§ 591.222 How does OPM use the expenditure weights to combine price indexes?

OPM uses a three-step process to combine price indexes.

(a) Step 1. For each DEC represented by one or more items for which OPM could make valid price comparisons (e.g., OPM was able to collect representative prices in both the COLA and DC areas), OPM computes the unweighted geometric average (the root of the product of numbers) of the price index(es) of all item(s) representing the DEC.

(b) Step 2. OPM multiplies the price index for each DEC by its expenditure weight, sums the cross products, and divides by the sum of the weights used in the calculation. This produces a price index for the level of aggregation (e.g., PEG or sub-PEG) in which the DEC is categorized.

(c) Step 3. OPM repeats the process described in Step 2 at each level of aggregation within the PEG to produce a price index for the PEG, at the PEG level to produce an index for the MEG, and at the MEG level to produce the overall price index for the COLA area.

§ 591.223 When does OPM conduct COLA surveys?

(a) OPM conducts a survey in each COLA area once every 3 years on a rotational basis and surveys the Washington, DC, area concurrently with each COLA area survey. The order of the COLA area surveys is as follows:

(1) Year 1. All COLA areas in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

(2) Year 2. All COLA areas in the State of Alaska, except as provided in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(3) Year 3. All COLA areas in the State of Hawaii and the Territory of Guam and CNMI.

(b) Exceptions:

(1) Nothing in this subpart precludes OPM from conducting interim surveys or implementing some other change in response to conditions caused by a natural disaster or similar emergency, provided OPM publishes a notice or rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER explaining the change and the reason(s) for it.

(2) As provided in § 591.215(c), OPM does not conduct surveys in the Rest of the State of Alaska COLA area unless COLA rate reductions appear warranted.

§ 591.224 How does OPM adjust price indexes between surveys?

(a) OPM adjusts price indexes between the triennial surveys in each COLA area that is not surveyed in that year. To do this, OPM uses the annual or biennial change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the COLA area relative to the annual or biennial change in the CPI for the Washington, DC, area. OPM uses the annual change for those areas surveyed the preceding year. OPM uses the biennial change for those areas surveyed 2 years before.