

MURPHY'S THIRTEEN UNLUCKY LAWS FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

1. **OVERTIME:** Don't work uncompensated overtime, because:
 - 1.1 You will just decrease your AVERAGE hourly pay.
 - 1.2 No one will notice or reward your additional contribution to the project, anyway.
 - 1.3 People will think you are mentally imbalanced, gullible, a brown noser, and look at you funny. They will also wonder why you are so gullible/dedicated when there isn't any reason to be and no one else around you is.
2. **INNOVATION:**
 - 2.1 Don't suggest new ideas--your boss will respond with silence, wait a few days or weeks, and then repropose YOUR idea after everyone has forgotten about it, pretending like it was his own. That way, HE/SHE gets all the credit instead of YOU for being innovative.
 - 2.2. Don't waste any of your own time developing a new invention at home on your own time and at your own expense for use at work if you intend on patenting or copyrighting it so that you can make some money off of it. The U.S. Code Title 10 *PROHIBITS* employees of the federal government from selling ANYTHING to the government as an independent business, even if the item is unrelated to your job and would not otherwise present a conflict of interest.
3. **SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT/ENGINEERING:**
 - 3.1 Don't pursue careers in software development. Design hardware and electronics only because at least you can patent these inventions.
 - 3.2 Don't work hard on a new software idea at work. NRaD does not allow engineers to copyright software inventions, even though it is very commonly done in private industry and even though they allow hardware devices to be patented.
 - 3.3 You are better off developing work-related software at home, because then at least you will have some legal protection for your idea or your organization.
 - 3.4 If you don't heed this advice, and work hard to develop a new software product, then you will be punished by the system for your transgressions in the following ways:
 - 3.4.1 Some other federal organization will find out about the product and request a FREE copy under the Freedom of Information Act. Then they will use the product to become your WORST nightmare of a competitor in the market YOU created through your innovation.
 - 3.4.2 A commercial company will find out about your product, request a FREE copy under the Freedom of Information act, and then put you out of business by selling the product for cheaper than you could make it.
 - 3.4.3 You won't have any copyrights to dress up your resume while other engineers who design hardware can put patents on their resume and will look better than you, consequently.
4. **RETIREMENT:** Don't count on having any federal retirement when you get older. By the time you are ready to retire, Congress will:
 - 4.1 Increase the retirement age to 110.
 - 4.2 Eliminate inflation indexing of CSRS benefits, if they don't eliminate benefits entirely to begin with.
 - 4.3 Increase the member portion of retirement contributions for both CSRS and FERS employees to the point where federal employees actually LOSE money on their retirement actuarially, so that the retirement program ends up being a money MAKER for Congress instead of a net LIABILITY.
 - 4.4 STILL not have balanced the federal budget! Why should they...they are spending OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY, not their own, for the most part!
5. **CAREER ADVANCEMENT, PROMOTIONS, AND NEW HIRING:**
 - 5.1 Don't expect to advance..you'll stay a mid-grade DP-III for the rest of your life because that is the only way the center (NRaD) can keep the hourly rates low enough to stay in business and be attractive to sponsors.
 - 5.2 Don't ask your branch head or project manager too many questions as a way of educating yourself, advancing your career, and improving your performance because:
 - 5.2.1 You'll make him uncomfortable and threaten his fragile empire.
 - 5.2.2 You'll look like a busybody in other people's matters.
 - 5.2.3 He'll tell you that you ought to be taking care of business. If he says this, tell him how much uncompensated overtime you do that makes up for this time.
 - 5.3 Career advancement and personal growth come mainly from the following sources:

- 5.3.1 Leadership opportunities offered by your project manager or branch head.
- 5.3.2 Technical opportunities offered by your superiors to undertake challenging, new, or important tasks.
- 5.3.3 Access to ALL of the same information that your branch head and project managers have.
- 5.3.4 Political exposure to sponsors and other important people.

