

NSF Takes Steps on Cases of Employee Misconduct

In recent years, we have referred a number of employee misconduct cases to NSF and made many management recommendations for improving NSF's workplace environment. NSF has taken several significant steps to address recommendations arising from employee misconduct investigations we reported in our March 2009 semiannual report. This misconduct involved improper use of NSF information technology resources, as well as phone, time and attendance misuse, and abuse of transit subsidies.

In response to our recommendation regarding improper internet use by eight employees, NSF installed internet filtering software that prevents access by NSF computers to inappropriate web sites such as gambling and sexually explicit adult sites. NSF is also exploring additional software that would filter incoming and outgoing emails and attachments to prevent inappropriate material from being received and sent from NSF information technology resources. In addition, in September 2009 the NSF director issued a memorandum to all NSF staff detailing the safeguards, training, and policies that the agency has implemented pertaining to inappropriate use of government computers. This memorandum makes it clear that NSF has a zero tolerance policy for this type of misconduct and that NSF will strictly enforce this policy. We fully support these initiatives and look forward to their implementation.

In response to our recommendations regarding inappropriate computer use by eight employees, NSF removed two employees, suspended one for 60 days and reduced his grade, suspended one for 15 days and suspended two others for one day. Two had previously left NSF. The six remaining employees retain the right to appeal the action against them. In another case, NSF terminated an employee who inappropriately used his government computer to email sexually explicit material. After he filed a grievance, the action against him was changed. After he filed a grievance, the action against him was changed to resignation.

NSF proposed to terminate two employees for time and attendance abuse; however, both resigned in lieu of being removed. NSF issued an Official Reprimand to an employee for excessive use of the phone during work hours. Finally, NSF implemented all of our recommendations regarding programmatic improvements to its transit subsidy program and took personnel actions against the four current

employees who abused their government-provided transit benefits. Two were required to repay the excess subsidies they received, and two received oral counseling.

NSF recently issued a draft of the Director's "Employee Action Agenda" with a goal of creating a model workplace at NSF. We commend the agency for this agenda which includes goals of mandatory training for all managers and supervisors in harassment prevention, timely responses to misconduct, and the development of a formal performance management framework for individuals under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, among other things. We look forward to continuing to work with NSF to help ensure the integrity of the agency's operations and to prevent abuse of government resources.

