

**Assessment of
Rocky Flats Field Office
Calendar Year 2003 Reduction in Force**

INTRODUCTION

In calendar year 2003, the Rocky Flats Field Office (RFFO) management conducted a reduction-in-force (RIF) of the federal staff. The RFFO contracted with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to conduct the RIF. The RIF was invoked based upon a function and position analysis which showed a decreasing need for certain skills based upon the accelerated closure of the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (Site). A total of 123 positions were abolished during the RIF process. After the RIF, the RFFO was reorganized into the Rocky Flats Project Office (RFPO).

OPM guidelines suggest that agencies conduct an assessment of all RIF activities as it would serve as a valuable management tool in implementing future RIF's. As a result, the RFPO Manager appointed a team (the Team) to conduct an assessment and provide lessons learned to be used at Department of Energy Headquarters (DOE-HQ) and other DOE Environmental Management (DOE-EM) facilities that may face RIF activities in the future. The Team consisted of the following individuals:

Richard Schassburger, EM Cadre
Barbara Powers-Hargreaves, EM Cadre
Brent Johansen, EM Cadre
Thomas Kelly, Golden Field Office

The assessment was conducted between June and August of 2004. The scope included; 1) reviewing records and documentation to ensure compliance with OPM regulations, 2) surveying RFPO staff and former employees to determine positive as well as negative aspects of the RIF process, and 3) interviewing management, current employees and former employees for a more in-depth perspective of the RIF process and associated issues. Participation in interviews and in the survey process was on a strictly voluntary basis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is recognized that implementing a RIF under any circumstances is difficult for all parties involved leaving remaining staff and separated staff with negative perceptions. Taking this into account, the Team focused on areas surfacing during the course of the assessment which can be improved for future RIF's, and/or serve as a lessons learned (either positive or negative) for other DOE sites.

METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the Introduction, the assessment was conducted through review of RIF records/documentation, survey of current and former employees, and interviews of management, current and former employees. Each method and the corresponding results are discussed below.

1. Records/Documentation Review

A review of the RFFO RIF records/documentation was conducted by Team member Thomas Kelly. The review consisted of a hands-on review of the paper records, and two interviews (one with the RFPO Chief Counsel and one with the OPM Team Lead). The review of the RIF documentation concluded that the records met all regulatory requirements as outlined in 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 351.505. Although the records portion met regulatory requirements, issues surfaced during the course of the interviews concerning the organization, documentation and clarity of the records. It is of great importance that the records are clear, concise and appropriately documented for purposes of litigation support. The full report is contained in Attachment One.

2. Voluntary Survey

A survey instrument was developed by the Team and distributed to current RFPO employees and those former employees who were separated as a result of the RIF. The surveys were sent with a one week period for response. A total of fourteen completed surveys were received from current RFPO employees and a total of four surveys were received from employees who had been separated by the RIF. The major issues that surfaced from the surveys dealt with lack of trust in management, poor communications and inaccuracy of position descriptions. The majority of respondents, however, did feel that the use of OPM in conducting the RIF was positive and lent credibility to the process. The summary of survey results as well as a blank copy of the survey instrument are contained in Attachment Two.

3. Interviews

Employees were given an opportunity within the survey document to request a personal interview with the Team. A total of eight interviews were conducted; six were current RFPO employees (both management and staff), one was an employee displaced by the RIF, and one was a retired employee whose function was abolished during the RIF. The interviews provided individuals the opportunity to express their perceptions concerning the entire RIF process and to offer recommendations for improvement. They specifically discussed things they perceived to be both negative and positive about the entire process. A detailed summary of each individual interview is contained in Attachment Three.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

Both negative and positive aspects of the RIF process were identified throughout the assessment. Based upon the input and observations gathered through the surveys and interviews, the Team developed a list detailed below, of both positive and negative aspects of the RIF, and recommendations that should be considered for any future RIF's at RFPO or other DOE-EM sites.

Positive Aspects

- Having OPM run the RIF, rather than just DOE, provided objectivity and credibility to the process.
- OPM provided assistance during the RIF process by answering questions from staff and management.
- The use of a timeline of milestones leading up to the RIF and updated on a regular basis was positive.
- Outplacement support from management was good, especially details to other DOE offices as well as other agencies.
- Handing out RIF notices in a one-on-one meeting by the supervisor rather than being placed in the mailboxes was positive.
- Participation of a sympathetic observer when RIF notices were handed out was well received.
- Allowing employees to leave for the day after receiving their RIF notice was beneficial.
- Post-RIF retreat to discuss the future and work assignments of remaining employees facilitated the transition to a "project office" and mitigated impacts of the "survivor syndrome".
- Identification and communication of needed skills early in the process was viewed as beneficial.
- Running RIF to coincide with January 1st helped those individuals retiring based on timing of buyouts, salary and income tax.

Negative Aspects

- Management was not necessarily perceived as truthful by the staff.
- Management was not necessarily trusted by staff.
- Communications regarding the RIF could have been improved.
- Management could have begun communications with employees much earlier in the process.
- The bump and retreat process was not explained well to staff
- The explanation regarding differences between physical scientists and general engineers for RIF purposes was not explained in a manner that was understood by some employees.

