

Superior Accomplishment Awards and Time-Off Awards

This is the second article in a series describing various types of awards available to Federal employees. Superior Accomplishment Awards and Time-Off awards are addressed and explained. Articles 1 and 3 posted on the OHCM Awards Web site (<http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov/benefits/awards/>) address Performance Awards, Quality Step Increase awards, and honorary and informal recognition awards.

What is a Superior Accomplishment Award (SAA)

SAAs are used to recognize employee accomplishments that are achieved through an individual or group effort, in the form of a suggestion, an invention, or a special act or service. It is a lump-sum cash award based on a specific, one-time (non-recurring) contribution that is tied directly to the work that is being performed by an employee to successfully meet the organization's mission and goals.

SAAs are not based on an employee's performance rating of record or a particular appraisal period. Therefore, when an employee makes a significant contribution on a specific task or assignment or in support of a program or project, he/she may be awarded immediately by management.

Individual award recommendations may range up to \$25,000. The Center Director may approve cash awards up to \$10,000. However, individual award recommendations over \$10,000 must be approved by the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and award recommendations over \$25,000 must go the President of the United States for approval.

What are Time-Off Awards?

A Time-off award (TOA) is a unique type of award. A TOA is time off from duty, without loss of pay or charge to leave, granted to a Federal employee as a form of incentive or recognition.

The criteria for a TOA is similar to that of a Superior Accomplishment Award (SAA) used to recognize a one-time contribution by an employee. In addition, a TOA may also be used to recognize sustained high-level performance for an extended period as reflected in an employee's rating of record of Fully Successful or above. When a TOA is used as a performance-based award, a copy of the employee's rating of record is used as the award justification.

TOA's may be granted along with other forms of cash awards as long as the total value of the award given is commensurate with the contribution made by the employee. For example, an employee might receive an award consisting of both a 8 hour time-off award and \$500 as recognition for a single contribution as long as the combined "value" of the award is commensurate with the employee's contribution that is being recognized.

When determining the value of a contribution, it is important to factor in the impact the contribution has made to the program, project, organization, etc.; extent of its application; and actual benefits (value) derived as a direct result of the contribution.

How many TOA hours may an employee receive?

The maximum amount of hours that a full-time employee may receive in any given leave year is 80 hours. For a single contribution, a TOA may be granted in increments of up to 40 hours. Since a TOA is an excused absence, employees must schedule and obtain approval to use a TOA by their immediate supervisor.

Part time employees may be granted TOAs up to the average number of hours of work in their biweekly scheduled tour of duty. For a single contribution, a TOA may be granted in increments no greater than one-half the total hours allowed during a given leave year.

Are there any limitations involved with TOAs?

TOAs cannot be:

- Converted to cash.
- Transferred when an employee transfers to another Federal agency, except when an employee is transferring to another NASA Center.
- Substituted for overtime work that should be directly compensated through paid overtime or compensation.
- Transferred to leave recipients under the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program.

What are examples of contributions that may warrant a SAA or TOA?

A contribution-based award, whether a SAA or TOA, may be used to recognize a one-time, nonrecurring contribution, such as:

- Making a high-quality contribution involving a difficult or important project or assignment;
- Displaying special initiative and skill in completing a particular project or assignment before the deadline;
- Ensuring that the mission is accomplished during a difficult period by successfully completing additional work or a project assignment while maintaining the employee's own workload; or
- Using initiative and creativity in improving a product, activity, program, or service.

To find out more information about awards, contact the Awards Office in the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) at extension 43194, refer to the Questions and Answers below, and reference the NASA and LaRC Awards Policy, as follows:

- NPR 3451.1B, NASA Awards and Recognition Program Requirements;
- LPR 3451.1 Incentive Awards and Recognition Program;
- NPR 3430.1C, Employee Performance Communication System
- Center's OHCM Web site at: <http://ohcm.larc.nasa.gov/benefits/awards/>
- Agency's NASA People Web site at:
http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/awards/external_awards.htm
- Human Resources Portal at:
https://hr.nasa.gov/portal/server.pt/community/policies_and_programs/233/awards/12990

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TOA Q&A

Who is eligible to receive a SAA or TOA?

All General Schedule employees including excepted service, intermittent, stay-in-school, summer, and or temporary civilian employees are eligible to receive an SAA or TOA.

SES, ST, and SL employees are eligible under certain circumstances and require higher level approval.

Is there a limit to a TOA?

On an annual basis, a time-off award(s) for full time employees cannot exceed 40 hours per one-time contribution and may not exceed 80 hours within a 12 month period. Time-off awards are prorated for part time employees based on the average number of hours of work in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty.

Is there a time limit on when a TOA must be used?

A TOA should be taken within a reasonable time period, usually within 12 months of the effective date of the award.

When an employee is granted a SAA (contribution-based award), does the value of a TOA granted for the same contribution have to be taken into consideration when determining the amount of the cash award?

Yes. Because the TOA is being granted for the same contribution as an SAA, the TOA must be calculated and included in the total cash award amount being granted to the employee.