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February 22, 1999

Director, Division of Research

Request for Pay Above the Minimum Rate– Eric R. Schmidt

This is to request consideration for pay above the minimum for the recruitment of Mr. Eric Schmidt as a GS-13, Step 6, Fire Protection Engineer.. The position is located in the Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention (FFFIP) Team, Surveillance and Field Investigations Branch, Division of Safety Research of NIOSH. The FFFIP Team was formed in response to a congressional appropriation to NIOSH in fiscal year 1998 to address the continuing national problem of occupational fire fighter fatalities. The FFFIP Team conducts investigations of fire fighter deaths suffered in the line of duty for purposes of determining causal or contributory factors and making recommendations for prevention of future similar incidents The specific expertise of a fire protection engineer is needed to provide in-depth and state-of-the-art knowledge about fire fighting operations and prevention strategies.

Mr. Schmidt is an exceptional candidate who brings a unique blend of experience and expertise in fire fighting and safety engineering. Mr. Schmidt has 17 years of experience in fighting fires and 18 years of experience as a fire protection engineer, focusing on pro-active efforts to prevent fires and related injuries and deaths. Mr. Schmidt has an Associate of Applied Science in Fire Science and a Bachelor of Science in Fire Protection Engineering. Mr. Schmidt is a registered Professional Engineer in 2 states and is certified as a Fire Inspector by the National Fire Service. Mr. Schmidt demonstrated extensive knowledge and experience, and an understanding of the needs and potential for the NIOSH program in his interview with NIOSH. His specific qualifications and potential contributions to the FFFIP teamed were corroborated by past supervisors and references. Mr. Schmidt's experience and expertise would be a tremendous asset in NIOSH investigations of fire fighter fatalities and the development of recommendations to prevent future incidents.

NIOSH took extra steps in order to recruit qualified applicants for this position. In addition to general procedures, the announcement was sent to all Fire Protection Engineering Schools with the request that the announcement be distributed to qualified students and affiliates. The announcement was also posted on the well-trafficked Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program homepage that includes information on the program and information from each NIOSH investigation to date. Despite these efforts, Mr. Schmidt was one of only two promising candidates for the position. The second candidate would bring useful skills to the program, but does not have the specific experience and expertise offered by Mr. Schmidt. Both candidates are crucially needed to aid NIOSH in investigating a mounting number of fire fighter fatalities that cannot be investigated with current staff.

Due to his experience and demonstrated abilities, Mr. Schmidt currently receives compensation as an independent consultant above the current GS-13, Step 1 position level and, thus, requests pay above the minimum.

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Safety Engineer, GS-803-13

Introduction

This position is located in the Trauma Investigations Section, Surveillance and Field Investigations Branch, Division of Safety Research. The mission of the Division is on file in the Human Resources Management Office, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Major Duties

Serves as the technical expert on safety engineering techniques and methods for studying fire fighter work-related injuries to develop intervention and prevention strategies. Provides engineering interface with internal and external professionals in the study and development of engineering designs, practices, protocols, recommendations, aimed at reducing fire fighter fatalities. Also, proposes recommendations for new or modification of existing fire fighter research directions or projects to further the mission of DSR and NIOSH. [25%]

Develops and writes technical documents and manuscripts for publication and presentation based on the results of research for dissemination in peer review journals, NIOSH publications and other appropriate sources. Also, conducts technical reviews of scientific work conducted by others (internal and external), participates in inter-branch or inter divisional projects/teams, and provides technical expertise as required to meet the mission and goals of DSR, NIOSH, and CDC. [25%]

Applies the Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Model to conduct fatality investigations of fire-related incidents involving fire fighters. Prepares written reports from the investigative findings along with recommendations which contain engineering solutions which could prevent similar work-related traumas in the future. [25%]

Provides safety engineering expert advice on fire fighter work-related injuries to the Division and the Institute as well as other government agencies, non-government and private agencies and organizations, and the public. This includes working independently as a NIOSH representative with organizations such as the Department of Labor, state departments of health, National Safety Council, trade associations, labor unions, academia, etc. [25%]

Factor 1: Knowledge Required by the Position

Comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practices of safety engineering, including the application of engineering controls and safe work practices for reduction of traumatic occupational injury of fire fighters and emergency responders that result from motor vehicle related incidents.

In-depth knowledge of occupational safety and health principles, practices, and requirements for safe and healthful working conditions, and a working knowledge of the etiology of workplace injuries and illnesses.

