




## Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

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### MEMORANDUM FOR HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORS

**FROM:**   
SARAH J. BONILLA, DIRECTOR  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM #5:  
Accretion-of-Duties Promotions

This memorandum provides policy guidance on how to consistently address accretion-of-duties promotions within the Department and is effective immediately.

The Department of Energy's Merit Promotion Plan permits the use of accretion-of-duties promotions as an exception to competitive procedures. The ability to effect noncompetitive promotions based on accretion-of-duties is an important staffing tool available to supervisors. Whenever possible, supervisors and servicing Human Resources Offices will ensure that a reasonable and accurate career ladder is established before a position is filled. Following good management practices, supervisors should be aware of the duties assigned or assumed by their staff, and exercise caution when changes result in the unintentional growth or erosion of assignments sufficient to affect the grade level.

Requests for accretion-of-duties promotions must be accompanied by documentation demonstrating that: (1) management essentially had no choice in assigning higher level work to the employee; (2) the employee has performed the higher level duties for a significant period of time (i.e., at least 52 weeks) and will continue to perform those duties; (3) no other qualified employee is being denied an opportunity to compete for the same promotion; and (4) approval of this request would not compromise Merit System Principles in perception or actuality.

Once an accretion-of-duties situation has been identified, management has but two choices: (1) approve the promotion, or (2) remove the higher level duties from the position. The following provisions will govern noncompetitive promotions based on accretion-of-duties:

1. Whenever possible, supervisors and HR Specialists will ensure that a reasonable and accurate career ladder is established before a position is filled.
2. If an employee's position must be upgraded due to the assignment of additional duties and responsibilities, the incumbent may be promoted without competition if **all** of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The employee continues to perform the same basic function;
  - b. The majority (more than 50 percent) of the major duties of the former position are absorbed into the new position, and the former position is abolished;
  - c. The new position has no further promotion potential;



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- d. No other positions within the organizational unit, whether encumbered or unencumbered, are adversely affected by the action (e.g., the "new" duties were moved from another position in the organization and that position's grade is jeopardized as a result);
- e. The new duties could not reasonably be assigned to any other position within the organization;
- f. The new position does not involve the addition of project leader, group leader, team leader, or supervisory duties to a nonsupervisory or non-leader type position;
- g. The new position is not a reclassification from a one-grade interval to a two-grade interval position (e.g., an Accounting Technician, GS-525, is reclassified as an Accountant, GS-510);
- h. The new position must be in the same series as the former position;
- i. There is no reduction-in-force or transfer of function being planned or implemented within the organization; and
- j. The employee has met all eligibility requirements.

If **all** of the above conditions are not met, the position must be filled competitively through Merit Promotion action.

After an initial review of the organizational structure, Human Resources Specialists review personnel actions and supporting documentation requesting promotions via accretion-of-duties under a comprehensive two-step process that will determine: (1) whether higher-level work is actually being performed and (2) whether the proposed promotion action can be exempted from competitive procedures.

Requests for an accretion-of-duties promotion to the GS-14 level should be extremely rare and under no circumstances is an accretion-of-duties promotion allowed to the GS-15 grade level. Promotions to the GS-15 grade level must be competed.

Should you have questions or need clarification, please contact either Vivian Clark at 202-586-2167, e-mail address [Vivian.Clark@hq.doe.gov](mailto:Vivian.Clark@hq.doe.gov) or Joyce Hayes at 202-586-3270, e-mail address [Joyce.Hayes@hq.doe.gov](mailto:Joyce.Hayes@hq.doe.gov).