

N-96-01
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Carol

MEMORANDUM

Date : January 4, 1982

Subject: Phase-out of the EPA Noise Abatement Program

From : Kathleen Bennett, Assistant Administrator for
Air, Noise and Radiation Programs (ANR-443)

To : Dr. John P. Horton, Assistant Administrator
for Administration (P4-208)

As you know, the Personnel Task Force reviewing the various programs in Air, Noise and Radiation (ANR) has completed its task and submitted a report. As a part of that study the Task Force analyzed the phase-out of the Office of Noise Abatement and Control (ONAC). This office is scheduled to be phased out by the end of FY 1982. A copy of the various recommended options arising out of this study is attached for your information. I especially call your attention to the issue "Maintaining Continuity of Operations During the FY '82 ONAC Phase-Out," discussing the option on accelerated phase-out. This option recommends that this program be identified as a Headquarters "pilot test" and consequently receive increased levels of assistance to enable them to phase out this program in an expeditious and exemplary manner.

We have been successful in reducing the staffing levels in this office from 92 PFT and OPFTE as of February 1981 to about 30 PFT and OPFTE as of January 1982. This was accomplished through an aggressive outplacement program conducted by the Noise Office, plus a number of retirements. This success is almost exclusively due to the efforts of the Noise Office management, with minimal assistance from the Personnel Management Division.

On their own the managers of the Noise Office organized an intensive and far-reaching outplacement program to assist the personnel working in the office to secure employment elsewhere. Utilizing their own in-house expertise they conducted counseling programs for potential retirees; trained personnel in resume writing and interview techniques; organized mock job interviews to polish the skills of individuals going back into the job market; established personal contact with all Department of Defense personnel offices to stay on top of the largest block of vacancies available for ONAC personnel; contacted private employment agencies to assist job seekers without charge; contacted both the Senate and House personnel offices to assist secretarial and clerical employees locate possible employment on the Hill; set up a continuing job announcement desk where vacancy announcements from every government agency were maintained and kept current. But most of all, the managers provided a generous amount of personal encouragement to each impacted employee within the office.

Through continued application of all these outplacement techniques ONAC has projected that they will be down to approximately 13 PFT by June 1982, and under optimum conditions can probably phase out all or most of the remaining staff without having to resort to a formal reduction-in-force.

However, to accomplish this we will need the fullest support from the Personnel Management Division and the Management and Organization Division.

To date ONAC employees have not been given RIF status priority placement within the Agency even though they are technically in the same status as employees in a RIF situation. The office is being completely phased out and there are no funds in the EPA budget to continue the program past FY 1982. This status imposes a penalty on the ONAC employees in two ways: 1) they do not receive any sort of priority in competing for available vacancies within the Agency; and 2) the "save pay" provisions are usually not operable for those employees who accept lower grades with EPA and other Federal agencies.

The relative smoothness of the Noise Program phase out has been exemplary. Because of the efforts made on the employees behalf, plus the success of the counseling and outplacement program, morale and productivity in the office has stayed at an exceptionally high level. The experience and knowledge gained through the phase out of this office can be of real value to the Agency as we continue to reorganize and face other possible RIF situations throughout other programs.

In order that we carry out the recommendations of the Task Force in a timely and efficient manner, I would like to establish a mechanism whereby the Personnel Management Division and the Management and Organization Division would give assistance to ONAC in the accomplishment of the goals of this final phaseout. Perhaps we could get together soon to discuss the possibilities for some sort of mutual assistance effort.

Attachment

Mr. Ropes

Ms. Jordan

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