Project managers who are worried that you are threatening their authority or challenging their precious empire will abuse their authority and try to HOLD YOU DOWN by denying you access to ALL of the above four important sources of career advancement.

- 5.4 What really regulates the organization and what propels careers forward is all the talk that goes on in the back room and behind the closed doors of branch heads, division heads, department heads, and project managers:
 - 5.4.1 What they say on the phone when talking with sponsors or their superiors (which they don't want you listening to most of the time).
 - 5.4.2 What they discuss on travel while their subordinates aren't there.
 - 5.4.3 Presentations they see that they don't share, or at least don't volunteer access to with their subordinates.

These are the things that REALLY count. This is the kind of jealously-guarded hot-button information that project and personnel managers rely on to perpetrate their control. And they can't be in control unless they are the ONLY ones who know ALL the IMPORTANT answers. Don't expect them to let you into this inner circle without a fight, because they know that their authority depends on shutting you out.

- 5.5 Bosses don't want you to advance, because that destabilizes their empire and threatens their authority. Instead:
 - 5.5.1 They want good ROBOTS to follow orders, do what they are told, and not ask any questions.
 - 5.5.2 They want to jealously hoard all the authority for themselves while unloading the responsibility that generated the authority on their subordinates as quickly as they can. The less authority the troops have and the more the responsibilities (but not the authority) are divided and distributed, the more firm is the boss' control and the more assured is his empire.
- 5.6 When new employees are hired, management will always hire the LEAST qualified people for the job. For instance:
 - 5.6.1 The IEEE reports that 60% of a new engineer's time (and an even greater percentage for more senior engineers) is spent communicating, both orally and in writing.
 - 5.6.2 The last round of hiring undertaken by NRaD was for 20 new professionals. Of those, half were foreign born, and a very large percentage of those almost certainly have English as a second language and therefore, they are likely poor communicators, both orally and in writing. Past experience has proved this assertion out.
 - 5.6.3 A very large percentage of past NP hires have also been foreign born.
 - 5.6.3 With so many poor communicators, these people will probably never be adequately qualified for management positions. In the future, this will lead to a large groups of disgruntled employees who will be passed over for promotions and management positions.

6. **REORGANIZATIONS:**

- 6.1 Whenever there is a reorganization, to the employees, management will always claim the following purposes behind the reorganization:
 - 6.1.2 Overhead will be reduced.
 - 6.1.2 Levels of management (and bureaucracy) will be reduced so that there will be more indians and fewer chiefs.
 - 6.1.3 Labor rates can be reduced.
 - 6.1.4 The center will be more competitive and efficient.
 - 6.1.5 Consolidate operations to one central location.
- 6.2 In addition to what they are WILLING to tell the employees, managers also have a hidden/secret agenda when executing reorganizations. Behind closed back-room doors, in smoke-filled rooms of the good-old-boy golf network, managers will also freely and consider the following ADDITIONAL more important purposes of reorganizations. They are listed in order of their relative importance to the manager:
 - 6.2.1 To preserve the manager's job, first and foremost.
 - 6.2.2 To incapacitate political opponents within the organization by laying them off.
 - 6.2.3 To clear out the dead wood from the organization by laying off the nonproducers in the organization, even though managers don't have the courage to sit down with those same nonproducers face-to-face and give them focused, honest, and complete feedback or discipline or try to improve their performance.
 - 6.2.3 To reduce the number of employees.
- 6.3 In reality, the ultimate affect of the reorganization as viewed by the EMPLOYEES will always be:
 - 6.3.1 Longer working hours.