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- Personnel files were not up-to-date and included position descriptions that were years out-of-date.
- Misperceptions existed concerning what, if any, level of outplacement support would be available post-RIF to separated employees.
- The office did not receive good and timely RIF guidance from Headquarters which impacted ability to communicate with employees earlier in the process.
- In some instances, local Human Resource staff guidance contradicted OPM guidance.
- In some cases, information provided by the Union was information that should have been provided by management.
- Rumor mill, including information from managers participating in RIF process determinations, was rampant which drove some individuals to make decisions based on bad information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At the beginning of the RIF planning process, contract with a RIF expert (outside of OPM) to assist the organization in developing a comprehensive communication plan, as well as providing advice throughout the process.
2. In addition to the use of a timeline, develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan which clearly defines communication requirements throughout the planning and implementation phase of the RIF.
3. Designate one member of the management team to be the spokesperson for all RIF communications.
4. Contract with OPM to run the RIF and provide post-RIF support as needed. This lends credibility and objectivity to the process.
5. Ensure the Memorandum of Agreement between DOE and OPM specifically covers all aspects of support needed from OPM (both during the RIF and post-RIF), including any follow-on support needed for litigation post-RIF.
6. Ensure that employees have as much advance notification of RIF activities as possible.
7. Allow individuals to go on details to organizations that could potentially result in a permanent position.
8. If possible, avoid running multiple RIF iterations. Recommend running one final RIF including filling all vacancies at the end.
9. Request management and RIF team members sign confidentiality forms to prevent leaks.
10. Ensure that all personnel, staff and management are made fully aware that issuance of the RIF announcement closes all personnel actions including updating position descriptions, updating resumes, performance appraisals, etc.
11. Place strong management emphasis to staff concerning importance of updating resumes in personnel files prior to RIF announcement since OPM uses these resumes to judge qualifications and competencies for bumping and retreating purposes.
12. Make sure effort devoted to benefits and retirement counseling is sufficient for individuals to understand.

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13. Ensure that the RIF team (management, OPM, legal and human resource representatives) that plans and invokes RIF are present throughout the entire process for purposes of continuity.
14. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities and provide direction throughout the RIF process to employees who will be separated at the end of the RIF or who will be remaining after the RIF is complete.
15. Involve an attorney in the RIF process from start to finish for any post-RIF litigation or administrative hearings
16. Involve a human resource representative in the RIF process from start to finish.
17. Annually, require all supervisors to review position descriptions with employees during either the mid-year or final performance appraisal. This could be tied to a Supervisor's Certification of Accuracy document that becomes a part of personnel file that shows annual review of position description with employee was completed.
18. Clarify to separating employees what level, if any, of career transition/outplacement support is available to them after separation.

ATTACHMENT ONE

RECORDS REVIEW

BACKGROUND

This is the report of the review of the records of the January 2003 Rocky Flats Field Office (RFFO) Reduction-In-Force (RIF). The review was conducted as one part of the post-RIF assessment being conducted by the Team established for that purpose. The review consisted of a hands-on review of the paper records, and two interviews which are discussed below.

Paper Records

The review of the paper records was conducted at the Mountain View #2 Offices. The records were contained in four boxes, and were in the custody of the Rocky Flats Project Office (RFPO) Office of Chief Counsel (OCC). Within the four boxes, the records of the RIF consist of:

- RIF Timeline
- Severance Pay Estimates
- Buyout Applications
- Signed Reduction In Force Notices
- Job Acceptance Forms
- Position Descriptions used in RIF
- Reduction In Force Reports
- Reduction In Force Worksheets;
- Notices issued 12/9, 12/15, and 1/6
- Resumes used in RIF Placement Decisions
- Miscellaneous RIF
 - 1) A substantial amount of correspondence, primarily e-mail messages, about the RIF, and,
 - 2) A box of documents from the RFPO Director of Project Support pertaining to the RIF.

There was no attempt by this reviewer to reconstruct the RIF from the documents and ensure that every placement action was correct. Rather, the review was conducted from a macro perspective and attention was paid to whether or not all records expected from a RIF and needed to reconstruct that RIF were contained in the files.

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The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires that agencies conducting a RIF establish, organize, and maintain records of that RIF that are comprehensive and that enumerate: (1) the reasons for the RIF; (2) management's decisions related to the RIF when confronted with choices and options; and, (3) determinations of employee retention standing and assignment rights. (Reference 5 CFR 351.505) **The records meet all regulatory requirements.**

Interviews

The first interview was with RFPO Chief Counsel (Chief Counsel); the second was with the OPM Team Lead. Chief Counsel was very familiar with the records due to the use of them as lead counsel in responding to the two appeals of the RIF to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) (one of which was settled prior to hearing, the other of which the Administrative Judge ruled that the Department of Energy (DOE) properly conducted the RIF and the agency's action was affirmed.). The OPM Team Lead assisted the RFPO in conducting the RIF, and was instrumental in preparing the records.

The interview with Chief Counsel was conducted on June 23, 2004. This discussion confirmed that the records were complete. Chief Counsel felt that OPM handled their responsibilities in the RIF very well. However, Chief Counsel indicated that the documentation wasn't as clear as it should be and had originally found the RIF records difficult to understand and to use. Chief Counsel found it challenging to reconstruct the RIF using these records in order to respond to the MSPB appeals. Additional assistance had to be requested from OPM to understand what the records were saying, and who had prepared specific records. Chief Counsel, as a member of the RFPO management, had been involved in RIF planning activities up to the point of issuance of specific notices. At that point Chief Counsel recused herself due to OCC being affected by the RIF and the need to avoid an appearance of a conflict of interest.

