

DEAMS successfully processes first civilian timecards; training continues as officials develop rollout plan

By Cathy Segal

DEAMS Strategic Communications

Timekeepers in Air Mobility Command's Financial Management directorate successfully entered payroll data into the Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System's Oracle Time and Labor module to close out January's first pay period. Although the process didn't go off without a hitch it did present opportunities for improvement before OTL is rolled out to other Scott Air Force Base units.

The directorate's timekeepers began using OTL with the pay period beginning Jan. 2 to demonstrate its capability and increase the comfort level for other users before it deploys to the rest of the base.

"This test was a real success story," said Col. Mark A. Brown, AMC Comptroller and FM Director. "It was more difficult than we thought it would be, but it wasn't a disaster because we used a small sample size and learned a few things before we go forward."

According to DEAMS officials, OTL feeds payroll data into the Defense Civilian Pay System, the

current government civilian timekeeping tool. Some of the problems encountered during the first pay run included incorrect dates transferred from DEAMS to DCPS on five of FM's 72 timesheets, causing errors in DCPS. Payroll data for those records was entered directly into DCPS and all 72 civilian employees were compensated correctly on payday.

Fawn Green is AMC/FM's primary timekeeper; her comments after entering the first timecards helped prompt DEAMS officials to tweak OTL implementation plans to better control the process.

As a result of lessons learned, the DEAMS Functional Management Office will roll out OTL incrementally starting with the pay period beginning Jan. 30. Although the complete schedule is yet to be determined, training continues for timekeepers, who will be notified of the new OTL deployment schedule. The FMO will provide direct over-the-shoulder assistance to timekeepers on their first OTL entry.

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Green pointed out that OTL requires more time and steps than timekeepers are used to, such as adding lines for additional duty or absence codes, and entering project and task codes for each employee. The FMO is researching ways to streamline data entry to ease the timekeeper workload.

Green also commented on OTL from an employee's perspective. "As an individual, I don't think the process will be nearly as bad since the project and task code will already be stored in the timecard. The individual will still have to add a line for every entry as well as holidays. An additional step will be on the supervisors since they will have to go in and approve the inputs for their sections," she said.

According to Karen Toney, the DEAMS government lead for Project Accounting, OTL was originally designed for employees to enter their own time and attendance data, eliminating the need for timekeepers to enter data for their groups. However, when DEAMS officials planned to deploy OTL with Spiral 2 in May 2010, they reconfigured OTL to enable timekeepers

to continue inputting time to reduce the amount of change taking place at once. When the OTL implementation was delayed, they elected to stick with timekeeper input until all 317 timekeepers on base are comfortable enough with it to increase the level of acceptance among individual employees. Also, OTL must be reverted to its original form and be

tested before individual entry begins – a process that would take several months.

Despite the errors, AMC and DEAMS officials agree that OTL worked as it was designed. The DCPS errors were traced to

inaccurate effective dates that were entered into OTL – problems Toney said can be eliminated by adjusting training.

Toney and her team are collecting lessons learned from the AMC timekeepers for other suggestions on how to make training more effective.

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AMC Comptroller and FM Director***

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Timekeepers who have already completed OTL training will receive updated materials but will not have to complete training again, Toney said. OTL overview sessions at the Scott theater originally scheduled for early February have been postponed due

to the change in the implementation schedule. Dates will be announced once plans are finalized. Some of the recent changes will be highlighted during those sessions.



Members of the DEAMS Sustainment Team were on hand to observe and assist the AMC/FM timekeepers as they entered time and attendance Jan. 12. Pictured left to right are Terri Drees, government lead for sustainment; Courtney Melone, DEAMS Help Desk; Monette Ortega and Cheryl Christ, alternate timekeepers; Fawn Green, primary timekeeper; Karen Haselhorst, AMC DEAMS liaison; Khadidra Wood, DEAMS Help Desk; and Todd Crockett, DEAMS Data Standardization and Cleansing Team, and DEAMS OTL facilitator.