- 6.3.2 An INCREASE in the number of management (chief, nonworker bee) and DP-IV positions.
- 6.3.3 More layers of bureaucracy to deal with in the daily conduct of taking care of business, resulting in even less direct control over how they can do their job.
- 6.3.4 Reduced benefits, such as:
 - Reduced wages
 - Elimination of the GAP program.
 - Elimination of overhead funding of NP program
 - Private funding of water coolers.
 - Increase in employee contribution to FERS and CSRS (by 2.5% in 1995, for instance)
- 6.3.5 Decreased morale. People will grumble more about having to work so late for less pay and having less help in doing their job.
- 6.3.6 More incompetent and unproductive people in the organization and lower revenues thereby because SMART people:
 - 6.2.6.1 If they already work at the organization, will pursue more profitable work elsewhere.
 - 6.2.6.2 Won't pursue work at an organization that doesn't adequately reward good performance, competency, and hard work.

7. THE PROCUREMENT SYSTEM:

- 7.1 Nothing about the miserably inadequate procurement system makes sense until you finally realize, understand, and appreciate the following philosophy underlying its existence:
 - 7.1.1 ALL federal employee are incompetent, immoral, and unscrupulous and therefore can't be trusted.
 - 7.1.2 Because federal employees can't be trusted, then it is the duty of the GOVERNMENT to LEGISLATE MORALITY by inserting all kinds of unnecessary and irrational checks and IMbalances into the system to limit the damage they can do.
 - 7.1.3 These irrational checks and balances create the following environment for the average federal employee:
 - 7.1.3.1 Extreme frustration, exhasperation, and a sense of helplessness.
 - 7.1.3.2 Unnecessary/excessive expense in procuring, doing the paperwork, tracking, and following-up on procurements. In most cases, you expend two or three times as much labor as you would without the controls.
 - 7.1.3.4 Makes federal employees want to throw up their hands and give all their business to the nearest contractor, instead of doing it themselves, because they don't want to face the hassles of the procurement system.
 - 7.1.4 The government should stay out of the business of making anything.
 - 7.1.5 Minority-owned businesses that charge more should be favored over white-owned businesses that charge less and save the government money.

DISCRIMINATION IN ANY FORM IS STILL DISCRIMINATION AND OUGHT TO BE ELIMINATED, WHETHER IT IS FORWARD DISCRIMINATION OR REVERSE DISCRIMINATION

- 7.1.4 COMPETITION SHOULD BE PREVENTED, NOT ENCOURAGED. For instance:
 - 7.1.4.1 For large procurements over \$50,000, the bidding process limits competition, by explicitly preventing the bidding process from turning into an auction. It only permits one and only one round of bidding. Bidders are legally prevented from knowing about other bidders or what their bid price was.
 - 7.1.4.2 If the government wanted to encourage competition, then they would have several rounds of bidding for large procurements, preserve the practice of preventing bidders from knowing who the other bidders are but showing them only the dollar value or average value of all offers AT THE END of each round of bidding. Then they could initiate another round of bidding if any motivated bidder proposes going lower at the conclusion of the first round. After the end of the second round, they could simply throw out any bids from the same vendor that are higher than the first round if the vendors collude on price after finding out about the first round prices. This would save the government TONS of money.
- 7.2 Everything you order will always take three or four times as long to get as it would take if the contractor who works for you ordered it. This has the affect of:
 - 7.2.1 Delaying projects and making the government look incompetent and unresponsive to the sponsor/customers.
 - 7.2.2 Giving contractors an advantage over government organizations in a competitive environment.

7.2.3 Encouraging federal agencies to contract efforts out instead of undertaking the exasperating procurement experience themselves.

7.3 Procurement people will always act like YOU work for THEM, instead of the other way around. WHO IS THE CUSTOMER HERE? Isn't TQL supposed to fix this?

8. **TOM (TOTAL QUALITY MISMANAGEMENT):**

8.1 Deming's TQL is a good idea, but in the federal government and the military, it is frequently perverted as a way to reinforce the management structure and undermine the very causes it seeks to promote.

