
Reduction in Force (RIF)

A reduction in force is a process an organization may use to reduce the number of positions or employees in its work force. Your job may be affected by a RIF for several reasons:

- Lack of work.
- Shortage of funds.
- Insufficient personnel ceiling.
- Reorganization.
- A former employee is exercising his reemployment or restoration rights.
- Reclassification of your position due to erosion of duties that occurs within 180 days of a formally announced RIF.

ALTERNATIVES TO A RIF

The Corps will use a RIF only when required. We will first use all other possible ways to restructure our work force. These include:

- Attrition.
- Freeze or limited hiring and promotion.
- Separation of temporary employees or reemployed annuitants.
- Corps of Engineers and Department of Defense outplacement programs (pages 9 and 22).
- Voluntary Early Retirement (page 60).

If a RIF becomes the only remaining option, the Corps will—

- Determine which jobs are essential to accomplish its mission.
- Determine which jobs will be abolished.
- Determine which employees about to lose their jobs have rights to other positions (bumping/retreating).
- Issue notices to employees at least 60 days before the RIF takes effect.
- Help employees find other jobs.

COMPETITIVE AREA

The competitive area is the area in which you will compete for jobs. The competitive area will be—

- Geographic.
- Organizational.

For example, if you work at the North Pacific Division, you will not be in the same competitive area as someone who works at the Portland District, even though both are in Portland, Oregon. This is because the organizations have different missions.

Competitive areas can be changed, but should be in effect at least 90 days before a RIF—less than 90 days requires OPM approval.

COMPETITIVE LEVELS

All employees in a competitive area are grouped into competitive levels.



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- Each level consists of positions at the same grade that are so similar the positions are interchangeable. Similarities include—
 - Duties.
 - Responsibilities.
 - Pay schedule.
 - Experience, training, and skill requirements.
 - A competitive level may consist of many positions, only a few, or only one job. That means a position that is highly specialized and not interchangeable with any other positions is put in a competitive level by itself.
 - Every position in a competitive area must be assigned a competitive level.
 - During a RIF, the names of all employees in a competitive level are listed on a retention register in the order of their retention standing.

RETENTION STANDING

Your assignment rights are determined by your retention standing in the competitive area and competitive level. Four factors, established by law, affect your retention standing—

- Tenure group.
- Veterans preference.
- Length of service (military and civilian).
- Performance ratings.

Tenure Group. The type of appointment (tenure) determines the group you will be ranked in on a retention register. The three groups in a competitive service are:

- Group I** Career employees not serving a probationary period for initial appointment.
- Group II** Career employees serving a probationary period for initial appointment and career-conditional employees.
- Group III** Indefinite, term, and status quo employees; employees serving under temporary* appointments pending establishment of a register (TAPER); and employees under any nonstatus, nontemporary appointment.

**An employee serving under a temporary appointment with a specific time limit is not in group III and is not a competing employee in a RIF.*

Excepted service employees are similarly grouped but do not compete with employees in the competitive service.

Veterans Preference. Each of the above groups is divided into three subgroups:

- AD** Veterans with 30 percent or more service-connected compensable disability.
- A** Veterans not in AD.
- B** All other employees.

Note: If you are eligible for veterans preference and are a retired member of a uniformed service, you must meet further conditions to be considered a veteran for RIF purposes.



Length of Service. Within each subgroup, you will be ranked by your service computation date. Employees with the most years of total federal service (civilian and military) will be listed first.

Performance Ratings. You will be given additional service credit based on the average of your last three annual performance ratings received during the four years before a RIF notice. *If you have not received three appraisals in the last four years, the missing appraisals are assumed to be fully successful.*

Additional service credit will be added to your service computation date for each rating that is—

Exceptional	20 years
Highly successful	16 years
Fully successful	12 years
Minimally acceptable	0 years
Unsatisfactory	0 years

For example, if your last three performance ratings were fully successful (12), fully successful (12) and highly successful (16), you would receive credit for 14 years of additional service.

$$12 + 12 + 16 = 40$$

$$40 \div 3 = 13.3 \text{ (rounded up = 14 years)}$$

RETENTION REGISTER

Employees in a competitive level are ranked on a retention register—in order of adjusted length of service—as follows:

- I-AD** Disabled veterans on career appointments.
- I-A** Other veterans on career appointments.
- I-B** Nonveterans on career appointments.
- II-AD** Disabled veterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods (except supervisors or managers).
- II-A** Other veterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods.
- II-B** Nonveterans on career-conditional appointments or serving probationary periods.

