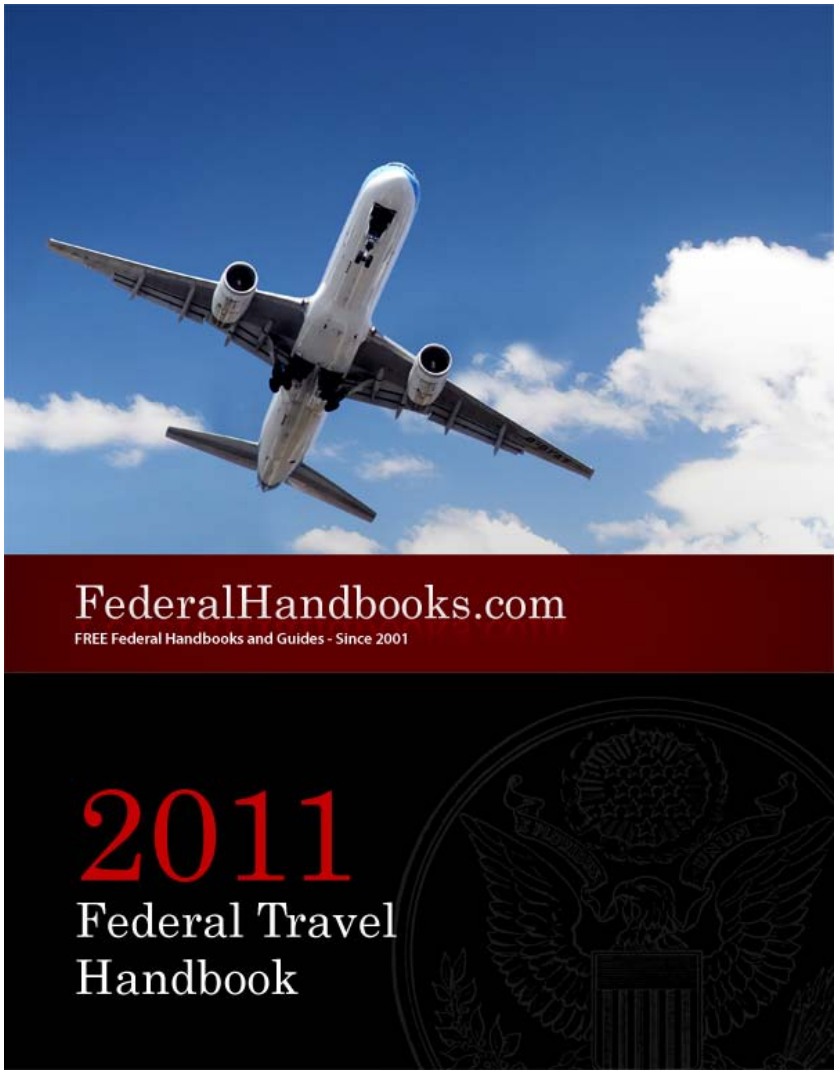

2011 Federal Travel Handbook

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1

Introduction

Many federal employees are required to travel as part of their official job duties – from a manager flying to a field office for an important meeting, to an agency attorney traveling to participate in a hearing, a Human Resources Specialist attending a conference, or a host of other job-related trips. Those interviewing for a federal job or federal law enforcement personnel who are under threat because of their work duties may also need to travel at Government expense.

This handbook is intended primarily to assist federal employees in learning the rules they must follow when they travel on official Government business. The Federal Travel Regulation forms the basis for these rules, and covers topics such as transportation and per diem expenses, claiming reimbursement, and using frequent flyer miles acquired through official travel for personal trips. These issues – and many more – are explained in detail in this handbook.

Federal employees who require additional information or clarification about the travel rules and regulations can also turn to their agency's Human Resources office or to the General Services Administration (GSA) for guidance. GSA is responsible for providing travel policy for federal agencies and their travelers. Employees who have questions about unique travel situations or who are unsure of the travel rules should definitely seek assistance from one or more of these sources to avoid running afoul of the regulations. To reach GSA's travel website, click on www.gsa.gov.

2

Temporary Duty Travel Allowances

Federal employees and applicants traveling on official Government business are said to be on "temporary duty" or TDY. Since they are traveling for the benefit of the federal Government, with the approval of their agencies, they are generally entitled to payment of – or reimbursement for – their travel expenses, including their transportation costs, hotel costs, and meals and other incidental expenses. But this rule does have limits, since these individuals are traveling at the taxpayer's expense. Accordingly, employees are generally expected to use good judgment to keep their travel expenses down, to the extent practicable.

Additionally, federal employees usually are expected to keep track of their expenses so they can provide adequate documentation to their agencies for reimbursement. Failure to provide receipts when required – or to inflate expenses or claim false ones in order to defraud the federal Government – can result in severe consequences, ranging from denying reimbursement to disciplinary action, up to and including removal. Under certain conditions, criminal penalties may also be imposed. Therefore, employees need to learn the travel rules, take the requirements seriously, and seek guidance from their agencies if they have any questions.

This chapter will begin with the basics - who is eligible to receive temporary duty allowances, the expenses that are covered by the agency when an employee or applicant travels on official Government business, and when agency authorization is required.

Eligibility For TDY Allowances

The following federal employees and applicants are eligible for TDY allowances:

a) Employees traveling on official business;
b) Interviewees performing pre-employment interview travel;
c) Employees who must interrupt official business travel to perform emergency travel as a result of an incapacitating illness or injury or a personal emergency situation; and
d) Threatened law enforcement/investigative employees and members of their family temporarily relocated to safeguard their lives because of a threat resulting from the employee's assigned duties.

Authorization To Travel

Generally, an employee must have written or electronic authorization prior to incurring any travel expense. If it is not practicable or possible to obtain such authorization prior to travel, the agency may approve a specific authorization for reimbursement of travel expenses after travel is completed. However, written or electronic advance authorization is required for some items.

Travel Expenses That May Be Paid By the Agency

Agencies may pay only those expenses essential to the transaction of official business, which include:

a) Transportation expenses;
b) Per diem expenses;
c) Miscellaneous expenses; and
d) Travel expenses of an employee with special needs.

Standard Of Care To Use When Incurring Travel Expenses

Employees and applicants are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

Travel Expenses For Which The Employee Is Responsible
Employees are responsible for expenses over the reimbursement limits established by law. Agencies will not pay for excess costs resulting from circuitous routes, delays, luxury accommodations, or services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business.

Travel Arrangements Requiring Specific Authorization Or Prior Approval
Employees must have specific authorization or prior approval for:

a) Use of first-class or business-class service on common carrier transportation;
b) Use of a foreign air carrier;
c) Use of reduced fares for group or charter arrangements;
d) Use of cash to pay for common carrier transportation;
e) Use of extra-fare train service;
f) Travel by ship;
g) Use of a rental car;
h) Use of a Government aircraft;
i) Payment of a reduced per diem rate;
j) Payment of actual expense;
k) Travel expenses related to emergency travel;
l) Transportation expenses related to threatened law enforcement/investigative employees and members of their families;
m) Travel expenses related to travel to a foreign area;
n) Acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses; and
o) Travel expenses related to attendance at a conference.

Limits on Travel Arrangements
There are limits on travel arrangements that employees may make for common carrier, commercial lodging, and car rental accommodations. Such limitations include, but are not limited to, the following:
(a) Common carrier accommodations:

(1) If the employee's agency is a mandatory user of GSA's city-pair contracts for air passenger transportation services, the employees must use the contract carrier, unless the employee has an approved exception;

(2) Employees are required to use coach class accommodations unless granted an exception to use first-class accommodations (under FTR §§301-10.123, 301-10.162 or 301-10.183) or business-class accommodations (under FTR §301-10.124)

(3) employees must always use a U.S. Flag Air Carrier unless travel circumstances meet one of the exceptions in FTR §301-10.131 through § 301-10.143.

(b) Lodging accommodations:
(1) Employees should always stay in a “fire safe” facility. This is a facility that meets the fire safety requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990, as amended (see 5 U.S.C. § 5707a).