8.2 TQL is founded on a few fundamental ideas:

8.2.1 Statistical process control.

8.2.2 Focusing on who the customer is and making him/her happy. Putting the customer at the top of the organization chart INSTEAD of the boss

8.2.3 A discipline system with the teeth to strongly reward hard work and competency and punish incompetence.

8.2.4 A democratic, instead of authoritarian oligarchy, approach to management.

8.2.5 Delegating RESPONSIBILITY AND THE AUTHORITY THAT GOES WITH IT to the lowest possible level to empower INDIVIDUALS instead of MANAGERS so that nonmanagers can:

8.2.5.1 Contribute to process improvement and get the recognition that goes along with that contribution.

8.2.5.2 Make decisions that managers would normally make.

8.2.5.3 Get the credit for good ideas, instead of the manager taking all the credit.

8.2.6 Giving EVERYONE in the organization EQUAL access to all information, knowledge, and opportunities, instead of perpetuation the good old boy network that limits information distribution.

8.3 TQL doesn't work in the federal government because:

8.3.1 Federal managers don't have the strong disciplinary tools that the private industry has. Workers are too hard to fire, for instance.

8.3.2 Managers feel uncomfortable delegating both responsibility AND authority to their subordinates for tasks that they manage because they see it as a threat to their position and authority. Instead, they will frequently delegate RESPONSIBILITY and keep the authority for themselves.

8.3.3 Federal workers aren't paid as much as private industry, making it difficult to attract the kind of intelligent, self-motivated people who work well in a TQL environment.

8.3.4 The advancement system tops people off early so soon (after about five years) that they don't feel motivated to continue working hard.

8.3.5 People aren't rewarded for working hard and doing good work. For example:

8.3.5.1 There is no profit sharing

8.3.5.2 The overtime rate is LESS, in most cases, than the regular hourly rate.

8.3.5.3 In most cases, overtime pay is VERY difficult to get.

8.3.5.4 There is no incentive to assume risk and a lot of INCENTIVE NOT TO. The people who end up assuming most of the risk in the organization are usually the people at the bottom, who have ALL of the responsibility for making things work and NONE of the authority to make anything happen.

8.3.6 Smart federal managers are too paranoid to let their employees know everything they know or give them access to all the same information they have access to.

9. **RECOGNITION AND BLAME:**

9.1 Kudos roll uphill and blame rolls downhill. Remember that!

9.2 Be very careful who you call "friend", as a federal employee.

9.3 Whenever you do a good job, you can count on an entourage of "friends", many of whom you don't even know and most of whom you work for, to show up to share the CREDIT and the ACCLAIM for the work YOU and ONLY YOU did. The most notable of these "friends" will be your project manager(s) and branch head.

9.4 If you SCREW UP, those same "friends" will try to claim that they don't even know who you are! Your boss, the "teflon man", will inoculate himself against your failures (which YOU incurred in the process of helping HIM look good and doing what you were told) by making sure that he undermines your credibility occasionally so that when you tell people that you were just doing what you were told, they won't believe you and you will look like a fool!

9.5 If you screw up and your boss is still smiling, then it is probably because *he knows he can heap all the blame on you!*

