for the same appraisal cycle. In addition to a cash Performance Award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their performance.
- b. **Quality Step Increase (QSI).** A QSI is to provide recognition of sustained high-quality performance and faster-than-normal progression through the step rates of the General Schedule (GS) pay system. An employee must have received an *Outstanding* rating of record to be considered for a QSI. A QSI is not required or automatically granted for an *Outstanding* performance rating. The Supervisor reserves the discretion to grant a QSI. To receive a QSI, an employee must (1) not have received a QSI within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks; and (2) not be at the top step of the pay range. Additionally, an employee may not receive a QSI if he/she has received a performance award based in whole or in part on the performance rating of record for the same appraisal cycle.
- c. **Special Act or Service Award.** Recognizes a special contribution either within or outside of an employee's regular job responsibilities that aids in support of Office or Agency mission and goals. An employee may receive an award in any amount from \$500 up to \$10,000 no more than twice per fiscal year, provided that the total amount of Special Act or Service Awards awarded to any one employee in a single fiscal year may not exceed \$10,000. In addition to a cash Special Act or Service Award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their contribution.
- d. **On-the-Spot Award.** Recognizes special contributions either within or outside of an employee's regular job responsibilities that warrant immediate recognition but have a small monetary value. An employee may receive a small lump-sum payment, not to exceed \$500. An employee may not receive more than four On-the-Spot Awards in any fiscal year, and the total amount of On-the-Spot Awards awarded to any one employee in a single fiscal year may not exceed \$2,000. In addition to a cash On-the-Spot Award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their contribution.

¹ Pursuant to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the CSB and Local 2211, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), cash performance-based awards for CSB employees in the bargaining unit covered by the CBA will be calculated using a percentage of the employee's base pay.

- e. **Time-off Award.** Time-off Awards may be granted to individuals or groups of employees to recognize the same types of accomplishments as cash awards.
- (1) A Supervisor may grant up to 10 hours of time-off without a higher level of review or approval. If the award exceeds 10 hours, but no more than 40 hours; it must be reviewed and approved by an official at a higher level than the recommending official.
 - (2) Awards in excess of 40 hours must be approved by the Chairperson. No more than 80 hours of time off may be granted in a performance year for a single achievement.
 - (3) Part-time employees may be granted time off up to the average number of work hours in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty during a leave year. The limit for any single contribution for part-time employees or employees with an uncommon tour of duty is one-half the maximum that may be granted during the leave year. For example, if an employee has a biweekly scheduled tour of duty of 64 hours, the employee may be granted up to 64 hours of time off during the leave year but cannot be granted an award in excess of 32 hours for a single achievement.
 - (4) Time-off Awards may be granted along with other forms of awards, as long as the total value of the awards given reflects the value of the contribution being recognized. For example, an employee might receive both a one-day time-off award and a \$50 cash award as an award for a single contribution, as long as the combination of the awards does not exceed the value of the employee's contribution.
 - (5) Unused time off will be forfeited once an employee separates or transfers to another federal agency. If forfeited, no other award or compensation may be substituted.
 - (6) A Time-off Award shall not be converted to a cash payment under any circumstances.
- f. **Length of Service Award.** Employees are eligible for length-of-service awards upon completion of the required years of service. In computing eligibility, employees shall receive credit for total Federal service, including all civilian service and all honorable military service credited to their service computation date (SCD). Recognition includes a certificate and a pin. Awards will be presented starting with 5 years of service through 45+ years of service, at 5-year intervals. Appropriate ceremonies for the presentation of Length of Service Awards will be arranged by the Office of Human Resources.
- g. **Recognition upon Retirement.** Each retiring employee will receive a plaque or other recognition upon retirement. The employee will also receive a Presidential Letter of Appreciation, when applicable.

- h. **The Carolyn Merritt Award.** An agency award that recognizes teams or individuals for significant and measurable contributions in meeting one or more of the specific goals in the CSB strategic plan.
 - (1) The Office of Human Resources will solicit nominations for the award annually, normally in September or October;
 - (2) The Office of Human Resources, in coordination with the Chairperson, will select a panel of 3 employees to review the nominations and recommend an award recipient or recipients;
 - (3) Only one award may be given per Strategic Goal, and if there are no nominations or none of the nominations meet a significant and measurable contribution standard, no award will be given that year; and
 - (4) The Chairperson may reject the recommendation(s) of the panel if the Chairperson deems the employee's or employees' contributions not significant enough to warrant this level of recognition.
- i. **Informal Awards (Including Mementos, Apparel, and Other Items).** Informal awards are those given to recognize performance or an accomplishment that, taken alone, may not merit cash, time-off, or an honorary award. These awards are intended to recognize contributions of lesser scope, and include, for example, certificates, folders, plaques, badges, challenge coins, pins, medals, shirts and other apparel, mugs, patches, and caps bearing the CSB logo. The Office of Administration will maintain an inventory of such items for agency-wide use to be awarded to employees, as the budget permits.

11. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS. The Student Loan Program governed by Board Order 31 is not included as a part of the Awards Program. The Student Loan Program is a tool for recruitment and/or retention purposes and should not be used to recognize performance or contributions. Approval for participation in the Student Loan Program, however, disqualifies an employee from receiving a Performance Award or Quality Step Increase.

12. RECORDS.

- a. Supervisors shall document all cash and time-off awards in compliance with this Board Order and forward the original signed Recommendation for Award to the Office of Human Resources for processing.
- b. The Office of Human Resources shall maintain copies of all award recommendations and file award documents in the employees Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).
- c. The Agency shall report awards data to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as appropriate.

