

NEW PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM—Alert #8

Conduct Versus Performance

Management is supposed to document your work based upon its performance value: you perform well and that results in better ratings, performance awards and promotions. That is all part of the merit system.

However, there are times when management prefers to document your *conduct* at work and relate that to performance ratings or to assess your performance in *conduct* terms. The reason why management does this has to do with preparing a case for adverse action, in which the standard for proof is lower for conduct-related “offenses” than those based solely on performance.

This may seem somewhat arcane, but SSA workers should be aware that the agency is, in fact, using conduct to adjust your performance ratings.



For example, if a supervisor learns about an argument between two employees, that OS could write up an audit sheet claiming such behavior may affect the employees’ ratings in interpersonal skills, participation or achieves business results that represent three of the four critical job elements (this actually happened to an SSA worker!). Remember: *you only need to fail one critical element to justify an overall “Unsuccessful” rating.*

Similarly, employees at TSCs or in ICTUs are finding themselves written up for general service observation and then learning weeks thereafter that alleged deficiencies occurring during the SO are being used to document their performance. To make matters worse, the agency is not providing any identifying information that would allow the affected workers to rebut the write-ups. If management claims that you were rude during a telephone interview, how do you rebut that weeks later when your supervisor won’t even identify the circumstances or the caller?

AFGE recommends that you take preventative measures. If a claimant or a co-worker presents a situation that could be interpreted as argumentative, rude or disruptive, you should document the event and retain that information at your desk. Note the time and place and whether or not anyone else was in ear shot. If management insists upon placing negative assessments of these events in your personnel file, whether as a result of direct service observation or an audit of your work, you still have rights under the contract to have the record corrected.

Article 21, Section 6 B says that “Supervisory conclusions based upon observations of an employee by management will be *timely communicated* to the employee during informal discussions and/or the progress review. If the employee disagrees with the supervisory conclusions on individual cases or overall performance to date, he/she may provide management with written rebuttals that will be placed in the SF-7B Extension File.”

For more information, contact your AFGE Local Representative or visit our web site at www.afgec220.org.