Skill in evaluating and incorporating the latest developments, methods and devices needed to make recommendations for establishing NIOSH policy and for furthering the Institute's objectives in preventing occupational traumatic injuries.

Working knowledge of the current literature, both national and international, in the area of occupational traumatic injury, epidemiology and statistics.

Comprehensive knowledge of existing fire-related safety and health standards (mandatory and consensus), regulations, and legal requirements for the protection of workers in all industries.

Knowledge of available sources of occupational injury and illness statistical data and specific needs for such data used in occupational injury risk assessment; familiarity with statistics on accidents, injuries, rates of injuries, and related data.

Knowledge of surveillance and research design and statistics required to review work and comment on research studies proposed by other Branch staff.

Skill in oral and written communication.

Factor 2: Supervisory Controls

The incumbent works under the administrative supervision of the Section Chief. Administrative direction entails assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or objectives. Director is generally limited to approval of staffing, project and facility funding, requests for large equipment and broad NIOSH policies. The incumbent has full responsibility for independently planning and conducting the assigned work. The incumbent's work is accepted as technically accurate. The supervisor reviews work for adherence to assigned mission or objectives; to determine if advice and recommendations made by the incumbent had positive influence on the overall program; and/or if the incumbent's work made a contribution to the advancement of injury prevention technology.

Factor 3: Guidelines

General guidelines include Institute policies as well as current Federal regulations, appropriate technical literature, and recent developments in safety engineering and injury intervention and prevention strategies. Other guidelines such as technical reference texts and manuals, specifications, practices, procedures, etc., cover certain aspects of the work, but often are very general and involve large blocks of data which contain critical gaps which are controversial or unknown. These guidelines are often inadequate because of the critical gaps which exist in the availability of work in the assigned area. The incumbent is expected to apply a high degree of imagination and creativity in developing new and novel theories, methodologies or solutions to complex safety engineering problems of significant importance in the area of fire fighter work-related injuries.

Factor 4: Complexity

The safety engineering problems addressed by the incumbent typically involve new concepts and varied problems which are difficult to define, often require original or innovative approaches, and sophisticated state-of-the-art in safety engineering techniques. These problems cover a broad range of engineering and scientific disciplines involving complex interactions between scientific variables, human behavior, and work environments. The incumbent is independently responsible for exercising a high degree of originality and ingenuity in defining and developing safety engineering solutions and designs based on sound judgement and experience by either selecting or synthesizing methods and techniques best suited to the specific problem. The incumbent will have mastered a thorough knowledge of these interactions and has the analytical and theoretical skills needed to determine the nature and scope of such engineering problems.

Factor 5: Scope and Effect

The purpose of the work conducted by the incumbent is to identify and study causal factors common to fire fighter injuries and fatalities; to develop prevention and intervention strategies; and to evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions. The result of this work will contribute to the reduction and prevention of fire fighter work-related injuries and fatalities in these US industries. The results will directly affect the policy directions of NIOSH. Research results from studies will potentially impact other National industrial work populations. Study reports are published in widely disseminated journals, trade publications and NIOSH reports, and are used in the safety and health profession.

Factor 6: Personal Contacts

Personal contacts include research personnel within and outside NIOSH including representatives of the International Association of Fire Fighters, professional engineering organizations, organized labor, trade associations, academicians, and national safety organizations.

Factor 7: Purpose of Contacts

The overall purpose of contacts is to gain information, coordinate activities, gain cooperation from employers, employees, and government officials, and maintain communication while constantly disseminating information. The incumbent will provide technical expertise to employers, workers and their representatives, associations, and other governmental agencies; maintain awareness of new developments and literature in the field; obtain input from other safety professionals; identify research needs of NIOSH customers; and, present the results of research projects to employees, employers, professional groups and OSHA.

Factor 8: Physical Demands

Most of the office work is sedentary, although there may be some manual activity associated with performing field investigations. The manual activity requires some lifting, handling, and

transporting of equipment up to 50 pounds. The incumbent may be walking, climbing, and physically active during the field investigations with possible exposures to certain workplace hazards, for which personal protective equipment is provided.

Factor 9: Work Environment

The work requires exposure to a varied work environment which may require safety and health precautions as well as personal protective equipment. Work is mainly performed in an office or laboratory setting, at work site locations where field tests or experiments are being conducted, and at a variety of nationwide meeting places where research results are discussed.