Chief Counsel indicated that she was able to identify 5 iterations of the RIF, but came to this conclusion only after sorting through what she described as iteration discrepancies. For instance, iteration #4 supported the specific notices issued on August 27, 2003, while iteration #2 and iteration #3 supported the specific notices issued in December 2003. Initially these iterations appear to be out of sequence, and the file contained no explanation for the missing iterations. Eventually, Chief Counsel was able to clarify that the iteration #4 was the fourth version of the first round, and that there were four versions (iterations) of the first round due to quality checks by OPM. She also determined that iteration #2 and iteration #3 were versions relating to subsequent rounds, and also related to quality checks. OPM was instrumental in clarifying this for Chief Counsel, as well as explaining the rest of the records they had prepared. OPM was brought back assist in OCC's records review. However, Chief Counsel found it somewhat difficult to engage OPM's time in the post-RIF period due to concerns within OPM about their staff's involvement with MSPB appeals.

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Another concern raised during the interview involved the RIF Worksheets, also known as the “green sheets”. The “green sheets” were insufficient from a litigation standpoint because they did not show who prepared them and who subsequently changed them. Additionally, some of them did not make it clear why a decision was made and who made it. Chief Counsel indicated OPM was unable to clarify those concerns.

Chief Counsel’s recommendations for the future were as follows:

- If at all possible, OPM should limit the rounds during the RIF to two. She believes it would be ideal if there was only one round during the RIF, but if necessary there could be one more. She believes any more than two rounds is too many. She suggested that each iteration of a round not be discarded, but rather maintained in the file, with an explanation of why it was not used.
- OPM’s “green sheets” should indicate on each one who prepared the document, if changed who changed it, and for any decisions made who made them and why, be documented.
- It should be understood in advance, and stated in the Memorandum of Understanding, that OPM will provide post-RIF support for records review and appeals preparation and, where necessary, testimony.

The interview with the OPM Team Lead was conducted on June 24, 2004. The discussion helped the reviewer to understand what each record was and its purpose. The OPM Team Lead was able to go through each document within the retention register folders and explain what each one recorded. Once the records were explained they were fairly easy to follow, however, they weren’t initially easy to understand.

The OPM Team Lead provided the following suggestions:

- Members of the RIF team should be the same throughout the entire RIF process.
- There should be an attorney as part of the team throughout the process, and that individual would be the one expected to be responsible for MSPB and EEOC appeals. This would avoid a situation such as experienced here where the attorney reviewing the records in order to respond to an appeal is not initially familiar with those records. As noted above, Chief Counsel was part of the RIF planning process, but recused herself prior to issuance of the specific notices.
- A Human Resources Officer or Specialist should be part of the team from start to finish. In this instance, the RFFO HR Director performed this function, but retired prior to the actual effective date of the RIF. The HR representative to the team should be detailed from another DOE office with the expectation that he/she would be part of the team from beginning to end. She also suggests the detailed individual should be screened to ensure they handle stress well.

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- Attention should be given to clerical assistance for the RIF team. She believes the RIF team should have its own copy machine identified and maintained. Apparently the copy machine identified for use by the RIF team broke down, creating substantial difficulty for document reproduction.
- Clerical assistance is a necessity for a RIF team. The Office of Environmental Management did detail several people to assist the Rocky Flats RIF team, but these were not individuals accustomed to carrying out routine clerical duties. Individuals used to functioning at the assistant or clerk level are the best choice for this type of support.

Lessons Learned

- OPM was a good choice to provide RIF services.
- The contract or Memorandum of Understanding with a RIF services provider should spell out any and all expectations regarding records. It should also specify expectations regarding post-RIF support, and anticipated level of involvement with appeals, up to and including testimony at the MSPB, the EEOC, and possibly even court proceedings.
- The defined expectations regarding RIF records should include a requirement for a narrative overview of the various events occurring during the RIF, decisions made, who they were made by and why. The narrative should also include a discussion of each round of the RIF and the reason for each iteration within each round. Another expectation regarding records that should be spelled out is that the records regarding each iteration of a round should be labeled and maintained as part of the file. A “greensheet” should also be required to be annotated as to who prepared them, who changed them, and who made decisions and why.
- The RIF team should consist of members who are likely to be part of the team throughout the entire process, up to and including post-RIF appeals.
- The RIF team should include an attorney who will be responsible for responding to appeals.
- The RIF team should include an HR Officer or Specialist who will not be affected by the RIF and is likely to be part of the process from start to finish. This individual should be able to deal with the stressful situations accompanying RIF. This individual would probably have to be detailed from another DOE office or another Federal agency.
- Clerical assistance for the RIF team should receive adequate attention, and sufficient clerical support be provided, including staff, supplies and office machines, particularly copiers.
- A discussion should take place regarding how many rounds are expected during the RIF, and why.

