



NTEU's Take on PASS

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will revamp portions of its Performance and Accountability Standards System (PASS) in 2008. PASS is the performance appraisal system that links TSA employee job performance to pay increases.

Several changes are proposed, but perhaps the most significant will be to increase the number of performance rating levels from four to five and give employees rated in the top three levels a chance at a merit salary increase or bonus. As it stands today, only TSA employees rated in the top two performance levels are eligible for any sort of merit pay increase.

The chart below describes some of the planned PASS changes and what they could mean for you – the TSA employee.

- **PASS 2007:** Current PASS scoring system has four final rating levels. Only employees scoring in the top two rating levels “Role Model” and “Exceeds Standards” receive merit salary increases;
 - **PASS 2008:** Scoring system will have five final rating levels. Employees scoring in the top three levels will receive a merit salary increase;
 - **NTEU's Take:** Though PASS remains inferior to the General Schedule (GS), additional ratings levels could create more potential for recognition and rewards.
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- **PASS 2007:** Certain PASS rules that determine an employee's final performance rating carry more influence than others;
 - **PASS 2008:** PASS rules will be revised to give additional weight to an employee's overall performance rating;
 - **NTEU's Take:** Current PASS rules make it virtually impossible for dual function screeners (DFS) to achieve the “Role Model” or “Exceeds Standards” ratings.
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- **PASS 2007:** High-performing dual function screeners are not adequately recognized for their work;

- **PASS 2008:** Dual function screeners merit bonuses will be increased and awarded on a tiered system;
 - **NTEU's Take:** Changes to PASS rating rules and final rating levels could help dual function screeners be properly recognized, and compensated, for their work.
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- **PASS 2007:** PASS Image Quizzes are of very poor image quality;
- **PASS 2008:** All PASS Image Quizzes will be taken on upgraded, high-resolution systems;
- **NTEU's Take:** Improved image quality could help improve test scores, increase PASS final rating and lower TSA attrition rates.

The bottom line is that, along with allegations of favoritism and cronyism, PASS is a poor substitute for what is really lacking at TSA – a performance appraisal system that is transparent and credible with all TSA employees, and quality leadership that solicits, values and acts upon the ideas and initiative of frontline workers.

In that vein, NTEU is proud of its role in lobbying the Senate to include an amendment by Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) to the fiscal 2008 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations bill that would require TSA to give a PASS status report to the House and Senate Appropriations committees by March 1. Specifically, the TSA would have to provide Congress with data of how many agency employees – managers and nonmanagers alike – achieved each of the five PASS performance levels. A final vote on the bill is expected later this fall.