Data cleansing continues prep for future deployments

By Cathy Segal

DEAMS Strategic Communications

Although it may seem that the Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System team is at a standstill between deployments, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Air Force's new financial management system deployed at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., in May but a schedule for future deployments is awaiting funding decisions. In the meantime, several teams are forging ahead with supporting plans and activities.

Project accounting, for example, is validating information and training timekeepers in preparation for the activation of Oracle® Time and Labor. The OTL module will be used to process payroll for civilian employees paid with funds managed at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. Current plans are for OTL to roll out to the rest of the Air Force as bases transition to DEAMS.

Representatives from several teams, including those from deployment and change management, are mapping out plans for future DEAMS implementations. Although the sequence of “who, when and where” is yet to be determined, the “how” is being already being detailed.

When the rollout schedule is determined, the DEAMS Data Standardization and Cleansing Team will be more than ready. It is continuing work it started last year for bases under Air Mobility Command, and Air Education and Training Command. Team members include Meredith Underhill, the government lead; Anne Spencer; Jim Goodman; Mike Beal; Felecia Parker; Lillian Mauller; Ed Negron; Todd Crockett; Patrick Puskarich; Drew Resnick; and Julia Kaplon. All of them work out of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service office in Columbus, Ohio, except for Crockett and Resnick, who are in Fairview Heights, Ill., and Kaplon, who is in Dayton, Ohio.

Data cleansing began at 11 AMC bases in February and 12 AETC bases in July. Work entails reviewing General Accounting and Finance System data and Integrated Accounts Payable System data to find and fix anomalies before converting that data to DEAMS. Anomalies are things that do not conform to set business rules; transferring them to DEAMS would cause files to error out and require manual repairs.

Data cleansing was one of the early DEAMS success stories. The DSCT examined 203,000 Scott Air Force Base legacy system records over 16 months and identified more than 22,300 anomalies; only five remained by the time data was converted to DEAMS in May, and they were cleaned without incident.

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During cleansing, raw data is extracted from the legacy systems and run through a data transformer preset with 287 business rules. The transformer generates a report of anomalies, which the DSCT manually researches to identify specific problems. A data cleansing team at the DFAS center in Limestone, Maine, then works with base resource advisors to fix the anomalies.

According to Underhill, the team is applying lessons learned from Scott's data cleansing to the rest of AMC and to AETC. "Once a formal decision has been made and announced for the next deployment we will continue to work all of AMC but focus on the next base and ensure we're in good shape as far ahead of go-live as possible." Once a base begins data cleansing, it continues until DEAMS deploys there.

The two most common anomalies are data values that are missing from the Financial Management Data Dictionary – which validates data for use in DEAMS – and the use of a data value for an unauthorized period.

Underhill led part of her team through a self-initiated "Fall Frenzy" a few months ago in which "we took the data elements with the greatest number of anomalies, looked at causes and explored possible solutions," she said. "One of the larger issues we discovered was that data values for Special Operations Command were not being held in the FMDD. After some analysis and coordination we determined that

the SOCOM Responsibility Center Cost Codes follow a completely different structure and will not be held 'as-is' in the FMDD. We have ongoing discussions as to how that will be accomplished; however, the SOCOM Program Element Codes did follow the Air Force data structure and therefore were able to be added into the FMDD. This will result in a significant reduction in anomalies," she explained. That is important not only because SOCOM is a combatant command, but also because the headquarters is located at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. – another AMC base. Like U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, SOCOM headquarters will convert to DEAMS at the same time as its host base.

While thousands of anomalies related to preset data values, unauthorized timeframes and many other categories may seem overwhelming, the DSCT has that under control as well. In 2009 they implemented a dashboard tool that gives DFAS Limestone a way to review the status of data cleansing anomalies and retrieve detailed reports to work individual problems. Designated base users can see the same information. In some cases, the fix is simply a matter of adding missing data elements to the FMDD; corrections can take weeks or just a few hours, Underhill said.

Once a DEAMS rollout schedule is announced, the DSCT will focus on the first bases to deploy and adjust its schedule to match the deployment schedule, starting the cleansing process 12-18 months before rollout. Even before that happens, the dashboard is indicating full speed ahead.

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