



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20240

NOV 18 2002

PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 03-5 (451)

SUBJECT: Unsung Hero Award

## **What is the Unsung Hero Award?**

The Unsung Hero Award is a Departmental award to recognize Department of the Interior employees who have made positive "behind-the-scene" contributions to accomplish the Department's mission. This award recognizes contributions that would not normally be recognized by other types of formal awards, such as Special Thanks for Achieving Results (STAR) awards or other honor awards.

## **What are the criteria for an Unsung Hero Award nomination?**

Employees nominated for the Unsung Hero Award must have demonstrated one or more of the following types of characteristics that resulted in successful mission accomplishment:

- displayed extraordinary effort in performing tasks other than his/her normal job duties;
- showed enthusiasm and initiative, and displayed a customer-oriented attitude;
- unselfishly shared his/her time and expertise;
- consistently and willingly extending a helping hand.

## **Who can nominate an employee for an Unsung Hero Award?**

Any employee or group of employees in the Department of the Interior, including supervisors, can nominate a deserving employee for this award. An Assistant Secretary can select/approve an employee as an Unsung Hero, and the employee's name will be submitted to the Department for consideration as a Departmental Unsung Hero.

## **How are Unsung Hero Awards recognized at the bureau/equivalent office level?**

Bureaus and equivalent offices should honor their chosen Unsung Heroes for the previous fiscal year quarter at an appropriate ceremony, and the awards should be publicized within the bureau/equivalent office. The Unsung Heroes will normally be presented with a non-monetary award item of nominal value and a time-off award of eight hours.

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**When are nominations due?**

Nominations can be submitted at any time.

**How are nominations submitted?**

Submit a DI-451 Award Certification form, with a citation of no more than one page detailing the employee's contributions, written in plain English. Send the nomination to the employee's servicing personnel office. A copy of a sample nomination form and citation is attached.

**Who is the point of contact for this award?**

Each bureau/equivalent office is responsible for establishing an Unsung Hero Award program in their bureau/equivalent office, and their award coordinator is the point of contact. The Office of Personnel Policy, Office of the Secretary, is the point of contact for the review/selection/recognition of the Department-level Unsung Hero Award nominees.

**When and how are Unsung Heroes chosen?**

During the first month of each fiscal year quarter (January, April, July, October), a bureau/equivalent office employee panel, including a union representative, will be convened to review nominations and select awardees from among nominations submitted during the previous quarter.

No later than December 1 of each year, each bureau/equivalent office should submit up to five Unsung Hero Award nominations to the Director, Office of Personnel Policy, Office of the Secretary, for consideration for the Departmental Unsung Hero Award. DI-451 Award Certification forms with citations should be submitted by a transmittal memorandum signed by the head of the bureau/equivalent office. A Departmental panel, including a union representative, will review the nominations and select one nominee from each bureau/equivalent office to receive the Departmental Unsung Hero Award recognition.

**What do the bureau/equivalent office Unsung Hero Award winners receive as recognition?**

Each quarter at an appropriate bureau/equivalent office awards ceremony, the Unsung Heroes will be presented with a non-monetary award item of nominal value and a time-off award of 8 hours.

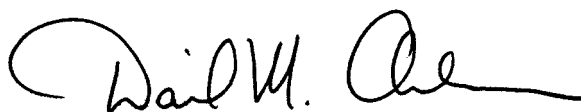
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**What do the Departmental Unsung Hero Award winners receive as recognition?**

The Departmental recipients (one per bureau/equivalent office) will receive a plaque at a Departmental awards convocation. They will also receive a monetary award of \$1,000 funded by their organization.