Thomas A. Kelly, Human Resources Specialist
Golden Field Office

ATTACHMENT TWO

RIF ASSESSMENT
Summary of Survey Results

Surveys Received: 14 RFPO Staff
4 RIF'd Staff

1. Was the RIF run objectively?

YES (10)

Comment:

- **As far as I know, with the exception of selection of the core cadre which was pulled out ahead of time, and the legacy waste positions.**

NO (6)

NO RESPONSE (2)

2. Were communications from management to employees regarding the RIF good?

YES (9)

Comment:

- **Yes, but not quite truthful**

NO (7)

Comment:

- **Management never could get straight whether they were creating incentives for people to stay, or just special people, or trying to lay everyone off. They should have had a better determination of how long functions were needed, and been up front about it.**

“OK” (1)

NO RESPONSE (1)

3. If not, what could have been done to improve communications?

- **Broaden communications on the same topics. Say the same thing differing ways. More OPM communications.**
- **The RFFO Manager must have known when he came here in October the situation and the apparent resolution. He may not have known the actual timeline, but he lied when he claimed to “not be a hatchet man”. He also lied the week before the announced General RIF. At a Mgr.’s meeting he stated that the RIF was not imminent; then one week later the union was notified. Nothing in the government works that fast.**
- **Improving communication would involve management being honest and stating what is going to happen and stating when or date unknown. Telling the employees the truth vs. lying.**
- **Considering the hidden agenda of the then manager and EM HQ to protect the favorites, I’m not sure what would have helped.**

- A more effective system of rumor control is a critical component of the communications plan.
- Management should have been forthright with employees from the beginning. Employees were being continually assured that RIF was not imminent, when the word leaked out that they were at the same time doing RIF planning and running RIF scenarios.
- Many meetings were held but they lied.
- I believe the staff was left in the dark a great deal of the time. Communications between management and staff has always been an issue. During something this traumatic, individuals need a great deal of care and feeding. I don't think you can communicate enough.
- The last minute change in the size of the RIF (being much deeper) than earlier projections created additional problems. The emergency management function was shown on earlier timelines as continuing to the end of FY04. Contractor counterpart personnel in this area were maintained on site as well until this time. This information was sent over to the Golden Field Office when the initial details were set up and filled in FY03.
- This may or may not have had any influence on the selection of qualified candidates such as trying to give preference to those with jobs ending sooner, rather than later, but was inaccurate, and may have had a negative influence on those seeking a detail who appeared wrongly to still have jobs at RF, (I applied for one of these details, and did not get the opportunity). With continuing program responsibilities in areas such as emergency management (as well as events outside of work outside of my control), it was difficult for me to set up a detail somewhere at the last minute – without the contacts and networking I have since done. I was faced with just abandoning the EM program and considering my needs only (which I should have done in hind site). Instead, I finished up program responsibilities to the best that I could, sorted through program files, and prepared a turnover list to provide to my supervisor with what he needed until it really ended. Although people who did not have that much to do any longer may have set up their own details, those of us who were still busy did not because of inaccurate timeline information, and woefully inadequate information on our best chances for getting future jobs in the federal government, and in what we all already knew was a very bad job market overall. Many of us have applied for many, many, many jobs for which we should have been very good candidates – but have not been given the attention by outside agencies without a foot in the door – the ICTAP process is marginal at best (especially in this job market). If management knew that details were the better way to go, they should have provided active assistance and ensured everyone had the opportunity to go this route, instead of letting people just look for jobs during working hours which in most all cases has taken far too long to get results.

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- **Managers should have been more knowledgeable.**

4. Did you find the RIF timeline helpful?

YES (15)

Comment

- **After it was extended to 12/31**

NO (2)

Comment

- **NO, considering the complete change in schedule due to the rerunning of so called “Needed vs. eliminated positions.**

NO RESPONSE (1)

Comment

- **You always get laid off at Christmas, don’t you.**

5. Did you have trust in management regarding how the RIF was run?

YES (7)

NO (8)

Comment:

- **Absolutely NOT.**

“MOSTLY” (1)

“SOMEWHAT” (1)

“NO RESPONSE” (1)

6. If not, why not?

- **I think management was able to maneuver around certain obstacles to achieve what they wanted.**
- **Decisions regarding what positions were kept and which were eliminated were not based on credible analysis. The management team basis for their decisions appear to be solely personality based (“friends + family”). Necessary positions were eliminated because the incumbents were not “in favor” with management. e.g.: occupational safety, industrial hygiene, radiological safety, integrated work control, quality assurance. Input from supervisors and some assistant managers were discarded so a handful of the RFFO Manager’s buddies made decisions on positions with limited knowledge and intelligence.**
- **Because information was being leaked out by certain management officials which painted a different picture than the information management was giving out to employees. It became clear that the RFFO Manager would have played games to save certain people if allowed. I think it was extremely good that OPM handled the RIF which basically kept the management team in line.**
- **Some retained positions were very subjective. Other critical positions to the closure mission were abolished, but later were occupied by other retained individuals.**
- **Inherent distrust of management here.**