(2) When selecting a commercial lodging facility, employees must give first consideration to the commercial lodging facilities under FedRooms (http://www.fedrooms.gov), all of which meet fire safety requirements, unless one or more of the certain conditions exist; visit http://www.fedrooms.gov) for further details.

(c) Car rental accommodations: when authorized to use a rental vehicle under FTR §301-10.450, employees must rent a vehicle from a vendor that participates in the Defense Travel Management Office’s (DTMO) U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement, unless travel is OCONUS and no agreement is in place for the OCONUS TDY location. DTMO has negotiated rental car agreements that include automatic unlimited mileage, collision damage insurance, and ceiling rates (see FTR §301-50.8).

3

Transportation Expenses

Employees are eligible for payment of transportation expenses when performing official travel, including local travel. Expenses that are payable as transportation include fares, rental fees, mileage payments, and other expenses related to transportation. Agencies may authorize a number of different methods of transportation for employees to use. For example, depending on the circumstances, agencies may authorize transportation by:

a) Common carrier (e.g., aircraft, train, bus, ship, or local transit system);
b) Government vehicle;
c) Privately Owned Vehicle (POV); or
d) Special conveyance (e.g., taxi or commercial automobile).

Agencies must select the method most advantageous to the Government, when cost and other factors are considered. Travel must be by the most expeditious means of transportation practicable and commensurate with the nature and purpose of the employee's duties. In addition, the agency must consider energy conservation, total cost to the Government (including costs of per diem, overtime, lost work time, and actual transportation costs), total distance traveled, number of points visited, and number of travelers.

Travel by common carrier is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation and must be used when reasonably available. However, when an agency determines that the travel must be performed by automobile, a Government automobile is presumed to be the most advantageous method of transportation.

If an employee does not travel by the method of transportation required by regulation or selected by his or her agency, any additional expenses incurred will be borne by the employee.

Generally speaking, the employee must travel to his or her destination by the usually traveled route unless the agency authorizes or approves a different route as officially necessary. If, for personal convenience, an employee travels by an indirect route or interrupts travel by a direct route, then his or her reimbursement will be limited to the cost of travel by a direct route or on an uninterrupted basis. The employee will be responsible for any additional costs.

Types of Common Carrier Transportation That May Be Authorized
Employees may be authorized to use airline, train, ship, bus, or the local transit system.

Airline Travel

Basic Requirements For Using Airlines
The requirements for using airlines fall into three categories:

a) Using contract carriers, when available;
b) Using coach class service, unless business-class or first-class service is authorized;
c) Using U.S. flag air carrier or ship service, unless use of foreign air carrier or ship is authorized.

Using A Contract City-Pair Fare
Employees must always use a contract city-pair fare for scheduled air passenger transportation service if they are a civilian employee of an agency, unless one or more of the following conditions exist(s):

a) Space on a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of the employee's travel, or use of contract service would require the employee to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip; or

b) The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of the Federal department or agency with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours; or
c) A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government, to include the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses. (But this exception does not apply if the contract carrier offers a comparable fare and has seats available at that fare, or if the lower fare offered by a non-contract carrier is restricted to Government and military travelers on official business and may only be purchased with a Government Transportation Request (GTR), contractor-issued charge card, or centrally billed account (e.g., YDG, MDG, ODG, VDG, and similar fares); or
d) Rail service is available and such service is cost effective and consistent with mission requirements; or
e) Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the employee.

Note: Department of Defense (DOD) groups of 21 or more passengers may request contract service on an optional basis. Contract carriers may, but are not required, to furnish service to such groups.

Requirements For Using A Non-Contract Fare
Before purchasing a non-contract fare, the employee must: (1) Meet one of the requirements for exceptions listed above, and (2) If the non-contract fare is non-refundable, restricted, or has specific eligibility requirements, the employee must know or reasonably anticipate, based on the planned trip, that he or she will use the ticket. In addition, the agency must determine that the proposed non-contract transportation is practical and cost-effective for the Government.

Liability For Unauthorized Use Of A Non-Contract Carrier
An employee may be liable for unauthorized use of a non-contract carrier when contract service is available and the employee does not meet one of the exceptions for required use. Any additional costs or penalties incurred by the employee resulting from unauthorized use of non-contract service are borne by the employee.

Using Contract Passenger Transportation Service For Personal Travel
Keep in mind that employees may not use contract passenger transportation service for personal travel.

Using A Reduced Group Or Charter Fare
An employee may use a reduced group or charter fare when the agency has determined, on an individual case basis prior to travel, that use of such fare is cost effective. Chartered aircraft are subject to the same rules as Government aircraft, and agencies in the executive branch of the Federal Government are subject to the requirements of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-126 and 41 CFR part 101-37 in making such cost effectiveness determinations.

Choosing Between Airlines Providing The Same Service At Different Fares
When there is no contract fare, and common carriers furnish the same service at different fares between the same points for the same type of accommodations, the employee must use the lowest cost service unless the agency determines that the use of higher cost service is more advantageous to the Government.

Changing Or Failing To Use A Common Carrier Reservation
If an employee knows that he or she will change or not use his or her reservation, the employee must take action to change or cancel it as prescribed by the agency. Also, the employee must report all changes of his or her reservation in accordance with agency procedure in an effort to prevent losses to the Government. Failure to do so may subject the employee to liability for any resulting losses.

Unused Government Transportation Requests, Tickets, Or Refund Applications
Employees must submit any unused Government Transportation Request(s) (GTR(s)), unused ticket coupon(s), unused e-tickets, or refund applications to their agency in accordance with their agency's procedures.

Employees are generally not authorized to receive a refund, credit, or any other negotiable document from a carrier for unfurnished services (except compensation an airline gives an employee for voluntarily vacating his or her seat as provided below) or any portion of an unused ticket issued in exchange for a GTR or billed to an agency's centrally billed account. However, any charges billed directly to the employee's individually billed Government charge card should be credited to the employee's account.

Compensation Received If Airline Denies The Employee A Seat

If an employee is performing official travel and a carrier denies him or her a confirmed reserved seat on a plane, the employee must give his or her agency any payment received for liquidated damages. The employee must ensure the carrier shows the "Treasurer of the United States" as the payee on the compensation check and then forward the payment to the appropriate agency official.

Compensation Given For Voluntarily Vacating Seat

An employee may keep compensation an airline gives him or her for voluntarily vacating his or her seat on a scheduled airline flight when the airline asks for volunteers, under the following circumstances:

a) If voluntarily vacating the seat will not interfere with the employee performing his or her official duties; and
b) If additional travel expenses incurred as a result of vacating the seat are borne by the employee and are not reimbursed; but
c) If volunteering delays the employee's travel during duty hours, the agency will charge the employee with annual leave for the additional hours.

Classes Of Airline Accommodations Available

a) Coach-class – The basic class of accommodations offered to travelers regardless of fare paid. The terms "tourist" or "economy-class" are sometimes used for this class of accommodation. When authorizing this class of accommodation, use of the contract city-pair fare is mandatory.
b) Business-class – A premium-class of accommodation offered by the airlines that is higher than coach and lower than first class, in both cost and amenities. This class of accommodation is generally referred to as "business, business elite, business first, world business, connoisseur, or envoy," depending on the airline. Not all city-pair fares are available in business-class, and even when use of business-class is authorized, the use of business-class city-pair fares is optional. This class of service may only be authorized in accordance with the provisions specified below.
c) First-class – Generally, the highest class of accommodation offered by the airlines in terms of both cost and amenities and termed "first-class" by the airlines and any reservation system. This class of service may only be authorized in accordance with the provisions specified below. There are no contract city-pair fares for this class of accommodation.
d) Single-class – This term applies when an airline offers only one class of accommodation to all travelers.

Class Of Airline Accommodations Employees Must Use

For official business travel, both domestic and international, employees must use coach-class accommodations, except as provided below.

