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## UNIQUE POSITION NUMBERS

### QUESTION

Should the Agency adopt a system of unique position numbers which would identify a position regardless of subsequent changes in location on the staffing complement?

### BACKGROUND

1. At the present time each Office and Area Division has an independent series of numbers for positions with the result that there may be 60 slots with the same number.
2. A slot number supposedly remains the same after a reorganization if the function of the position is unchanged and it remains in the same office. There are frequent exceptions, however, in cases of large reorganizations or when an office wants to realign the numbers for ease in finding a position. All position numbers are changed or lose their identity when two offices are combined.
3. It is impossible by computer and virtually impossible manually to trace the history of a position or to identify its incumbents through the years.
4. Although the position number is one of the items on the present and proposed Service Record Card, which the Civil Service Commission requires all agencies maintain either by computer or manually, it has no significance outside an agency.

### DISCUSSION

1. In addition to providing a method for tracing the history of a position from this time forward, unique numbers would offer several distinct advantages related to processing personnel actions, editing of input and maintenance of personnel records:

- a) A position with a unique number can be located in only one place on the staffing complement of the Agency. By simply indexing the position number, all data pertaining to the slot could be determined readily - the directorate, office, division, branch, etc., the headquarters, grade, title, career service, and planned incumbency. Although the Request for Personnel Action would require the completion of the organizational designations for the benefit of the approving officer, if changed from the previous action, it would be unnecessary to edit and standardize the nomenclature for input into the system. This is now done by Position Control Section of TRB. The clear text

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could be taken from the Staffing System for printing on the notification of action. (Indexing can be done without unique numbers but it will require additional manual input, considerably more complex programming, and will be slower to access).

b) It would simplify tremendously the paperwork required to reflect reorganizations within an office, to merge two offices, and to reassign personnel subsequently.

c) Since it is planned to store a certain amount of position data in the man record, i.e. grade, SD, occupational title, and subcategory of the position vis-a-vis the employee's data, the system could not only isolate all individuals ever assigned to a uniquely numbered position but also provide comparative analyses of personnel and position data that is not possible now except on a current basis.

2. At the time of conversion, new numbers could be assigned by computer in the staffing order sequence, new PCR's produced and personnel actions computer generated assigning incumbents to the positions. Lists of the old versus the new numbers would be furnished PMCD and the offices. This would have the short-term advantage of realigning positions in chronological sequence. The first Form 261 processed will change all that and never again would they be in true number sequence. This is probably the greatest long-term disadvantage of unique numbers.

3. PMCD would have to renumber all position descriptions now maintained by office groupings. The list of old and new numbers should facilitate this task.

4. If a number of offices maintain manual position inventories, and plan to continue in future, for use in preparing Requests for Personnel Actions, a completely new numbering system could cause a great deal of confusion and extra work during the period of dual operation of the old and new systems. One way to avoid this is to prefix the current number with two unique characters for each office. The disadvantages of this solution are (a) positions would be six digits long whereas five alpha/numeric designations would provide enough unique numbers for the probable lifetime of the Agency, and (b) some offices are already in the 4000 or 5000 series which means that it might be necessary in future to double back and reissue numbers used prior to conversion.

5. The questionnaire being sent to personnel officers on the PCR asks what offices maintain manual position inventories.

6. The position numbers in current use are so out of order, offices might welcome an opportunity to realign them again.

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RECOMMENDATION

1. If the Agency wants the capability to perform historical analyses of positions and incumbents, provide for a system of unique position numbers.

2. Determine the magnitude of the conversion problem if new numbers bear no resemblance to current numbers both to PMCD and the individual offices (based upon results of the PCR questionnaire). If it is not feasible to adopt a completely new number, create unique numbers by prefixing the current numbers with alphabetic characters.

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