10. **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SUPERIORS:**

10.1 Don't tell your branch head or project manager EVERYTHING, because:

10.1 You can be sure that HE doesn't either, especially if it concerns:

10.1.1 Advancement.

- 10.1.2 Sponsors and the status of their projects, since s/he wants to perpetuate his own empire.
 - 10.1.3 Funding or fiscal management of a project (programmatic issues, which he regards as HIS turf).
Project managers typically don't like to share how they spend their money because often times they have to stretch/bend the financial/procurement rules to please their sponsors.
 - 10.2 He'll use what you tell him against you later if you do something he doesn't like.
 - 10.3 He'll use that information to perpetuate his position of authority/empire, instead of growing your career by delegating some of his authority.
 - 10.4 You will be dispensible if he or your coworkers know everything you do. Then he can fire you on a whim.
 - 10.2 In SPITE of the above, bosses will always EXPECT you to tell them everything anyway and they will swiftly punish you and make you into a whipping boy if you follow their example and don't. Then, hypocritically, they will get angry if you expect the same from them because you want to develop your career and learn more about the organization!
 - 10.3 If you naively tell your boss/manager everything you know and you are a competent employee, then:
 - 10.3.1 He or she will educate your peers with selected pieces of the information and make it sound like they were the one who thought up the ideas.
 - 10.3.2 Once they educate your peers with everything YOU told them, they will divide and conquer the troops by removing responsibilities from you, transferring them elsewhere in the group, and then making sure that you aren't informed about other activities that are going on so that YOU lose control over the situation while their power grows and multiplies. That's called dividing and conquering.
 - 10.4 Bosses don't care what you know if you are and incompetent employee. Therefore, if you get a lot of questions from the boss, then he is demonstrating to you that you are competent and that he respects your capabilities and opinion. Likewise, if the boss never goes to you, then you probably don't have his respect.
 - 10.5 In order to perpetuate the idea that S/HE is the innovator and deserves to be the leader, bosses will frequently ask competent employees questions but do it in private and away from the prying ears and eyes of their subordinates, so that they don't look silly for asking. Then they will create the appearance in front of other employees that everything they learned from YOU was THEIR idea, and no one will contradict them because no one heard you telling him everything he knows.
11. **CONTRACTORS:**
- 11.1 Contractors stay in business by:
 - 11.1.1 Keeping their sponsors ignorant about how they get the job done.
 - 11.1.2 Using what they learn from you to get a job with your competitor and to help him compete better with you.
 - 11.1.3 Charging as much as the market will bear for their services.
 - 11.1.4 Making you sign a nondisclosure statement for everthing they show you and putting "proprietary" at the bottom of every printed page.
 - 11.2 If you trust your contractor, then I've got some (swamp)land in Florida to sell you!
 - 11.3 Watchdog contractors hired by ignorant bosses:
 - 11.3.1 Bosses who don't know the technical aspects of a job will frequently rely on an outside contractor to second guess what should be done and do the technical management for them. They will then ensure that the contractor is MUCH higher in the information food chain than the boss' subordinates so that the contractor can make more informed decisions than subordinates and can intimidate subordinates into submission because of their relative ignorance. This is a devious way for bosses to eliminate the need to do any of the following because these actions would eventually the manager and his fragile empire:
 - 11.3.1.1 Delegate the authority to their subordinates.
 - 11.3.1.2 Increase the knowledge of subordinates.
 - 11.3.1.3 Grow their careers.
 - 11.3.2 Contractors, on the other hand, aren't regarded by the prudent federal boss as a threat because if they get too smart/threatening, you can always fire them and find another one, while that is much harder to do if it is a subordinate (especially if he is a federal worker). Bosses will also use this watchdog contractor as a way to do a reality check on recommendations and decisions of their subordinates. Everything these types of bosses do them becomes a process of management by majority vote, and you can count on the fact the contractor's vote will always overrule subordinates.