Using First-Class Airline Accommodations

Employees may use first-class airline accommodations only when their agency specifically authorizes/approves their use of such accommodations under one of the following paragraphs:

a. No other coach or business-class accommodations are reasonably available. "Reasonably available" means available on an airline that is scheduled to leave within 24 hours of the employee's proposed departure time, or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of the employee's proposed arrival time.
b. When use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need. A disability must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. A special need must be

substantiated in writing according to the agency's procedures. If the employee is authorized to have an attendant accompany him or her, the agency also may authorize the attendant to use first-class accommodations if the employee requires the attendant's services en route.

c. When exceptional security circumstances require first-class travel. Exceptional security circumstances are determined by the agency and include, but are not limited to:
    i. Use of other than first-class accommodations would endanger the employee's life or Government property;
    ii. The employee is an agent on protective detail and is accompanying an individual authorized to use first-class accommodations; or
    iii. The employee is a courier or control officer accompanying controlled pouches or packages.
d. When required because of the agency's mission.

Be aware that an employee may upgrade to first-class at his or her personal expense, including through redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

Using Business-Class Airline Accommodations

An employee may use business-class only when his or her agency specifically authorizes/approves the use of such accommodations for one of the following reasons:

a. Regularly scheduled flights between origin/destination points (including connecting points) provide only first-class and business-class accommodations and the employee certifies such on his or her voucher; or
b. No space is available in coach-class accommodations in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed; or
c. When use of business-class accommodations is necessary to accommodate the employee's disability or other special need. The disability must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. Any special need must be substantiated in writing according to the agency's procedures. If the employee is authorized to have an attendant accompany him or her, the agency also may authorize the attendant to use business-class accommodations if the employee requires the attendant's services en route; or
d. Security purposes or exceptional circumstances as determined by the agency make the use of business-class accommodations essential to the successful performance of the agency's mission; or
e. Coach-class accommodations on an authorized/approved foreign air carrier do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards; or
f. The use results in an overall cost savings to the Government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time while awaiting coach-class accommodations; or
g. The employee's transportation costs are paid in full through agency acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source, as permitted by law; or
h. Where the origin and/or destination is outside the continental United States (OCONUS) and the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours. (In this instance the employee will not be eligible for a rest stop en route or a rest period upon arrival at his or her duty site.); or
i. When required because of the agency's mission.

Note that here, too, an employee may upgrade to business class at his or her own personal expense, including through redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

Using U.S. Flag Air Carrier Service

Employees are required under the "Fly America Act" to use U.S. flag air carrier service for all air travel funded by the U.S. Government, except as provided below in the section entitled "Exceptions To The Fly America Act," or when one of the following exceptions applies:

a. Use of a foreign air carrier is determined to be a "matter of necessity," as defined below; or
b. The transportation is provided under a bilateral or multilateral air transportation agreement to which the U.S. Government and the government of a foreign country are parties, and which the Department of Transportation has determined meets the requirements of the Fly America Act; or
c. The employee is an officer or employee of the Department of State, United States Information Agency, United States International Development Cooperation Agency, or the Arms Control Disarmament Agency, and the employee's travel is paid with funds appropriated to one of these agencies, and the travel is between two places outside the U.S.; or
d. No U.S. flag air carrier provides service on a particular leg of the route, in which case foreign air carrier service may be used, but only to or from the nearest interchange point on a usually traveled route to connect with U.S. flag air carrier service; or
e. A U.S. flag air carrier involuntarily reroutes the employee's travel on a foreign air carrier; or
f. Service on a foreign air carrier would be three hours or less, and use of the U.S. flag air carrier would at least double the employee's en route travel time; or
g. When the costs of transportation are reimbursed in full by a third party, such as a foreign government, international agency, or other organization.

Exceptions To The Fly America Act

The exceptions to the Fly America Act requirements that apply when an employee travels between the U.S. and another country are as follows:

a. If a U.S. flag air carrier offers nonstop or direct service (no aircraft change) from the employee's origin to his or her destination, the employee must use the U.S. flag air carrier service unless such use would extend the travel time, including delay at origin, by 24 hours or more.
b. If a U.S. flag air carrier does not offer nonstop or direct service (no aircraft change) between the employee's origin and his or her destination, the employee must use a U.S. flag air carrier on every portion of the route where it provides service unless, when compared to using a foreign air carrier, such use would:
    i. Increase the number of aircraft changes the employee must make outside of the U.S. by 2 or more; or
    ii. Extend the employee's travel time by at least 6 hours or more; or
    iii. Require a connecting time of 4 hours or more at an overseas interchange point.

The exceptions to the Fly America Act requirements that apply when an employee travels solely outside the United States and a U.S. flag air carrier provides service between the employee's origin and destination are as follows. The employee must always use a U.S. flag carrier for such travel unless, when compared to using a foreign air carrier, such use would:

a. Increase the number of aircraft changes the employee must make en route by 2 or more; or
b. Extend the employee's travel time by 6 hours or more; or
c. Require a connecting time of 4 hours or more at an overseas interchange point.

Foreign air carrier service is deemed a "matter of necessity" when service by a U.S. flag air carrier is available, but cannot provide the air transportation needed, or will not accomplish the agency's mission.

"Necessity" includes, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

a. When the agency determines that use of a foreign air carrier is necessary for medical reasons, including use of foreign air carrier service to reduce the number of connections and possible delays in the transportation of persons in need of medical treatment; or

b. When use of a foreign air carrier is required to avoid an unreasonable risk to the employee's safety and is approved by the agency (e.g., terrorist threats). Written approval of the use of foreign air carrier service based on an unreasonable risk to the employee's safety must be approved by the agency on a case by case basis. An agency determination and approval of use of a foreign air carrier based on a threat against a U.S. flag air carrier must be supported by a travel advisory notice issued by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of State. An agency determination and approval of use of a foreign air carrier based on a threat against Government employees or other travelers must be supported by evidence of the threat(s) that form the basis of the determination and approval; or
c. When the employee cannot purchase a ticket in his or her authorized class of service on a U.S. flag air carrier, and a seat is available in the authorized class of service on a foreign air carrier.

Keep in mind that an employee may not travel by a foreign air carrier because the cost of his or her ticket is less than traveling by a U.S. flag air carrier. Foreign air carrier service may not be used solely based on the cost of the ticket. Nor may an employee use a foreign air carrier if the service is preferred by, or more convenient for, the agency or the employee. The employee must use U.S. flag air carrier service, unless the employee meets one of the exceptions described above, or unless the foreign air carrier service is deemed a "matter of necessity."

Employees must provide a certification and any other documents required by their agency if they use a foreign air carrier. The agency cannot pay the foreign air carrier fare if the employee does not provide the required certification.

<u>The certification must include</u>:

a. The employee's name;
b. The dates traveled;
c. The origin and the destination of travel;
d. A detailed itinerary of the travel, name of the air carrier, and flight number for each leg of the trip; and
e. A statement explaining why the employee met one of the exceptions, or a copy of the agency's written approval that foreign air carrier service was deemed a matter of necessity.

The employee will not be reimbursed for any transportation cost for which he or she improperly used foreign air carrier service. If the employee is authorized by his or her agency to use U.S. flag air carrier service for his or her entire trip, and he or she improperly uses a foreign air carrier for any part of or the entire trip (i.e., when not permitted by regulation), the employee's transportation costs on the foreign air carrier will not be payable by the agency. If the agency authorizes the employee to use U.S. flag air carrier service for part of the trip and foreign air carrier service for another part of the trip, and the employee improperly uses a foreign air carrier (i.e., when neither authorized to do so nor otherwise permitted under the regulations), the agency will pay the transportation cost on the foreign air carrier for only the portion(s) of the trip for which the employee was authorized to use foreign air carrier service. The agency must establish internal procedures for denying reimbursement to travelers when use of a foreign air carrier was neither authorized nor otherwise permitted under the regulations.

