

# FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



## AGRICULTURE

### STATES TO RECEIVE MORE THAN \$185 MILLION IN INTERIM NATIONAL FOREST PAYMENTS

■(WASHINGTON) Forty-one states and Puerto Rico will share interim payments totaling more than \$185 million as their portion of national forest receipts collected in fiscal year 1996, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced Wednesday. Oklahoma's interim payment will be \$561,000, with an estimated total payment of \$748,000.

The interim payment represents 75 percent of the estimated total each state will receive as its share of funds collected during the year from the sale and use of a variety of national forest products and services. USDA pays any additional funds it owes the states in December, after determining the actual receipts for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 1996.

By law, the Forest Service pays 25 percent of the revenues it collects from timber sales, grazing, recreation, minerals, and land uses to states in which national forest lands are located. The funds are used for schools and roads. Last year, the states received total payments of more than \$273 million.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
10/10/96

## BUSINESS & LABOR

### WORKPLACE HAZARDS AND HEALTH EVALUATED

■(WASHINGTON) The Department of Energy (DOE) took a major step forward in its program to evaluate the health of former workers in the nuclear weapons complex and look for links to potential exposures to hazardous substances during their work.

Last week, the department awarded cooperative agreements totaling \$2.8 million to six teams of health and labor specialists in Colorado, Ohio, the District of Columbia, Nevada, New York, California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Washington. Investigators will identify specific groups of former DOE workers who may be at risk for disease based on past DOE workplace exposure to radioactive or hazardous substances such as asbestos, chemicals and beryllium. Over the next year, these groups will conduct "needs assessments" and recommend whether DOE should fund programs

to monitor the health of the former workers. The program was developed in accordance with the Defense Authorization Act of 1993.

Two pilot projects currently monitor former workers exposed to hazards where health risks are well-known (beryllium and high lifetime doses of ionizing radiation). The new program could expand medical monitoring to other at-risk groups of former workers and others exposed to beryllium and radiation.

Investigators will also recommend whether to move into a second phase that would culminate in medical screening of targeted populations of former workers based on exposure history and the availability of acceptable screening tests. The teams administering these projects will coordinate referrals and follow-up treatment, as well as workers compensation and other existing insurance and benefits programs.

Additional information on each project is available by calling 202-586-6993.

—US DEPT. OF ENERGY  
10/07/96

### OSHA AWARDS GRANTS TO IMPROVE WORKPLACE SAFETY

■(WASHINGTON) Extended training grants for 26 nonprofit groups to help employers and employees reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, were announced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently.

The grants were initially awarded in fiscal years 1994 and 1995. Because of delayed appropriations this fiscal year, OSHA decided to extend existing grants for an additional year rather than conduct an open competition for new grantees.

Grantees of the \$2,372,000 will develop educational materials and provide training on construction safety and health, ergonomics, lockout/tagout, logging safety, prevention of lifting injuries in medical care facilities, process safety management of highly hazardous chemicals, and safety and health programs for small business.

—US DEPT. OF LABOR  
10/07/96

*"States do not prosper through ideology."*

*Napoleon I  
letter to M. Cambaceres  
April 24, 1805*

### PENSION PAYBACK PROGRAM RECOUPS MORE THAN \$4.8 MILLION

■(WASHINGTON) Almost \$5 million in delinquent contributions have now been restored to the pension plans of 16,800 workers as a result of the U.S. Labor Department's Pension Payback Program.

The department last week announced the paybacks following a six-month period when it allowed employers as part of its payback program to restore the 401(k) pension funds. Altogether, 170 employers responded, restoring \$4.8 million in delinquent contributions ranging from \$43 to \$200,000.

"We are pleased with the results," said Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich. "Not only did this voluntary compliance effort recoup money for American workers, it freed up federal investigators to work on more serious pension violations."

Eligible employers who participated in the pension payback program could avoid civil and criminal sanctions, including civil injunctions, criminal prosecutions or criminal fines, excise taxes and civil money penalties.

They were required to provide the Labor Department with written evidence that funds actually had been restored and to notify their participants of the restorations within 90 days. Meanwhile, department investigators are continuing to examine the notifications to verify that the contributions were, in fact, made to the plans and that all conditions of the program were met.

Employers who engaged in the most egregious conduct were not allowed to take advantage of the program. Participation also was not available to persons who failed to make timely deposits of participant contributions after April 5, 1996, or had unpaid participant contributions exceeding the aggregate amount of participant contributions received or withheld from employee wages in calendar year 1995.

—US DEPT. OF LABOR  
10/08/96

### ILLEGALLY MADE GOODS TRACED TO SEARS, MACY'S WEST, HUB AND GUESS

■(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich put on notice some of the nation's major retailers, distributors and manufacturers. Reich cited Sears, Roebuck and Co., Macy's West, Hub Distributing, Continued on next page