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- Once the chosen few were protected, then OPM was brought to do the dirty work according to the statutes.
 - Be honest with employees. If you know something, do not keep us in the dark. We are not children although we are treated as such.
 - Perceived lack of interest in OPM decisions.
 - Only because of the stringent process already set up, and OPM involvement.
 - Historically management acquires their desire.
 - Every time a question was asked, the RFFO Manager would say, “I don’t know”.
7. Did you have trust in the in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and it’s competence regarding RIF implementation?
- YES (12)
NO (4)
Comment
- Absolutely not.
- “SOMEWHAT” (1)
“NO RESPONSE” (1)
8. If not, why not?
- They worked with management to achieve management’s desires without breaking the rules – a lot of grey area.
 - Did not appear to hold RFFO Management to OPM regs.
 - I have a general distrust of OPM because I see them as being responsible for our seriously screwed up federal HR system. All the other administrative systems (procurement, accounting, budget, travel, etc) have significantly improved since the National Performance Review. But the HR system has continued an uninterrupted dive into absolute chaos, resulting in the situation we have now in the federal government, where no agency can hire staff from outside the system.
 - They did well given the information and cadre situation provided to them. The 801 (general engineer) and 1301 (physical scientist) have been used interchangeably since RF started. To suddenly separate the two and not make them interchangeable was ludicrous and unfair to the personnel in these categories.
 - They told me I could change health insurance and believe me you can’t. \$1,000 it has cost me!
9. Do you believe the RIF was run fairly?
- YES (10)
Comment:
- As far as I know.
- NO (5)
“KIND OF” (1)
“I GUESS SO” (1)
NO RESPONSE (1)

Comment:

- **Everything was a secret until they (management – OPM) were ready to tell you).**

10. If not, why not?

- **I would like to think that it was run fairly but knowing management, I have my doubts.**
- **As said above, some retained positions were very subjective by management. Some people with critical mission positions were downgraded and retreated unfairly to another position.**
- **Many of the positions eliminated are still needed but now many of the remaining staff have to do double and triple functions while several of the same protected small groups do as little as they did prior.**
- **The cadre was pre-selected personnel that management determined that they could not “live” without. The job descriptions were not for anyone to apply towards although management stated that is what they wanted. There were insufficient 13 positions for the masses to apply on. The job descriptions were written with specific employee/job descriptions in mind thereby preventing “anyone” to apply.**
- **Job descriptions used by OPM were not current and did not reflect certain specialized skill sets. Veteran’s capabilities appeared to be expanded well beyond reality.**
- **Other than treatment of the core cadre and legacy positions.**

11. Did you feel the bump and retreat came out fairly?

YES (11)

NO (2)

NO RESPONSE (3)

“MOSTLY” (1)

“DON’T KNOW” (1)

Comment:

- **Kind of**
- **As far as I know**

12. If not, why not?

- **I understand the process but it was very difficult to understand how some people were able to fit into a position. Without having a HR background or experience it is difficult to answer this question.**
- **Appeared to be penalized for retreating to a lower grade.**
- **Lost responsibilities and authorities.**
- **Due to the way that the original protected group of Cadre were selected (biased) many would have not have survived the bump and retreat. Therefore the bump and retreat were also biased.**
- **The physical scientist/engineer flap.**

13. Was DOE Human Resources of help to employees during the RIF process?

YES (13)

NO (4)

Comment:

- They want nothing to do with helping. One staff member helped.

“SOMEWHAT” (1)

Comments:

- I think they tried, but it would have been much better if the position descriptions had been accurate going into the RIF. Also there were instances where the 2 personnel specialists and the clerk gave out wrong information. The personnel director should have been the only one allowed to answer questions.
- Yes, as best they could, considering the fact that the RFFO HR was used as simple messengers.
- For the most part, except that HR and OPM should have had a much larger role in supporting outplacement of employees within government, and not just conducting the RIF. I have since through my own networking, found contacts in other agencies and temporary employment options. Individual job postings are narrow and restrictive in nature, when many RF employees have numerous skill sets which could be of value to other agencies – but people higher up in the organizations or with knowledge of the entire agency organization and function should consider RF employee skills useful to them. Otherwise you are relying on hit or miss application by employees to various positions which is one option, but not a good one in a poor job market, and when an agency is laying off large numbers of people. If another agency’s employees were being RIF'd, they would hope we would give consideration to them.

14. Was OPM personnel of help during the RIF process?

YES (12)

NO (4)

SOMEWHAT (1)

SOMETIMES (1)

Comment:

- NOT really. They just followed the script given them.
- Yes, but why has OPM no responsibility to provide outplacement assistance or to see that agency management does?

15. Did you have questions during the RIF process that never got answered?

YES (4)

Comment:

- All were answered.

NO (12)

NO RESPONSE (2)

16. What were they?

- **The question was finally answered but not in time to affect my decision for accepting early retirement.**
- **Save grade, save pay, and how QSI can be achieved at step 10 of lower grade.**
- **How were the remaining positions and functions needed for closure matched up? How did the Group (4) that made these decisions receive input from the SMEs as to remaining tasks since the closure path was still in the planning phase.**
- **Why 801's and 1301's are no longer interchangeable.**