Train Travel

<u>Classes Of Train Accommodations Available</u>

a. Coach-class – The basic class of accommodations offered by a rail carrier to passengers that includes a level of service available to all passengers regardless of the fare paid. Coach-class includes reserved coach accommodations as well as slumber coach accommodations when overnight train travel is involved.
b. Slumber coach – Includes slumber coach accommodations on trains offering such accommodations, or the lowest level of sleeping accommodations available on a train that does not offer slumber coach accommodations.

c. First-class – Includes bedrooms, roomettes, club service, parlor car accommodations, or other premium accommodations.
d. Business class – A class of service offered on Amtrak Acela or Metroliner extra fare train service.

Employees must use coach-class accommodations for all train travel, except when their agencies authorize first-class service.

An employee may use first-class train accommodations only when his or her agency specifically authorizes/approves their use for one of the reasons stated below:

a. No coach-class accommodations are reasonably available. "Reasonably available" means available and scheduled to leave within 24 hours of the employee's proposed departure time, or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of the employee's proposed arrival time.
b. When use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need. A disability must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. A special need must be substantiated in writing according to the agency's procedures. If the employee is authorized to have an attendant accompany him or her, the agency also may authorize the attendant to use first-class accommodations if the employee requires the attendant's services en route.
c. When exceptional security circumstances require first-class travel. Exceptional security circumstances include, but are not limited to:
    i. Use of other than first-class accommodations would endanger the employee's life or Government property;
    ii. The employee is an agent on protective detail and is accompanying an individual authorized to use first-class accommodations; or
    iii. The employee is a courier or control officer accompanying controlled pouches or packages.
d. Inadequate foreign coach-class train accommodations, such as when coach-class train accommodations on a foreign rail carrier do not provide adequate sanitation or health standards.

Extra-Fare Train Service
Extra-fare train service is a train that operates at an increased fare due to the extra performance of the train (i.e., faster speed or fewer stops). An employee may use extra-fare train service whenever the agency determines it is more advantageous to the Government or is required for security reasons. The use of the lowest class of service available on any AMTRAK Acela or Metroliner train service (including Acela Express) is deemed advantageous to the Government and no further agency approval is needed. On the Amtrak Acela Express or Metroliner train service, the lowest available class is business and on the Amtrak Regional train service the lowest available class of service is coach. AMTRAK Acela and Metroliner first-class accommodations may be authorized/approved only as explained above.

Travel By Ship

Travel By U.S. Flag Ship
An employee generally must travel by U.S. flag ship when one is available. An exception is made, however, if the necessity of the mission requires the use of a foreign ship.

An employee is required to travel by U.S. flag ship for the entire trip, unless use of a foreign ship has been authorized by the agency. If an employee improperly uses a foreign ship, any cost that is attributed to improper or unauthorized use of a foreign ship is the employee's responsibility.

Classes Of Ship Accommodations Available
Accommodations on ships vary according to deck levels:

a. First-class – All classes above the lowest first class, includes but is not limited to a suite.

b. Lowest first class – The least expensive first class of reserved accommodations available on a ship.

An employee must use the lowest first class accommodations when traveling by ship, except when the agency specifically authorizes/approves the employee's use of first-class ship accommodations, as explained below.

a) Lowest first class accommodations are not available on the ship.
b) When use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need. A disability must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. A special need must be substantiated in writing according to the agency's procedures. If the employee is authorized to have an attendant accompany him or her, the agency also may authorize the attendant to use first-class accommodations if the employee requires the attendant's services en route.
c) When exceptional security circumstances require first-class travel. Exceptional security circumstances include, but are not limited to:
    i. The use of lowest first class accommodations would endanger the employee's life or Government property; or
    ii. The employee is an agent on protective detail and is accompanying an individual authorized to use first-class accommodations; or
    iii. The employee is a courier or control officer accompanying controlled pouches or packages.

Using The Local Transit System

Employees may use the local transit system (bus, subway, or streetcar):

a. To, from, and between places of work. The use of bus, subway, or streetcar is an allowable expense for local travel between places of business at the employee's official station or a TDY station, and between places of lodging and place of business at a TDY station.
b. To places where meals can be obtained. Where the nature and location of the work at the employee's TDY station are such that meals cannot be obtained there, travel to obtain meals at the nearest available place is an allowable expense. The employee must, however, attach a statement to his or her travel voucher explaining why such travel was necessary.

Use Of Government Vehicles

There are certain types of Government vehicles that federal employees are authorized to use. An agency may authorize an employee to use:

a. A Government automobile;
b. A Government aircraft; and
c. Other types of Government vehicles in accordance with any Government-issued rules governing its use.

Employees may use a Government vehicle other than a Government aircraft only for official purposes, which include transportation:

a) Between places of official business;
b) Between such places and places of temporary lodging when public transportation is unavailable or its use is impractical;
c) Between either paragraphs (a) or (b) and restaurants, drug stores, barber shops, places of worship, cleaning establishments, and similar places necessary for the sustenance, comfort, or health of the employee to foster the continued efficient performance of Government business; or

d) As otherwise authorized by the agency.

The employee is responsible for any additional cost resulting from unauthorized use of a Government vehicle. Additionally, the employee may be subject to administrative and/or criminal liability for misuse of Government property. To operate a Government automobile for official travel, an employee must possess a valid State, District of Columbia, or territorial motor vehicle operator's license and have a travel authorization specifically authorizing the use of a Government-furnished automobile.

Use Of A Privately Owned Vehicle (POV)

Employees may use a privately owned vehicle (POV) for official travel when authorized by their agency.

Computing Mileage
The mileage reimbursement is computed by multiplying the distance traveled by the applicable mileage rate, as indicated below.

Determining Distance Measurements For Travel

If The Employee Travels By:	**The Distance Between The Origin And Destination Is:**
Privately owned automobile or privately owned motorcycle:	As shown in paper or electronic standard highway mileage guides, or the actual miles driven as determined from odometer readings.
Privately owned aircraft:	As determined from charts issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). You may include in your travel claim with an explanation any additional air mileage resulting from a detour necessary due to adverse weather, mechanical difficulty, or other unusual conditions. If a required deviation is such that airway mileage charts are not adequate to determine distance, you may use the formula of flight time multiplied by cruising speed of the aircraft to determine distance.

Reimbursement When Using A POV

For Use Of A:	**The Employee's Reimbursement Is:**
Privately-owned aircraft (e.g., helicopter, except an airplane).	Actual cost of operation (i.e., fuel, oil, plus additional expenses listed below).
Privately owned airplane **(Eff. 1/1/09)**	$1.29 per mile
Privately owned automobile	50 cents per mile
Privately owned motorcycle	47 cents per mile

In addition to the expenses above, the following chart lists the reimbursable and non-reimbursable expenses:

Reimbursable Expenses In Addition To Mileage Allowance	**Non-Reimbursable Expenses Included In The Mileage Allowance**
Parking fees; ferry fees; bridge, road, and tunnel fees; and aircraft or airplane parking, landing, and tie-down fees.	Charges for repairs, depreciation, replacements, grease, oil, antifreeze, towage and similar speculative expenses, gasoline, insurance, state and Federal taxes.

Reimbursement If Two Or More Are Traveling In A POV
If two or more employees travel on the same trip in the same POV, mileage is payable to only one employee. No deduction will be made from that employee's mileage allowance if other passengers contribute to defraying any expenses. Be aware that using a POV to transport other employees is strictly voluntary.

If an employee is authorized to use a POV instead of a taxi for round-trip travel between his or her residence and office on a day of travel requiring an overnight stay, the employee will be reimbursed on a mileage basis plus other allowable costs for round-trip travel on the beginning and/or ending of travel between the points involved, if determined advantageous to the Government.

As far as parking is concerned, if an employee parks his or her POV at a common carrier terminal while he or she is away from his or her official station, the agency may reimburse the parking fee as an allowable transportation expense not to exceed the cost of taxi fare to/from the terminal.

Finally, if an employee is authorized to use common carrier transportation and uses a POV instead, the employee will be reimbursed on a mileage basis, plus per diem, not to exceed the total constructive cost of the authorized method of common carrier transportation plus per diem. The agency must determine the constructive cost of transportation and per diem by common carrier.