12. **Remember what the word NAVY stands for:**

Never

Again

Volunteer

Yourself

13. MANAGEMENT AND PERKS:

- 13.1 In spite of the fact that we work for a government organization that has NO private ownership of ANYTHING, managers will always try and insist that they have special privileges and property rights over their subordinates, including such things as:
 - 13.1.1 Special reserved parking spaces.
 - 13.1.2 Special access to corporate databases, documents that subordinates DON'T have.
 - 13.1.3 Right to attend management meetings and be invited while excluding subordinates.
- 13.2 Management are likely use their authority to turn the government into a reverse robinhood, to steal from the poor and give to the rich. For instance, DP-IV's take home 40% more than DP-III's and yet they charge sponsors only 20% more. This disparity between what DP-IV's charge the sponsors and what they actually make means that DP-III revenues have to be used to SUBSIDIZE DP-IV pay. Is that fair?
- 13.3 Don't expect people at the top to be interested in changing or improving the organization because:
 - 13.3.1 They benefit excessively from the way things ALREADY ARE, so they have a vested interest in perpetuating the status quo.
 - 13.3.2 The more they benefit and the higher up they are, the less interested they will be in changing things.
 - 13.3.3 Chances are, they have used their power to insulate themselves from the many problems with the system by letting their minions at the bottom deal with it, so they don't realize, or don't want to realize, just how bad things really are for the people at the bottom.
- 13.4 REMEMBER THAT ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY: INSIST on knowing everything that goes on behind closed doors with your superiors and upper management, because what you DON'T know can DEFINITELY hurt you:
 - 13.4.1 QUESTION AUTHORITY.
 - 13.4.2 Don't think the person you work for has all the answers. NOBODY DOES!
 - 13.4.3 Hold your leaders accountable for their actions by closely observing everything they do, watching for signs of hypocrisy, and pointing them out. This keeps them in line.
 - 13.4.4 Ask for copies of all major staff/management meeting minutes and presentations.
 - 13.4.5 Insist on access to the same important information/email your superiors have, including all corporate databases. All employees should at least have read-only access to all corporate databases, other than personnel records, of course.
 - 13.4.6 Be suspicious when doors close, corporate databases lock you out, when there are a lot of unannounced (to you, Mr. Subordinate) and private meetings of managers, or when you stumble on something that the boss doesn't want to talk about, because it probably concerns you, your advancement, or your career.
 - 13.4.7 Your boss will probably try to pull a guilt trip on you by telling you that you are wasting time/money that you ought to be spending working on the project. He is right. Therefore, stay late to compensate for any time that you spend keeping politically informed to stifle his objections. That is how you get ahead!
 - 13.4.8 Subtle forms of discrimination still exist in the federal government as well as private industry, but because of all the laws regulating discrimination and equal opportunity, and also because of the affect on company morale, the discrimination can ONLY be maintained by management in SECRECY. The discrimination described can take several forms: 1. Sexual; 2. Anti-whistle-blower; 3. Anti-competitive (bosses against aggressive subordinates who are too threatening to the boss's empire). The only forum for maintaining secrecy in management are clandestine meetings and encrypted correspondence. Therefore:
 - 13.4.8.1 Keep your ear to the wall for any hint of clandestine meetings, ask why no one else was invited, secretly record these meetings, and then blow the whistle if you find out what they are about.
 - 13.4.8.2 Be on the lookout for encryption tools, safes, classified documents, and corporate databases that lock you out, because these are the primary weapons for tyranny and clandestine discrimination. If you discover that correspondence is being encrypted, classified, or locked up in a safe, or other similar efforts, question why this needs to happen and ask this question of EVERYONE who has access, to the protected information ensure that you get a consistent and justifiable answer. Also ask what the criteria is for gaining access and try to gain access yourself, if you can.

13.5 FINALLY, expect your boss to DENY EVERYTHING you read here because it UNDERMINES his authority, in spite of the fact that everyone else you talk to will probably agree that it is true, realistic, and accurate, sadly enough. Management typically lives in their own artificial world and their loyalties sway more toward the top and toward perpetuating their empire than to truth, justice, or the people who work for them.

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER! I DIDN'T INVENT THE MESSAGE...I AM MERELY DOCUMENTING AND EXPOSING HERE PROBLEMS WITH FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT THAT SEEM OBVIOUS TO JUST ABOUT EVERY FEDERAL EMPLOYEE YOU ASK BUT WHICH THEY ARE AFRAID TO MENTION FOR FEAR OF GAINING A REPUTATION AS A WHINER OR BEING CASTIGATED BY MANAGEMENT. THESE PROBLEMS ARE OLDER THAN THE HILLS AND SEEM TO GET WORSE WITH TIME.