17. What improvements could have been made to how the RIF was run?

- **I thought it was well organized and resourced.**
- **Run the RIF once, not the three times. Develop a communication plan that involved AFGE.**
- **Get position descriptions accurately depicting duties.**
- **Truly honest communications**
- **Understand what is needed for the remaining tasks for closure and the staff with the necessary skills and knowledge that will be necessary to meet these tasks vs. the protected favorite...**
- **Greater explanation about why some positions were only engineer and others physical scientists when all positions were originally open to either.**
- **A reasonable timeline up front.**
- **Rumor Control**
- **Need better planning. All funds were exhausted for FY04, i.e., no money left for training and awards.**
- **Information should have been kept confidential. There was a great deal of information leaking out during the RIF process and during the planning stages. This really undermined management and greatly added to the stress that employees were already suffering. If another RIF occurs, management needs to go to greater lengths to ensure that information is not leaked.**
- **Better, more knowledgeable OPM staff.**
- **Truthful DOE Manager (smarter, too!)**
- **This is another difficult question to answer. Emotions were running high and I know a large percentage of the staff felt that management was unfeeling and secretive.**
- **Core cadre selection and handling was a disgrace. Information and handling of legacy positions was poor.**
- **Those who were approved an award should have received it – but I have not – I would like to know why. I worked very hard that year!**

18. What worked well during the RIF process?

- **“Friends and Family” of RFFO management kept their jobs, no matter how incompetent they are!!**

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- Having the experts, OPM, run the RIF with assistance from the HR Director.
- Timeline
- I was not included!
- I thought communications were handled appropriately. We knew what was going to happen and when. I also thought management did an absolutely amazing job of reaching out to other federal agencies in the Denver area and helping to place our staff.
- Allowing individuals to work until end of calendar year to benefit from tax year.
- Got rid of several of the non-performers, unfortunately, still kept several of the favorite non-performers and created severe skill shortage in several needed areas.
- The employee rumor mill
- No intelligent answer
- Each employee was provided with personal information including SCD and severance computation in a timely manner.
- OPM running it.
- OPM training information sessions were well done.

19. Were outplacement efforts adequate?

YES (9)

Comment:

- But selectively

NO (7)

Don't Know (1)

NO RESPONSE (1)

20. If not, why not?

- I think the effort was there in the beginning but it seemed to lose momentum. From what I understand most of the individuals that were on details found their own placement and management did not do much to find openings. I would hope that we take this approach, with a much stronger effort up front, again at the end of the project when many of us will be in need of a new job; possibly someone that can dedicate full time to assisting employees. It would also be helpful to have another retirement seminar, sometime within the next year, for those that are able to retire.
- Need more communication and network with other agencies or DOE complex to give higher priority for RF employees.
- Some individuals were denied details and others had details extended.
- Only for the favorite few

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- **Management did not have to remove CTAP/ICTAP. It could be offered to present employees via a general notice to reduce. We know this is coming in 2005, why not announce it for 6 months at a time to assist those of us that are left and still job hunting. Is there any additional “talks” with other agencies to help us closer towards closure?**
- **Very limited HQ support for placement of RFFO employees. Missed opportunity for retaining closure site expertise within the complex.**
- **I was not subject to outplacement, but I thought a lot of effort and recognition of importance on part of management.**
- **Woefully inadequate – basically, we had use of the contractor transition center, which was great for assistance with resume preparation and interviewing skills, but they are totally lacking in assistance with placement of employees in the government environment. Management still has shown no real commitment to assistance with outplacement.**
- **Only for above grades.**

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This survey is a part of a Reduction In Force (RIF) assessment to gain lessons learned from the RIF performed at the Rocky Flats Field Office for consideration in future RIFs within the EM complex DOE-wide. This survey will collect information/perspectives from both staff and management on aspects of the RIF that were performed either poorly or well. Your input is appreciated.

The attached survey is voluntary. Names will not be required on the survey except for those individuals who are requesting an interview. Surveys can be returned either to a designated box located by the mailboxes, or by holy joe or unmarked envelope to an assessment team member. Any information collected during an interview will not be attributed to any individual, nor will a list of individuals interviewed be provided to management.

Members of the Assessment Team are:

**Barbara Powers-Hargreaves
Brent Johansen
Tom Kelly, Golden Field Office
Richard Schassburger
Marcy Nicks, ex-officio**

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RIF ASSESSMENT SURVEY

This voluntary survey is intended as a Lessons Learned exercise. Individual responses will be confidential. Responses will be consolidated before being provided to management. There will be no individual attribution.

1. Was the RIF run objectively?

YES NO

2. Were communications from management to employees regarding the RIF good?

YES NO

3. If not, what could have been done to improve communications?

4. Did you find the RIF timeline helpful?

YES NO

5. Did you have trust in management regarding how the RIF was run?

YES NO

6. If not, why not?

7. Did you have trust in the in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and it's competence regarding RIF implementation?

YES NO

8. If not, why not?

9. Do you believe the RIF was run fairly?

YES NO

10. If not, why not?

11. Did you feel the bump and retreat came out fairly?

YES NO

12. If not, why not?

13. Was DOE Human Resources of help to employees during the RIF process?

YES NO

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14. Was OPM personnel of help during the RIF process?