If an employee is authorized to use a Government automobile and uses a privately owned automobile instead:

a. Reimbursement based on Government costs – Unless the employee is committed to using a Government vehicle as provided in paragraph (b) below, his or her reimbursement will be limited to the cost that would be incurred for use of a Government automobile, which in CONUS is 28.5 cents per mile. If the agency determines the cost of providing a Government automobile would be higher because of unusual circumstances, it may allow reimbursement not to exceed the mileage rate for a privately owned automobile. In addition, the employee may be reimbursed other allowable expenses.
b. Partial reimbursement when the employee is committed to use a Government owned automobile – When the employee is committed to use a Government automobile or would not ordinarily be authorized to use a privately owned automobile due to the availability of a Government automobile, but nevertheless requests to use a privately owned automobile, the employee will be reimbursed 12.5 cents per mile. This is the approximate cost of operating a Government automobile, fixed costs excluded. In addition, parking fees, bridge, road and tunnel fees are reimbursable.

Special Conveyances

The agency may also authorize/approve the use of:

a) Taxicabs;
b) Commercial rental automobiles; or
c) Any other special conveyance when determined to be advantageous to the Government.

Types Of Charges Reimbursable For Use Of A Special Conveyance
The types of charges that are reimbursable for use of a special conveyance are actual expenses that the agency determines are necessary, including, but not limited to:

a. Gasoline and oil;
b. Rental of a garage, hangar, or boathouse;
c. Feeding and stabling of horses;
d. Per diem of operator; and
e. Ferriage, tolls, etc.

If the employee is authorized to use a special conveyance and uses a POV instead, he or she will be reimbursed the mileage cost for the use of the POV, and additional expenses such as parking fees, bridge, road and tunnel fees, not to exceed the constructive cost of the special conveyance.

Differences Between Government Aircraft And Aircraft Hired As Special Conveyance

A Government aircraft is any aircraft owned, leased, chartered, or rented and operated by the Government. An aircraft hired as a special conveyance is an aircraft that the employee, in his or her private capacity, rent, lease, or charter and operate.

Taxicabs, Shuttle Services, or Other Courtesy Transportation

The employee may use a taxi or shuttle service:

(a) For local travel. When the agency authorizes/approves the use of a taxi for the following, local travel is reimbursable:

(1) Between places of business at an official or TDY station;

(2) Between a place of lodging and a place of business at a temporary duty station; and

(3) To obtain meals at the nearest available place where the nature and location of the work at a TDY station are such that meals cannot be obtained there.

(b) To and from a carrier terminal.

(1) General authorization. Except as provided below, the employee will be reimbursed the usual fare plus tip for use of a taxicab or shuttle services in the following situations:

(i) Between a common carrier or other terminal and either the employee's home or place of business at his or her official station, or the employee's place of business or lodging at a TDY station; or

(ii) Between the carrier terminal and shuttle terminal.

(2) Courtesy transportation. The employee should use courtesy transportation service furnished by hotels/motels to the maximum extent possible as a first source of transportation between a place of lodging at the TDY station and a common carrier terminal. The employee will be reimbursed for tips when using courtesy transportation service.

(3) Restrictions. When appropriate, the agency will restrict or place a monetary limit on the amount of reimbursement for the use of taxicabs under this paragraph when:

(i) Suitable Government or common carrier transportation service, including shuttle service, is available for all or part of the distance involved; or

(ii) Courtesy transportation service is provided by hotels/motels between the place of lodging at the TDY station and the common carrier terminal.

(c) Between the employee's residence and office on the day the employee performs official travel. In addition to using a taxi under paragraph (b) above, the agency may authorize/approve reimbursement of the usual taxicab fare plus tip in the following situations:

(1) From the employee's home to his or her office on the day the employee departs the office on an official trip requiring at least one night's lodging; and

(2) From the employee's office to his or her home on the day the employee returns to the office from the trip.

(d) Between the employee's residence and office in cases of necessity. The agency may authorize/approve the usual taxicab fare plus tip for travel between the employee's office and home when the employee performs official business at his or her official station and:

(1) The employee is dependent on public transportation for officially ordered work outside regular working hours; and

(2) The travel between the employee's office and home is during hours of infrequently scheduled public transportation or darkness.

The agency will reimburse the employee for a tip to a taxi, shuttle service, or courtesy transportation driver an amount which it determines to be reasonable.

Rental Vehicles

To use a rental vehicle, the agency must determine that such use is advantageous to the Government and must specifically authorize such use. With respect to being reimbursed for the cost of collision damage waiver (CDW) or theft insurance, the general rule is that the employee will not be reimbursed for CDW or theft insurance for travel within the continental United States (CONUS) for the following reasons: (1) The Government is a self-insurer; (2) Rental vehicles available under agreement(s) with the Government include full coverage insurance for damages resulting from an accident while performing official travel; (3) Any deductible amount paid by the employee may be reimbursed directly to the employee or directly to the rental agency if the damage occurred while the employee was performing official business.

There is an exception to this rule, however. The employee will be reimbursed for collision damage waiver or theft insurance when he or she travels outside the continental United States (OCONUS) and such insurance is necessary because the rental or leasing agency requirements, foreign statute, or legal procedures could cause extreme difficulty for an employee involved in an accident.

Additionally, the employee may not be reimbursed for personal accident insurance. That is a personal expense and is not reimbursable.

The employee is responsible for any additional cost resulting from the unauthorized use of a commercial rental automobile for other than official travel-related purposes.

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Per Diem Expenses

In addition to their transportation expenses, federal employees are eligible to receive per diem expenses, as explained in this chapter.

The employee is eligible for an allowance (per diem or actual expense) when:

a. The employee performs official travel away from his or her official station, or other areas defined by the agency;
b. The employee incurs per diem expenses while performing official travel; and
c. The employee is in a travel status for more than 12 hours.

The employee *will not* be reimbursed for per diem expenses if his or her official travel is 12 hours or less.

The agency must pay an allowance (either a per diem allowance or actual expense), unless:

a. The employee performs travel to a training event under the Government Employees Training Act, and the employee agrees not to be paid per diem expenses; or
b. The employee performs pre-employment interview travel, and the interviewing agency does not authorize payment of per diem expenses.

The employee may be reimbursed both actual expense and per diem during a single trip, but only one method of reimbursement may be authorized for any given calendar day except as provided by regulation. The agency must determine when the transition between the reimbursement methods occurs.

Per diem expenses will be reimbursed by the:

a. Lodgings-plus per diem method;
b. Reduced per diem method;
c. Conference lodging allowance method; or
d. Actual expense method.

Determining Maximum Per Diem Reimbursement Rate

The employee's TDY location determines the employee's maximum per diem reimbursement rate. If the employee arrives at his or her lodging location after 12 midnight, the employee claims lodging cost for the preceding calendar day. If no lodging is required, the applicable meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) reimbursement rate is the rate for the TDY location.

If lodging is not available at the employee's TDY location, the agency may authorize or approve the maximum per diem rate for the location where lodging is obtained.

The employee's per diem or actual expense entitlement starts on the day the employee departs his or her home, office, or other authorized point and ends on the day he or she returns to his or her home, office or other authorized point.

The employee must record on the travel claim the date of departure from, and arrival at, the official station or any other place travel begins or ends. The employee must show this same information for points where he or she performs TDY or for a stopover or official rest stop location when the arrival or departure affects his or her per diem allowance or other travel expenses. The employee also should show the dates for other points visited. The employee does not have to record departure/arrival times, but must annotate the travel claim when the travel is more than 12 hours but not exceeding 24 hours to reflect that fact.

By law, employees must make their lodging reservations through their agency travel management system.