13. **REVIEW AND UPDATE**. The Office of Human Resources will be responsible for reviewing this Order at least once biennially and proposing revisions.

U.S. CHEMICAL SAFETY AND HAZARD INVESTIGATION BOARD

Adopted September 8, 2000; Revised, January 17, 2008; Revised May 13, 2014; Revised September 26, 2017; Revised August 3, 2022; Revised April 29, 2024

APPENDIX A - Award Chart

APPENDIX B - Award Recommendation Form

APPENDIX A

Award Category	Award/Amount	Criteria	Approval/Processing
Monetary Awards – Performance Based			
<p><u>Performance Based Cash Award</u></p>	<p>The amount of performance awards will be determined by the Chairperson or his/her designee.</p> <p>The amount of a performance award generally may not be greater than 10% of the employee’s annual rate of basic pay; Chairperson may authorize no more than 20% of the employee’s annual rate of basic pay.</p> <p>In addition to a cash award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be justified in writing. • Performance rating of <i>Fully Successful</i> or higher. • Subject to funds availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended by Supervisor. • Concurred by Reviewing Official • Approved by Chairperson or designee. • OHR processes the award.
<p><u>Quality Step Increase</u></p>	<p>An increase in rate of basic pay from one step or rate to the next higher step or rate within the grade.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance rating of <i>Outstanding</i>. • No Critical Element(s) can be below <i>Exceeds Fully Successful</i>. • Performance is expected to continue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended by Supervisor. • Concurred by Reviewing Official. • Approved by Chairperson or designee. • OHR processes the award.
Monetary Awards - Other			
<p><u>Special Act or Service Award</u></p>	<p>\$500 to \$10,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time special contribution. • Either within or outside of regular job responsibilities. • May receive no more than two in a fiscal year, and the total amount awarded to any one employee in a single fiscal year may not exceed \$10,000. • In addition to a cash award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended by Supervisor. • Concurred by Reviewing Official • Approved by Chairperson or designee. • OHR processes the award.

<p><u>On-the-Spot Award</u></p>	<p>Not to exceed \$500 at one time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special contribution that warrants immediate recognition. • Either within or outside of regular job responsibilities <p>May receive no more than four in a fiscal year, and the total amount awarded to any one employee in a single fiscal year may not exceed \$2,000.</p> <p>In addition to a cash award, an employee also may be awarded apparel and other items bearing the CSB logo in recognition of their performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended by the Supervisor • Approved by Chairperson or designee. • OHR processes the award.
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Award Category	Award/Amount	Criteria	Approval/Processing
Non-Monetary Awards			
<u>Time-Off Award</u>	<p>Excused absence granted without charge to leave or loss of pay.</p> <p>Supervisor may approve up to 40 hours per year.</p> <p>Chair may approve up to 80 hours per year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be justified in writing. • Performance rating of <i>Fully Successful</i> or higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended by the Supervisor. • Approved by Chairperson or Designee. • OHR processes the award.
<u>Length-of-Service Award</u>	Certificate and Pin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No justification required. • Eligible for award upon completion of creditable years of service every 5 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No approval required. • Award processed by OHR. • Presented by the Chairperson.
<u>Informal Award (Memento)</u>	E.g. certificates, folders, plaques, badges, challenge coins, pins, medals, shirts and other apparel, mugs, patches, caps, etc., bearing the CSB logo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be justified in writing. • Contribution of lesser scope than defined for other awards. • Recipient may or may not be a CSB employee. • Appropriate for the public sector and for the use of public funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved by the Supervisor. • OHR processes the award.
<u>Recognition upon Retirement</u>	Retirement Certificate and a Presidential Letter of Appreciation, when applicable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each retiring employee will receive recognition upon retirement. • Employees must have 30 or more years of creditable service towards retirement in order to receive a Presidential Letter of Appreciation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHR requests the letter from the White House, when applicable.
<u>Carolyn Merritt Award</u>	Inscribed certificate or plaque or memento, and either an appropriate lump-sum payment or time-off award.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be justified in writing. • Significant and measurable contribution in meeting one or more of the Agency’s specific goals in the Strategic Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominations are solicited. • Panel reviews and recommends a recipient or recipients to the Chairperson. • Chairperson makes selection(s). • OHR processes the award.

APPENDIX B

Chemical Safety Board – Recommendation for Award

Recipient's Name		Organization	
Recipient's Title, Series, Grade and Step			
AWARD TYPE			
Instructions: Select one award category. See Board Order 013 for award criteria.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Award	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Step Increase (QSI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Act or Service Award	
<input type="checkbox"/> On-the-Spot Award	<input type="checkbox"/> Time-off Award	<input type="checkbox"/> Carolyn Merritt Award	
<input type="checkbox"/> Memento: _____			
FORM OF AWARD			
<input type="checkbox"/> Monetary Award	Proposed Amount: \$ _____ Approved Amount: \$ _____	Recommending Official's Initials: _ Approving Official's Initials: ____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-monetary Award	Proposed Award: _____ Approved Award: _____	Recommending Official's Initials: _ Approving Official's Initials: ____	
Name and Title of Recommending Official			
Signature		Date	
Name and Title of Approving Official			
Signature		Date	
AWARD JUSTIFICATION			
Instructions: Describe in detail why the recommended employee deserves to receive the proposed award, relating specific actions or achievements of the employee to the award criteria set forth in Board Order 013.			