YES NO

15. Did you have questions during the RIF process that never got answered?

YES NO

16. What were they?

17. What improvements could have been made to how the RIF was run?

18. What worked well during the RIF process?

19. Were outplacement efforts adequate?

YES NO

20. If not, why not?

21. Do you feel that you need to be interviewed by the assessment team to express your opinions?

YES NO

22. If yes, how should we contact you?

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interview #1
July 1, 2004

- Interviewee stated that the RIF was run by the rules, however the objectivity was compromised because of outdated position descriptions (PDs). It appeared to the interviewee that updates to PDs had not been included in personnel files.
- Additionally, this individual had rewritten their PD which was not taken into consideration. Interviewee stated that in some cases, PDs were 5 to 6 years old.
- The interviewee claimed to have been bumped by someone who did not have the skills, and the skills could not be acquired within the required 90 days.
- Communications regarding the RIF were considered to be adequate.
- PD exercise was not fully worked by Human Resources, because there appeared to be no management concurrence on updates; communications obviously confused on this matter.
- Communications between RFFO management and OPM could have been improved.
- An issue arose regarding the interchangeability/non-interchangeability of physical scientists and engineers. PDs originally written (prior to RIF) as Physical Scientist/General Engineer, however during RIF it was either Physical Scientist or General Engineer. The interviewee felt that engineers were discriminated against and that process was rigged.
- Overall, the interviewee felt that OPM ran the RIF by the book; however more favor may have been given to individuals with veteran status.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interview # 2
July 1, 2004

- The interviewee believed that detail agreements with other offices and agencies worked well in mitigating the potential overall affect of the RIF. People who had details and job offers, but did not take them frustrated the process. Overall, 25 people were placed.
- It appeared that early communications worked well, although it could have been earlier and more forthright.
- Telling staff the reality of staffing numbers was a positive aspect. The interviewee believed that treating staff like adults and allowing them to make their own choices was best.
- The handing out of RIF notices individually with liberal leave for the remainder of that day worked well.
- Using OPM as the objective RIF process lead was the right thing to do; however, there were difficulties with the follow-on activities.
- The Memorandum of Agreement between DOE and OPM did not outline as much as it should have and caused problems.
- Running the RIF in pieces/multiple times confused people. The interviewee believes that running a mock RIF early on and informing people where they stood in the RIF would have been a better process.
- Timing of RIF to coincide with January 1st worked better than expected. For those individuals retiring, timing was perfect.
- There were great difficulties with the follow-on benefits. Some individuals have had significant delays in receiving severance and retirement checks, as well as medical. This was not a RFFO problem, but rather an OPM/DFAS problem.
- The Priority Rehire List has worked well with the help of the Golden Field Office.
- In terms of improvements, communications could have been improved by just doing more. Leaks did occur that complicated the understanding of the process.
- RIF announcement closes all personnel actions, including position descriptions and resumes. OPM put 80-90 percent confidence into resumes. At least 3 or 4 people could have been affected if they had updated their resumes. Management did not stress enough the importance of updating resumes.
- Better communications on OPM rules could have been provided, for example regarding the rules on engineers versus physical scientists.
- More effort should have been devoted to benefits and retirement information.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interview #3
July 1, 2004

- The interviewee felt that the bad part of the RIF was the rumor mill and that employees were listening more to it than to management. As a result, employees were making personal decisions based upon poor information.
- Information was closely held in part because of efforts to work through the HQ system which wasn't ready, because this RIF was the first one that had been done.
- It would have been better to communicate larger pieces of information versus bits and pieces.
- No communications plan. Because Rocky Flats was first out of the chute doing a RIF, HQ approvals came piecemeal; therefore, it would have been tough to have a communications plan.
- Using OPM was the best decision made. Neutral party intended to give credibility to the process.
- In hindsight, there is now a better understanding how to use OPM and work with them. By the time the RIF process was completed the most effective use was made.
- Recommend future use of OPM. The team was very good and knowledgeable.
- Need to make sure that the Memorandum of Understanding with OPM identifies specific documentation needed for litigation.
- Concerning RFFO Human Resources performance, at the staff level HR did not do what was needed to be done effectively or efficiently. Documentation issues; information gaps not addressed. Questions were asked but there was no commitment to follow through.
- It would have been beneficial to have documentation completed prior to the RIF, e.g. accurate position descriptions, documentation of details and qualifications.
- Running iterations of the RIF was a mistake. Management thought people were helped but it just caused animosity and confusion.
- Negotiations with union elongated period of time and caused things to fester.
- Need to have an attorney involved throughout the RIF process.

ATTACHMENT THREE

**Interview #4
July 20, 2004**

What could have been improved with the RIF? Suggestions for future RIF's.