The agency will reimburse the employee for different types of lodging as follows:

a. Conventional lodgings (hotel/motel, boarding house, etc.). The employee will be reimbursed the single occupancy rate.
b. Government quarters. The employee will be reimbursed, as a lodging expense, the fee or service charge the employee pays for use of the quarters.
c. Lodging with friend(s) or relative(s) (with or without charge). The employee may be reimbursed for additional costs the host incurs in accommodating the employee only if the employee is able to substantiate the costs and the agency determines them to be reasonable. The employee will not be reimbursed the cost of comparable conventional lodging in the area or a flat "token" amount.
d. Nonconventional lodging. The employee may be reimbursed the cost of other types of lodging when there are no conventional lodging facilities in the area (e.g., in remote areas) or when conventional facilities are in short supply because of an influx of attendees at a special event (e.g., World's Fair or international sporting event). Such lodging includes college dormitories or similar facilities or rooms not offered commercially but made available to the public by area residents in their homes.
e. Recreational vehicle (trailer/camper). The employee may be reimbursed for expenses (parking fees, fees for connection, use, and disconnection of utilities, electricity, gas, water and sewage, bath or shower fees, and dumping fees) which may be considered as a lodging cost.

Sharing A Room And Per Diem Reimbursement

The employee's reimbursement is limited to one-half of the double occupancy rate if the person sharing the room is another Government employee on official travel. If the person sharing the room is not a Government employee on official travel, the employee's reimbursement is limited to the single occupancy rate.

Computing Daily Lodging Rate When Renting Long-Term

When the employee obtains lodging on a long-term basis (e.g., weekly or monthly), the employee's daily lodging rate is computed by dividing the total lodging cost by the number of days of occupancy for which the employee is entitled to per diem, provided the cost does not exceed the daily rate of conventional lodging. Otherwise, the daily lodging cost is computed by dividing the total lodging cost by the number of days in the rental period. Reimbursement, including an appropriate amount for M&IE, may not exceed the maximum daily per diem rate for the TDY location.

When the employee rents a room, apartment, house, or other lodging on a long-term basis (e.g., weekly, monthly), the following expenses may be considered part of the lodging cost:

a. The rental cost for a furnished dwelling; if unfurnished, the rental cost of the dwelling and the cost of appropriate and necessary furniture and appliances (e.g., stove, refrigerator, chairs, tables, bed, sofa, television, or vacuum cleaner);
b. Cost of connecting/disconnecting and using utilities;
c. Cost of reasonable maid fees and cleaning charges;
d. Monthly telephone use fee (does not include installation and long-distance calls); and
e. If ordinarily included in the price of a hotel/motel room in the area concerned, the cost of special user fees (e.g., cable TV charges and plug-in charges for automobile head bolt heaters).

In a situation where the employee prepays his or her lodging expenses and the employee's TDY is curtailed, canceled, or interrupted for official purposes or for other reasons beyond the employee's control that are acceptable to the agency, the employee must first try to obtain a refund or otherwise try to minimize the cost. If the employee sought to obtain a refund or otherwise took steps to minimize the cost, the agency may reimburse expenses that are not refundable, including a forfeited rental deposit.

If the agency authorizes per diem reimbursement, it will not reduce the employee's M&IE allowance for a meal(s) provided by a common carrier or for a complimentary meal(s) provided by a hotel/motel. A meal provided by a common carrier or a complimentary meal provided by a hotel/motel does not affect the employee's per diem.

In some cases, a meal may be furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or may be included in the registration fee. In those cases, the M&IE rate must generally be adjusted (except when provided by a common carrier or a hotel/motel, as explained above) by deducting the appropriate amount shown in the chart below for continental United States (CONUS) travel, or any method determined by the employee's agency.

If the employee pays for a meal that has been previously deducted, the agency will reimburse the employee up to the deduction amount. The total amount of deductions made will not cause the employee to receive less than the amount allowed for incidental expenses.

Meals And Incidental Expenses Breakdown

Total M&IE:	**$46**	**$51**	**$56**	**$61**	**$66**	**$71**
Breakfast:	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lunch:	11	12	13	15	16	18
Dinner:	23	26	29	31	34	36
Incidentals:	5	5	5	5	5	5
1st & Last Day of Travel	34.50	38.25	42	45.75	49.50	53.25

Verified on 12/08/2010

Traveling Across The International Date Line

When the employee crosses the international dateline (IDL), the employee's actual elapsed travel time will be used to compute the per diem entitlement rather than calendar days.

Rest Periods While Traveling

a. The agency may authorize a rest period not in excess of 24 hours at either an intermediate point or at the destination if:
    i. Either the employee's origin or destination point is outside the continental United States (OCONUS);
    ii. The employee's scheduled flight time, including stopovers, exceeds 14 hours;
    iii. Travel is by a direct or usually traveled route; and
    iv. Travel is by coach-class service.
b. When a rest stop is authorized, the applicable per diem rate is the rate for the rest stop location.

Expenses On Non-Workdays

In some cases, the employee may be on official travel on leave or non-workdays (weekend, legal Federal Government holiday, or other scheduled non-workdays). In general, the employee will be reimbursed as long as his or her travel status requires his or her stay to include a non-workday (e.g., if the employee is on travel through Friday and again starting Monday, the employee will be reimbursed for Saturday and Sunday). However, the agency should determine the most cost effective situation (i.e., remaining in a travel status and paying per diem or actual expenses or permitting the employee to return to his or her official station). The agency will determine whether the employee will be reimbursed for non-workdays when the employee takes leave immediately (e.g., Friday or Monday) before or after the non-workday(s).

If required by the agency to return to the official station on a non-workday, the employee will be reimbursed the amount allowable for return travel.

The agency may authorize per diem or actual expense and round-trip transportation expenses for periodic return travel on non-workdays to the employee's home or official station under the following circumstances:

a. The agency requires the employee to return to his or her official station to perform official business; or
b. The agency will realize a substantial cost savings by returning the employee home; or
c. Periodic return travel home is justified incident to an extended TDY assignment.

If the employee voluntarily returns home or to his or her official station on non-workdays during a TDY assignment, the maximum reimbursement for round trip transportation and per diem or actual expense is limited to what would have been allowed had the employee remained at the TDY location.

The employee must provide a lodging receipt and either a receipt for any authorized expenses incurred costing over $75, or a reason acceptable to the agency explaining why the employee is unable to provide the necessary receipt.

If the employee travels to a location where the per diem rate is insufficient to meet necessary expenses, the employee may submit a request, containing pertinent lodging and meal cost data, through the agency asking that the location be surveyed.

Taxes

Taxes are not included in the lodging portion of the Government per diem rate. Lodging taxes paid by the employee are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense limited to the taxes on reimbursable lodging costs. For example, if the agency authorizes a maximum lodging rate of $50 per night, and the employee elects to stay at a hotel that costs $100 per night, the employee can only claim the amount of taxes on $50, which is the maximum authorized lodging amount.

For foreign areas, lodging taxes have not been removed from foreign per diem rates established by the Department of State. Separate claims for lodging taxes incurred in foreign areas are not allowed.

As a traveler on official business, the employee is required to pay applicable lodging taxes, unless exempted by the State or local jurisdiction.

Exemptions from taxes for federal travelers, and the forms required to claim them, vary from location to location. The GSA website (www.gsa.gov) lists jurisdictions where tax exempt certificates should be honored.

In the event the Government lodging rate plus applicable taxes exceeds the employee's lodging reimbursement, the employee may request reimbursement on an actual expense basis, not to exceed 300 percent of the maximum per diem allowance. Approval of actual expenses is usually in advance of travel and at the discretion of the agency.

Laundry Expenses

The expenses incurred for laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing at a TDY location are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense. However, the employee must incur a minimum of 4 consecutive nights lodging on official travel to qualify for this reimbursement. Laundry and dry cleaning expenses have not been removed from foreign per diem rates established by the State Department, or from non-foreign area per diem rates established by the Defense Department. Separate claims for laundry and dry cleaning expenses incurred in foreign areas and non-foreign areas are not allowed.

Advance Room Deposits

An agency may reimburse the employee for an advance room deposit, when such a deposit is required by the lodging facility to secure a room reservation, prior to the beginning of the employee's scheduled official travel. However, if the employee is reimbursed the advance room deposit, but fails to perform the scheduled official travel for reasons not acceptable to the agency, resulting in forfeit of the deposit, the employee is indebted to the Government for that amount and must repay it in a manner prescribed by the agency.

