

Newsflash 12-2

Acceptance of Photocopies by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

OPM will now accept photocopies of signed documents from agencies that have written procedures to ensure the documents received are a photocopy of the actual original. Benefits Administration Letter (BAL) 12-102, dated May 25, 2012, describes the revised policy regarding photocopies of signed documents submitted to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) directly from an agency.

The agency's written procedures should include:

- a) Record of where the document came from, who sent the document, how the document was sent (i.e., mail, fax, or email) and which documents were sent together;
- b) A process in which an agency official compares the original document(s) to the photocopied, scanned, or faxed document(s); and
- c) Certification from the document custodian attesting that the documents were produced within the context of the written records management procedures as prescribed in 5 C.F.R. 293.103, 36 C.F.R. 1234, the Business Records Act and other guidance defining chain of custody.

In addition, all signed applications, documents, and forms OPM receives from an agency will be accepted in the form of a photocopy (which includes a scan or fax) under the following conditions:

- 1) The document is directly submitted to OPM by an agency through mail, fax, or email.
- 2) If the document is contained within a retirement or death in service package, there must be an agency checklist that clearly shows the submission includes this document. The checklist must be signed by the personnel handling the documents and provide the contact information for this official.
- 3) If sent via fax or email,
 - a) The email addresses must identify an agency source and agency contact.
 - b) The fax must show the document was faxed from an identifiable agency location.
- 4) If scanned, OPM will only accept scans of documents maintained in the eOPF or other electronic storage systems as long as there is an identifiable watermark that indicates the document was maintained in a system of records used in the routine course of business.

As long as OPM can verify photocopies, scans and faxes of signed documents, OPM will consider them as authentic representations of the original from the Federal agency. **Please note that this new policy is for agency submissions only.** OPM will continue to require "wet" signatures when they originate from a non-agency source (such as from an employee or annuitant).



Questions?

Contact: benefits@cpms.osd.mil