

BRIEFLY...

Highlights of Report Number: 02-04-203-04-431, a report to the Assistant Secretary, Employment Standards Administration. September 30, 2004.

WHY READ THE REPORT

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) pays wage replacement, medical treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and other benefits to eligible Federal civilian workers who suffer work-related injuries or occupational diseases, and their dependents. The Employment Standards Administration's (ESA's) Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) administers the program. In FY 2003, FECA paid approximately \$2.3 billion in benefits and adjudicated 202,500 cases. Recent Congressional hearings have focused on reforms to reduce costs and risks for fraud, waste and abuse.

WHY OIG DID THE AUDIT

The OIG evaluated customer service provided by OWCP's Division of Federal Employees' Compensation. The objectives were to determine: (1) how OWCP's New York District Office responded to complaints or inquiries filed under the FECA; and (2) if nationwide OWCP surveys were useful in evaluating customer service satisfaction. The evaluation covered FECA customer service provided by OWCP in FY 2003 and surveys performed by OWCP from 1996 to October 2003.

READ THE FULL REPORT

To view the report, including the scope, methodology, and full agency response, go to:

<http://www.oig.dol.gov/public/reports/oa/2004/02-04-203-04-431.pdf>

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DISTRICT OFFICE RESPONDED TO FECA COMPLAINTS EFFICIENTLY, BUT OWCP NATIONWIDE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY COULD BE IMPROVED

WHAT OIG FOUND

Our evaluation found that:

OWCP's New York District Office responded to and resolved most of the complaints it received. Despite a heavy workload and time-consuming duties, response time was generally satisfactory. Complaint resolution times varied, depending on the complexity of issues involved.

OWCP's nationwide telephone survey provided limited information on customer satisfaction. OWCP only surveyed claimants who called into the district office, did not survey employing agencies or claimants who wrote in, and failed to ask about underlying causes of overall dissatisfaction with a call.

WHAT OIG RECOMMENDED

We recommended that the Assistant Secretary for Employment Standards:

- Establish separate customer surveys and performance goals for employing agencies.
- Add follow-up questions to OWCP's survey on FECA customer service to determine the underlying causes of dissatisfaction with telephone calls.

Generally, ESA disagreed with the recommendations. ESA's response cited resource constraints, ongoing efforts to address our findings, and concerns about lengthening the customer service survey.