Reimbursement For Lodging Under Lodgings-Plus Per Diem

When travel is more than 12 hours and overnight lodging is required, the employee is reimbursed actual lodging cost not to exceed the maximum lodging rate for the TDY location or stopover point.

The allowance the employee will be paid for M&IE is as follows:

When Travel Is:	**The Allowance Is:**
More than 12 but less than 24 hours:	75 percent of the applicable M&IE rate.
24 hours or more, on the day of departure:	75 percent of the applicable M&IE rate.
24 hours or more, on full days of travel:	100 percent of the applicable M&IE rate.
24 hours or more, on the last day of travel:	75 percent of the applicable M&IE rate.

However, the table above does not apply if the employee travels by ship, either commercial or Government. In that case, the agency will determine an appropriate M&IE rate within the applicable maximum rate allowable.

M&IE For Days of Travel Which:	**The Employee's Applicable Rate Is:**
Require lodging.	The M&IE rate applicable for the TDY location.
Do not require lodging, and travel is more than 12 hours but less than 24 hours.	The M&IE rate applicable to the TDY site (or the highest M&IE rate applicable when multiple locations are involved).
Do not require lodging, and travel is 24 hours or more, and the employee is traveling to a new TDY site or stopover point at midnight.	The M&IE rate applicable to the new TDY site or stopover point.
Do not require lodging, and travel is 24 hours or more, and the employee is returning to his or her official station.	The M&IE rate applicable to the previous day of travel.

Reduced Per Diem

An agency may prescribe a reduced per diem rate lower than the prescribed maximum under the following circumstances:

a. When the agency can determine in advance that lodging and/or meal costs will be lower than the per diem rate; and
b. The lowest authorized per diem rate must be stated in the employee's travel authorization in advance of the employee's travel.

Actual Expense Reimbursement

Actual expense reimbursement is warranted when:

a. Lodging and/or meals are procured at a prearranged place such as a hotel where a meeting, conference or training session is held;
b. Costs have escalated because of special events (e.g., missile launching periods, sporting events, World's Fair, conventions, natural disasters); lodging and meal expenses within prescribed allowances cannot be obtained nearby; and costs to commute to/from the nearby location consume most or all of the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging;
c. Because of mission requirements; or
d. Any other reason approved within the agency.

An official designated by the head of the agency may authorize/approve an employee's request for actual expense. Requests for authorization for reimbursement under actual expense should be made in advance of travel. However, subject to the agency's policy, after the fact approvals may be granted when supported by an explanation acceptable to the agency.

The maximum amount that an employee may be reimbursed under actual expense is limited to 300 percent (rounded to the next higher dollar) of the applicable maximum per diem rate. However, subject to the agency's policy, a lesser amount may be authorized.

When authorized actual expense and the employee's expenses are less than the locality per diem rate or the authorized amount, reimbursement is limited to the expenses incurred.

If the employee's actual expenses exceed the 300 percent ceiling, then the employee's reimbursement is limited to the 300 percent ceiling. There is no authority to exceed this ceiling.

Under actual expense, the employee is required to itemize all expenses, including meals (each meal must be itemized separately) for which the employee will be reimbursed under actual expense. However, expenses that do not accrue daily (e.g., laundry, dry cleaning, etc.) may be averaged over the number of days the agency authorizes/approves actual expenses. Receipts are required for lodging, regardless of amount, and are required for any individual meal when the cost exceeds $75. The employee's agency may require receipts for other allowable per diem expenses, but it must inform the employee of this requirement in advance of travel. When the agency limits M&IE reimbursement to either the prescribed maximum M&IE rate for the locality concerned or a reduced M&IE rate, it may or may not require M&IE itemization at its discretion.

Income Tax Reimbursement Allowance

The Income Tax Reimbursement Allowance (ITRA) is an allowance designed to reimburse Federal, State and local income taxes incurred incident to an extended TDY assignment at one location. An employee (and spouse, if filing jointly) who was in a TDY status for an extended period at one location, and who incurred Federal, State, or local income taxes on amounts received as reimbursement for official travel expenses is eligible to receive the ITRA. Employees should consult their agency's Human Resources Office for details.

5

Miscellaneous Expenses

When the following items have been authorized or approved by the agency, they will be reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense. Taxes for reimbursable lodging are deemed approved when lodging is authorized.

Examples of miscellaneous expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Baggage expenses;
b. Services of guides, interpreters, and drivers;
c. Use of computers, printers, faxing machines, and scanners;
d. Services of typists, data processors, or stenographers;
e. Storage of property used on official business;
f. Hire of conference center room or hotel room for official business;
g. Official telephone calls/service (but see note below);
h. Faxes, telegrams, cablegrams, or radiograms;
i. Lodging taxes;
j. Laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing, under certain circumstances as described on p. 23 of this handbook under "Laundry Expenses;"
k. Energy surcharge and lodging resort fee(s) (when such fee(s) is/are not optional);
l. Fees for travelers checks;
m. Fees for money orders;
n. Fees for certified checks;
o. Transaction fees for use of automated teller machines (ATMs) – Government contractor-issued charge card;
p. Commissions on conversion of foreign currency;
q. Passport and/or visa fees;
r. Costs of photographs for passports and visa;
s. Foreign country exit fees;
t. Costs of birth, health, and identity certificates; and
u. Charges for inoculations that cannot be obtained through a Federal dispensary.

Note: The employee should use Government provided services for all official communications. When they are not available, commercial services may be used. Reimbursement may be authorized or approved by the agency.

Baggage Expenses
The agency may reimburse expenses related to baggage as follows:

a. Transportation charges for authorized excess
b. Necessary charges for transferring baggage
c. Necessary charges for storage of baggage when such charges are the result of official business
d. Charges for checking baggage
e. Charges or tips at transportation terminals for handling Government property carried by the traveler.

6

Travel By Employees With Special Needs

The federal Government's policy for paying additional travel expenses incurred by an employee with a special need is to provide reasonable accommodations by paying for any additional travel expenses incurred. The agency will pay for additional travel expenses for employees with special needs when an additional travel expense is necessary to accommodate a special physical need which is either clearly visible and discernible, or substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority.

The additional travel expenses an agency may pay are:

a. Transportation and per diem expenses incurred by a family member or other attendant who must travel with the employee to make the trip possible;
b. Specialized transportation to, from, and/or at the TDY duty location;
c. Specialized services provided by a common carrier to accommodate the employee's special need;
d. Costs for handling the employee's baggage that are a direct result of the employee's special need;
e. Renting and/or transporting a wheelchair; and
f. Premium-class accommodations and business-class accommodations when necessary to accommodate the employee's special need.
g. Services of an attendant, when necessary, to accommodate your special need.

7

Emergency Travel

Emergency situations sometimes arise when employees are on TDY, causing them to have to return home or receive treatment at their temporary duty location. This chapter addresses the circumstances under which the agency will pay an employee's expenses when such an emergency occurs.

Emergency travel is travel that results from:

a. The employee's becoming incapacitated by illness or injury not due to the employee's own misconduct;
b. The death or serious illness of a member of the employee's family; or
c. A catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster, such as fire, flood, or act of God, which directly affects the employee's home.

When it comes to emergency travel, "family" is defined as any member of the employee's immediate family. However, the agency may, on a case-by-case basis, expand this definition to include other members of the employee's family and/or his or her spouse's extended family.

If the employee has to interrupt or discontinue his or her TDY travel, the employee should contact his or her travel authorizing/approving official for instructions as soon as possible.

When an illness or injury occurs on TDY, the expenses that the agency may pay are:

a. Per diem at the location where the employee incurred or was treated for incapacitating illness or injury for a reasonable period of time (generally 14 calendar days). However, the agency may pay for a longer period.
b. Transportation and per diem expense for travel to an alternate location to receive medical treatment.
c. Transportation and per diem expense to return to the employee's official station.
d. Transportation costs of a medically necessary attendant.

Expenses are not payable when the employee is confined to a medical facility within the proximity of his or her official duty station, or is confined to the same medical facility he or she would have been admitted to if the employee's incapacitating illness or injury occurred at the employee's official station.

