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OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

5 CFR Part 890

RIN 3206-AG33

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program: Procedures for Direct Payment of Premiums

AGENCY: Office of Personnel
Management.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is issuing final regulations to eliminate the requirement for the use of certified mail, return receipt requested, when notifying certain enrollees that their enrollment in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program will be terminated due to nonpayment of premiums unless the payment is received within 15 calendar days. The purpose of these regulations is to reduce the cost of administering the FEHB enrollments of enrollees who make payments directly rather than through payroll or annuity deductions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 3, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Margaret Sears (202) 606-0004.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On December 30, 1994, OPM published interim regulations in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 67605) eliminating the requirement for using certified mail, return receipt requested, when notifying FEHB enrollees that their coverage is about to be terminated due to nonpayment of premiums. Most individuals enrolled under the FEHB Program pay their share of the premiums through withholding from pay or annuity. However, in some cases enrollees may make direct payments. These include: (1) Certain annuitants and compensationers (individuals who are entitled to compensation from the Office of Workers' Compensation

Programs based on a job-related injury or disease) whose annuity or compensation has been waived or suspended; (2) former spouses whose enrollment is based on a qualifying court order under subpart H of 5 CFR part 890 governing FEHB; and (3) former employees, former spouses, and children enrolled under the Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) provisions.

Under regulations in effect before we issued the interim regulations, if an employing office did not receive the payment by the due date, it was required to notify the enrollee by certified mail, return receipt requested, that continuation of coverage rests upon payment being made within 15 days (or 45 days for some enrollees living overseas) after receipt of the notice.

The interim regulations eliminated the requirement for sending the nonpayment notice by certified mail, return receipt requested. Further, they clarified that there must be a delay of 60 days (90 days for overseas enrollees) before employing offices take action to terminate enrollments for nonpayment of premiums. We believe that the interim regulations are much more convenient for the enrollee because the enrollees no longer need to sign for the notice. If no one is at home when a letter carrier delivers a return-receipt-requested letter, the addressee must go to the post office to sign for it. Under the interim regulations, the letter is left in the enrollee's mailbox and the enrollee has the information without making an unnecessary trip to the post office.

OPM received no comments on the interim regulations.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

I certify that these regulations will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities because they primarily affect individuals enrolled under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

List of Subjects in 5 CFR Part 890

Administrative practice and procedure, Government employees, Health facilities, Health insurance, Health professions, Hostages, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Retirement.

Office of Personnel Management.

James B. King,

Director.

Accordingly, under authority of 5 U.S.C. 8913, the interim rule amending 5 CFR Part 890 published on December 30, 1994, (59 FR 67605) is adopted as final without any change.

[FR Doc. 95-13316 Filed 5-31-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6325-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

7 CFR Chapter VI and Part 620

RIN 0578-AA15

Wetlands Reserve Program

AGENCY: Natural Resources
Conservation Service, USDA.

ACTION: Interim rule with request for
comments.

SUMMARY: Title XIV of the Food Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (the 1990 Act), enacted on November 28, 1990, amended the Food Security Act of 1985 to provide for the establishment of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Under the WRP, the secretary of Agriculture is authorized to purchase easements from owners of eligible land who voluntarily agree to restore and protect farmed wetlands or converted wetlands and eligible adjacent acres. The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, authorized the establishment of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and transferred responsibility for the WRP from the Consolidated Farm Service Agency to the NRCS, formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). This interim rule provides the process by which the WRP will be administered within the NRCS. This rule also amends 7 CFR Chapter VI to reflect the establishment of the NRCS and the abolishment of the SCS.

DATES: Effective date: June 1, 1995.

Comments should be received on or before July 31, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to National Wetlands Team, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Cotton Annex, Mezzanine One, Post Office Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013.