This Personnel Bulletin supersedes Personnel Bulletin No. 02-9 (451) dated February 15, 2002, and Amendment 1, dated July 8, 2002. This policy will be included in the Departmental Manual chapter on Awards and Recognition when revised. The Department point of contact is Jacqueline Johnston at (202) 208-0144, Mail Stop 5221-MIB, E-Mail [Jacqueline\\_Johnston@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Jacqueline_Johnston@ios.doi.gov).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David M. Anderson  
Deputy Director, Office of Personnel Policy

Attachment

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
**AWARD CERTIFICATION**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wanda W. Wonderful  
(Recipient)

**Is Presented a:**

***Monetary Award or Recognition*** (UNsung HERO AWARD)

On-the-Spot Award in the net amount of \$

STAR Award in the gross amount of \$

Quality Step Increase (sustained exceptional performance pay increase)

Time Off Recognition--number of hours 8

Non-Monetary Recognition with a cash value of \$

Interior Innovation Award (\$1,000 increase to operating budget)

Continuous Improvement Incentive (check appropriate award above)

***Bureau-Specific Award*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Title)

***Honor Award***

**Highest Honors:**

**Distinguished Service Award**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Conservation Service Award**

**Mid-Level Honors:**

**Meritorious Service Award**

**Outstanding Service Award**

**Unit Award for Excellence of Service**

**Initial Honors:**

**Superior Service Award**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service**

**Heroic Act Honors:**

**Valor Award**

**Citizen's Award for Bravery**

**Exemplary Act Award**

**JUSTIFICATION** Required only for monetary awards, innovation awards, non-monetary recognition of significant value, or time off recognition. Citation is justification for honor awards. Attach copy of citation.

**APPROVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature, Date, and Telephone Number including Area Code)

**ADDITIONAL SIGNATURES**  
[As required by Bureau delegations]

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature and Date)

**FINANCIAL ACTION RECORD** This record is to initiate payment, accounting and tax transactions for STAR awards, On-the-Spot awards, and non-monetary recognition of significant value. Do not complete for Quality Step Increases, Time Off recognition, Interior Innovation Award or Honor Awards.

Recipient Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bureau Sub-Bureau Block Org. Code Cost Account

**MONETARY AWARD TO BE PAID THROUGH IMPREST (ON-THE-SPOT)**

Amount Authorized for Imprest Payment (Hours Code 66A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Net Amount)  
Amount Including Taxes (Amount Paid divided by .55) (Hours Code 30A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Gross Amount)

**IMPREST FUND PAYMENT RECORD** (To be Completed by Imprest Fund Cashier)

Paid by: Cash [ ] Third Party Draft [ ] Subvoucher # \_\_\_\_\_

Received by Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MONETARY AWARD TO BE PAID THROUGH THE PAYROLL SYSTEM (STAR OR ON-THE-SPOT)**

Total Cash Award (Hours Code 30A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Gross Amount)  
Pay Period to be Processed by Payroll \_\_\_\_\_

**NON-MONETARY RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT VALUE** (Date Presented: \_\_\_\_\_)

Cash Value of Award (Hours Code 66A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Net Amount)  
Value Including Taxes (Cash Value divided by .55) (Hours Code 30A) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Gross Amount)

**Disposition of this form:** Original to servicing personnel office, copy to recipient. For STAR awards, On-the-Spot awards, and non-monetary recognition of significant value FAX page 2 of this form to the Payroll Operations Division.

This fax is in lieu of original. ***DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL OF THIS DOCUMENT TO PAYROLL.***

Note: Information on this form is protected by the Privacy Act. Disclosure may be made only to authorized persons according to Title 5 U.S.C., Section 552a(b).

FORM DI-451

February 1996

**- INSTRUCTIONS -**

This Award Certification will be used for all awards for individuals or teams, when required. In the "Justification" section on page 2, provide a brief summary of the accomplishment being recognized by the award, using specific examples. For Honor Awards, the citation is the award justification. The amount of the award should be commensurate with the value of the individual or team accomplishment, considering the overall benefit to the government. Complete the "Financial Action Record" section on page 2, for each recipient of monetary awards and non-monetary recognition of significant value. A copy of the Financial Action Record must be faxed to the Payroll Operations Division to update the employee's pay record. A "Notification of Personnel Action" (SF-50) must be generated for all monetary, time off, and Quality Step Increase awards. For more detailed information, refer to the Awards and Recognition Program, Departmental Human Resources Management Handbook.