For example:

Tenure Group	Preference Subgroup	Employee	Service Comp Date	Additional Years for Performance Rating	Adjusted Service Comp Date for RIF
I	AD	Green, J	5/30/80	15	5/30/65
	A	White, W	3/8/81	12	3/8/69
	A	Grey, R	10/5/81	12	10/5/69
	B	Brown, A	6/13/83	16	6/13/67
	B	Smith, K	3/8/84	15	3/8/69
II	AD	Jones, F	7/23/85	12	7/23/73
	B	Peters, T	8/7/86	12	8/7/74



ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS

In first round competition, you have assignment rights in your own competitive level. According to RIF regulations—

- Each employee in groups I and II who has a current annual performance rating of marginal or higher has assignment rights and remains in competition for positions.
- Each employee in group III or with a current annual performance rating of "unacceptable" has no assignment rights.

BUMPING AND RETREATING

In second round competition, you have assignment rights for jobs in other competitive levels. This process is called bumping and retreating.

If you are in group I or II, you cannot be demoted, separated or furloughed if you qualify for a job in some other competitive level occupied by someone you can displace by bumping or retreating.

Bumping. You may bump someone in a lower subgroup at your same or lower grade. For example:

- An employee in subgroup I-A may bump someone in I-B or anyone in group II or III but may not bump another person in group I-A.
- An employee in group I-B may bump someone in group II or III but not another I-B.
- An employee in group II-A may bump someone in II-B or anyone in group III but not another II-A.
- An employee in group III may not bump another employee.

You may bump someone, even if that person has more service than you. For example, a veteran on a career appointment with 5 years of service can bump a nonveteran on a career appointment with 30 years of service.

If you are bumping into a different type of position, you must meet the job qualifications—including positive education requirements—and must move into the duties and responsibilities of the job without any undue disruption of the activity.

Retreating. You may retreat back to a job you once held and were promoted from or through—or a job substantially the same. You can retreat to that job if you are qualified, if it is occupied by someone in the same subgroup, and if you have longer service than the person who now occupies the job.

The theory behind retreating is that you would have been safe from a reduction in force if you had not been promoted. Therefore, you should not be laid off just because you were good enough to be promoted.

EMPLOYEE NOTICES

You are entitled to a 60-day notice if you are being released from your competitive level. The notice must be in writing and must explain all your rights concerning the proposed action—including your right to file a grievance or appeal.

A general notice may be issued advising all employees that a RIF action may be necessary although the activity has not yet determined the specific action to be taken.



TRANSFER OF FUNCTION

A transfer of function occurs when a continuing function is moved to another competitive area or when an entire competitive area is moved to another commuting area.

Note: A transfer of work is not a transfer of function if the function is already being performed in the other competitive area.

For example, it is a transfer of function if the military construction function of District A is transferred to District B, which does not have a military construction function. It is not a transfer of function if the planning function of District X is transferred to District Y, which already has a planning function. Even though District Y would be getting more work, it would not be getting a new function.

What is important about the difference? Transfer of function provisions deal with your right to accompany your work when it is moved to a different competitive area or geographic location. RIF regulations govern the following:

When a transfer of work is a transfer of function—

- You have the right to move with your work if the alternative at your current location is separation or downgrading.
- If the new location has more employees than needed to do the work, everyone identified for transfer competes for existing jobs with employees already in that competitive area.
- If you decline to transfer with your function, you cannot bump or retreat into positions that may remain at your current location—again, according to RIF regulations. However, if a RIF is being conducted there for other reasons, you may be included in the RIF.

When a transfer of work is NOT a transfer of function –

- You do not have any right to jobs at the new location.
- Instead of being filled by RIF regulations, the transferred jobs and existing vacancies created by attrition can be filled through outplacement programs. The primary program for placement under these circumstances in the Corps is explained on page 9.