- Management could have given the appearance of being fairer if realistic position descriptions (PD's) had been prepared for the Cadre positions rather than just using existing PD's. Recommend that PD's based upon realistic, anticipated duties be developed before initiation of Cadre selection process.
- Lack of communication from management to employees. Recommend that management communicate better with employees.
- Lack of trust with management. One example, management said Cadre would have to abide by the Relocation Agreement, but HQ personnel acknowledged that would not be enforced. Another example, management said there wasn't a RIF planned even though it was. Recommend that management act truthfully.
- OPM should have had position descriptions for work duties after the RIF at the beginning of the RIF process. In this way, after the RIF employees would know what they were supposed to do and there would not be confusion about whether a GS-15 should be classified as a supervisor even though the individual did not supervise anyone. Recommend that position descriptions be developed for post-RIF activities before running the RIF.
- OPM should have analyzed management's post-RIF plans to make sure they made sense and were supportable under Human Resource guidelines. Again, there would not be confusion about whether a GS-15 should be classified as a supervisor even though the individual did not supervise anyone. Recommend that position descriptions be developed for post-RIF activities before running the RIF.
- There appeared to be manipulation of the RIF so that "favored" individuals could be retained. Manipulation was accomplished through 1) Cadre selection, 2) not having PD's for post-RIF activities, 3) not having a good analysis of post-RIF organization (too many 15's post-RIF), and 4) certain staff were RIF'd even though their functions were needed. These functions were picked up by the "favored".
- Recommend that when RIF letters were issued the "observer" should have been a "sympathetic" person (Diversity Manager, HR, or someone who also was RIF'd).
- Recommend that the Manager that begins the process should be in the office during the RIF rather than delegating to others.
- For the period between issuance of the RIF and employees last day, management should provide clear direction for those RIF'd and those remaining: What are employee duties? What roll did management have at that point (were they to continue to provide job assistance for employees now RIF'd in looking for a job)? Recommend better direction from management after RIF notices have been issued.

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- Management should utilize the services of a RIF expert at the very beginning of the RIF process and then follow the recommendations of the expert. The expert should provide management, the rules, the do's and don'ts, what to say to employees and what not to say to employees, etc. Recommend management hire a RIF expert to provide direction to them in all areas of RIF planning, execution and post-RIF process.

What was done right?

- Using OPM gave a feeling of fairness / independence from management wishes.
- Giving employees an extra two months before the RIF.
- Allowing employees to leave for the day after receiving RIF notice.
- Post-RIF all-day retreat.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interview #5
June 30, 2004

What could have been improved with the RIF? Suggestions for future RIF's.

- Management was not given good RIF guidance from HQ.
- EM Headquarters caused delays in the implementation of the RIF. RFFO had to discuss the scope of the proposed RIF many times before EM would allow the formal paperwork to go to ME for final approval.
- We lacked a good communication plan because the RFFO Manager felt that it was not necessary. While RFPO management wanted to keep employees informed it sometimes did not happen. In addition, RFPO management did not have good communications with the Union. Recommend a good communication plan be developed and followed.
- We lacked a RIF expert because HQ was slow in recommending someone. Strongly recommend hiring an expert for future RIF's.
- Recommend that one person be in charge of making notes of the decisions made by the RIF committee. The notes should explain why certain decisions were made.
- Recommend having only one RIF iteration as it became very complicated to have several of them.
- RFFO's local HR guidance contradicted the guidance given by OPM.
- An HR clerk was a major part of the RIF process but was also RIF'd. It would be better to have someone who was not being RIF'd.

What was done right?

- Interviewee felt that management identified the skills they needed for closure (Cadre skills) and then chose individuals that qualified for those skills.
- Having OPM was very beneficial. It kept management honest.
- OPM documentation was adequate.
- In giving out the RIF notices, OPM studied the individuals they were meeting so that they knew them well.

Interview #6
July 7, 2004

- Interviewee was glad that OPM ran the RIF. However, acknowledged that many important decisions were made by RFFO management.
- Appreciated that the RIF notices were given in a meeting rather than through a letter in a mail box.
- Felt that establishment of the Cadre was to save people rather than positions.
- Communication from management to employees was not adequate. Interviewee stated the relations between management and the Union were not good. Compared management / employee communication during RFFO's RIF to a potential RIF at HQ's that interviewee was in. The HQ RIF had much better communication. Recommended that management openly communicate with employees. Specifically requested that management provide the date when the next RFPO RIF would occur.
- Employee trust of management was poor. Felt management was secretive. Recommended that management be up front with employees.
- Felt that the Union provided information to employees when it should have been provided by management (if at all). As examples, the release of bonus amounts to employees and also the list of eliminated positions. Interviewee felt these disclosures from the Union were not appropriate.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interviewee #7
August 4, 2004

- Interviewee felt RIF was run fairly by OPM. Felt it was a good decision to bring them in.
- Did not feel there were good outplacement efforts prior to RIF.
- Believes that RFFO should continue outplacement efforts for separated employees post-RIF.
- Believes communications were inadequate and confusing.
- Feels that selection of the Cadre was unfair. Believes management pre-selected individuals for the advertised positions.
- Timeline changed continuously and caused a great deal of confusion.

ATTACHMENT THREE

Interview #8
August 4, 2004

- RIF was well run. Only one issue evolved which concerned competitive levels and it was resolved and did not change any outcomes of the RIF.
- It was a good idea to use OPM. They had a specialized team and brought credibility to the process.
- Not convinced that management provided all the information they had to employees in a timely manner. They could have started talking to employees much sooner.
- Important that an HR presence be involved in the entire process from start to finish.
- Flaw – unclear communications on the need to update position descriptions and actions being frozen by OPM.
- No management emphasis on updating position descriptions.
- Recommends that annually, preferably at midyears or final performance appraisal that supervisors review position descriptions with employees and ensure their accuracy. Recommends a coversheet on position description at mid year to be signed by supervisor indicating accuracy of position description.
- Sending personnel function to Savannah River created difficulties, as they distanced themselves from the RIF, and no one was left at RFFO who could answer questions.
- The timing of communications was such that supervisors did not have much time if any to ensure position descriptions were updated.