**On-the-Spot Awards**

On-the-Spot Awards have a net value between \$50 and \$500. The amount given to the recipient (net amount) must be increased to cover the applicable withholdings (gross amount). Complete the Financial Action Record indicating whether payment is to be made through Imprest Fund or Payroll System. Divide the net amount by .55 to calculate the gross amount of the award. The following table calculates the gross amounts in \$50 increments, however, net amounts may range anywhere from \$50 to \$500:

<b>NET AMOUNT</b>	<b>GROSS AMOUNT</b>	<b>NET AMOUNT</b>	<b>GROSS AMOUNT</b>
\$50	\$91	\$300	\$546
\$100	\$182	\$350	\$637
\$150	\$273	\$400	\$728
\$200	\$364	\$450	\$819
\$250	\$455	\$500	\$910

**STAR Awards**

STAR Awards are cash awards in the gross amount of \$925 or more. In the Financial Action Record, complete the Monetary Award to be Paid Through the Payroll System Section, inserting the gross amount of the award. All STAR awards are to be paid through the payroll system. For team awards, an Award Certification must be completed for each team member. If members are to receive different award amounts, the justification must describe the individual team member's specific contribution(s).

**Quality Step Increases**

An employee may receive only one Quality Step Increase in a 52-week period. In the "Justification" section, enter brief specific examples of how expectations were exceeded in achieving all Critical Results. Follow Bureau guidance to generate an SF-50.

### **Time Off Recognition**

The minimum time off recognition is 1 hour. There is no maximum time off recognition. A copy of the awards certification must be forwarded to the employee's timekeeper for coding on the Time and Attendance Report.

### **Non-Monetary Recognition**

Use this Award Certification when the value of a non-monetary recognition is significant (\$26 to \$250). Recognition of nominal value does not require documentation. In the Financial Action Record, complete the Non-Monetary Recognition of Significant Value Section, inserting the cash value (net) of the award, the gross value including taxes and the date presented. The gross value is computed by dividing the cash value by .55.

### **Continuous Improvement Incentives**

An appropriately-valued award granted to recognize process improvement, cost-saving suggestions, streamlining, elimination of non-value added processes, gains in productivity, or inventions and patents. See above award descriptions. Patent Awards are processed through the Solicitor's Office. Innovation Award budget increases (granted for cost reduction, reinvention efforts, and improving customer service) are used for project support such as training and equipment.

#### ***Highest Honors***

The highest departmental honor awards presented to career employees or non-employee partners-in-mission. Recipients must have demonstrated extremely significant long-term contributions to departmental programs and missions.

#### **Distinguished Service Award**

For career employees, typically those who have received the Meritorious Service Award.

#### **Conservation Service Award**

For private citizen or organizational partners-in-mission.

#### ***Mid-Level Honors***

The second highest departmental honor awards presented to employees, groups, and partners-in-mission who have made exceptional continuing contribution(s) to Department or Bureau mission accomplishment.



**Meritorious Service Award**

For career employees of the Department, typically in mid-career, who may have received one or more Superior Service Awards.

**Outstanding Service Award**

For departmental political appointees.

**Unit Award for Excellence of Service**

For exceptional contribution(s) of employee groups, units, or teams.

***Initial Honors***

The first level of recognition in the departmental honor awards program, presented to career or non-career employees, volunteers, or other partners who have made significant contribution(s) to the Department through outstanding service to a Bureau program.

**Superior Service Award**

For career employees of the Department.

**Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service**

Bureau-specific awards for private citizen or organizational partners, including volunteers.

***Heroic Act Honors***

Departmental honorary recognition granted to employees for heroic acts or unusual bravery in the face of danger.

**Valor Award**

For employees of the Department who risk their lives while attempting to save the life of another.

**Citizen's Award for Bravery**

For private citizens who risk their lives to save the life of a departmental employee serving in the line of duty or the life of any other person, while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department.

### **Exemplary Act Award**

For employees or private citizens who attempt to save the life of another, or for private citizens who attempt to save the life of a departmental employee serving in the line of duty or any other person while on property owned by or entrusted to the Department, when risk to their own lives is not an issue.