In addition, medical expenses are not payable if the Government provides or reimburses the employee for hospitalization under any Federal statute (including hospitalization in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical center or military hospital). However, per diem expenses are payable if the employee's hospitalization is paid under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.

8

Threatened Law Enforcement & Investigative Personnel

Law enforcement and investigative employees whose lives – or the lives of their family members - are threatened as a result of their official duties may be sent by their agency to an alternative site for their protection. In such cases, these employees are entitled to have their agency pick up the tab for certain expenses, as explained below.

Subsistence and transportation expenses are paid for threatened law enforcement/ investigative employees in order to protect the employee and his or her immediate family when their lives are placed in jeopardy as a result of the employee's assigned duties. The agency decides when it is appropriate to pay these expenses based on the nature of the threat against the employee's life and/or the life of a member of the employee's immediate family.

Generally, "family" includes any member of the employee's immediate family. However, the agency may, on a case-by-case basis, expand this definition to include other members of the employee's extended family, and/or his or her spouse's extended family.

The agency may pay for transportation and subsistence expenses when it determines that a threat against the employee or a member of his or her immediate family justifies moving the employee and/or his or her family to temporary living accommodations at or away from the employee's official station. The agency designates the area where the employee and/or his or her family should obtain lodging. It may be within the employee's official station or at an alternate location. In addition, the employee and his or her family may occupy lodging at different locations, if authorized by the agency. The agency may also pay transportation expenses to transport the employee and/or his or her family to or from a temporary location.

Generally, only the employee's lodging costs may be paid. However, the agency may pay for meals and laundry/cleaning expenses if the employee's temporary living accommodations do not have kitchen or laundry facilities, or the agency determines that other extenuating circumstances exist which necessitate payment of these expenses.

The agency will pay the employee's actual subsistence expenses not to exceed the "maximum allowable amount" for the period the employee or his or her family occupy temporary living accommodations. The "maximum allowable amount" is the "maximum daily amount" multiplied by the number of days the employee or his or her family occupies temporary living accommodations, not to exceed the number of days authorized. The "maximum daily amount" is determined by adding the rates in the following table for the employee and each member of his or her family authorized to occupy temporary living accommodations:

	The "Maximum Daily Amount" of Per Diem Expenses That:		
If The Agency Authorizes:	**The employee or his or her unaccompanied spouse or other unaccompanied family member may receive is:**	**The employee's accompanied spouse or a member of his or her family who is age 12 or older may receive is:**	**A member of the employee's family who is under age 12 may receive is:**
Payment of only lodging expenses:	The maximum lodging amount applicable to the locality.	.75 times the maximum lodging amount applicable to the locality.	.5 times the maximum lodging amount applicable to the locality.

Payment for lodging, meals, and other per diem expenses:	The maximum per diem rate applicable to the locality.	.75 times the maximum per diem rate applicable to the locality.	.5 times the maximum per diem rate applicable to the locality.

Be aware that the agency may not pay the employee a per diem allowance instead of actual expenses. The employee must keep track of his or her actual expenses.

The agency may pay for subsistence expenses up to 60 days. However, the agency may pay for additional periods if it determines that an extension is justified.

Travel Advances

The employee may receive a travel advance for transportation and/or subsistence expenses for up to a 30-day period at a time to cover expenses allowable. The employee's travel advance may not exceed the maximum allowable amount, and he or she will be required to reimburse the agency for any portion of the advance disallowed or not spent.

Obtaining Reimbursement

To obtain reimbursement, the employee must provide receipts or any other documentation required by the agency. However, in instances when documentation might compromise the security of the individuals involved, the head of the agency may waive this requirement.

9

Making Arrangements & Paying For Travel

Employees are required to arrange their travel as designated by their agencies, and in compliance with the Federal Travel Regulation. Employees must use the eTravel Service (eTS) when their agency makes it available to them. Until then, employees must use their agency's existing Travel Management System (TMS) to make travel arrangements. Employees of the Department of Defense or the Government of the District of Columbia must arrange their travel in accordance with their agency's TMS.

Employees may be granted an exception to using eTS by their agency on a case-by-case basis when it: (1) Causes an unreasonable burden on the agency's mission accomplishment(s) (e.g., emergency travel and eTS is not accessible, invitational travel, necessity of disability accommodations or special needs); (2) Compromises a national security interest; or (3) May endanger the life of the traveler (e.g., an individual traveling under the Federal witness protection program, or threatened law enforcement/ investigative personnel).

Employees who do not use their agency's TMS or the eTravel Service and who do not have an approved exception are responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use the TMS or eTS, including service fees, cancellation penalties, or other additional costs (e.g., higher airfares, rental car charges, or hotel rates). In addition, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action against the employee.

Limits On Travel Arrangements

There are limits on travel arrangements employees may make for common carrier, commercial lodging, and car rental accommodations. Such limitations include, but are not limited to, the following:

Common Carrier Accommodations. If the agency is a mandatory user of the GSA's city-pair contracts for air passenger transportation services, the employee must use the contract carrier, unless he or she has an approved exception. In addition, the employee may only use first-class or business-class accommodations under certain circumstances, and must always use a U.S. Flag Air Carrier unless the employee's travel circumstances meet one of the exceptions.

Lodging Accommodations. Employees should always stay in a "fire safe" facility. This is a facility that meets the fire safety requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990, as amended. When selecting a commercial lodging facility, first consideration must be given to the commercial lodging facilities contracted by GSA under the Federal Premier Lodging Program (FPLP) (a list of FPLP facilities may be found at www.gsa.gov), all of which meet fire safety requirements, unless one or more of the following conditions exist:

(1) An FPLP facility is not available at the location needed (e.g., there are no FPLP facilities under contract within a reasonable proximity of the employee's temporary duty station, or there are no vacancies at the FPLP facilities at that location). In that case, the agency's TMS or eTS must provide the employee with a list of alternative facilities that meet the fire safety requirements of the Act.
(2) The agency has other contractual arrangements with commercial lodging facilities that meet the FEMA fire safety requirements at a lower cost than FPLP properties.
(3) The agency determines on an individual case-by-case basis that it is not practical to use FPLP facilities to meet mission requirements.
(4) The employee is attending a conference with prearranged lodging accommodations and is required to book lodging directly with the lodging facility.
(5) The employee's travel is OCONUS.

Car Rental Accommodations. When authorized to use a rental vehicle, the employee must rent a vehicle from a vendor that participates in the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC) U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement, unless the employee is OCONUS and no agreement is in place for the employee's TDY location. MTMC has

negotiated car rental agreements that include automatic unlimited mileage, collision damage insurance, and ceiling rates.

Method Of Paying For Official Travel Expenses

The employee is required to use the Government contractor-issued travel charge card for all official travel expenses unless the employee has an exemption. However, some official travel expenses and/or classes of employees are exempt from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card. The Administrator of General Services exempts the following from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card:

a. Expenses incurred at a vendor that does not accept the Government contractor-issued travel charge card;
b. Laundry/Dry cleaning;
c. Parking;
d. Local transportation system;
e. Taxi;
f. Tips;
g. Meals (when use of the card is impractical, e.g., group meals or the Government contractor-issued travel charge card is not accepted);
h. Phone calls (when a Government calling card is available for use in accordance with agency policy);
i. An employee who has an application pending for the travel charge card;
j. Individuals traveling on invitational travel;
k. New appointees;
l. Relocation allowances, except en-route travel and house-hunting trip expenses; and
m. Employees who travel 5 times or less a year. Even though exempt, agencies have the discretion to issue a travel charge card to such an employee.

However, bear in mind that the agency head or his or her designee has the authority to grant exemptions from the mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card.

Additionally, if the agency grants an exemption, that would not prevent the employee from using the Government contractor-issued travel charge card on a voluntary basis in accordance with the agency's policy.

If the employee receives an exemption from use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card, the agency may authorize one or a combination of the following methods of payment:

a. Personal funds, including cash or personal charge card;
b. Travel advances; or
c. Government Transportation Request (GTR).

Note: City pair contractors are not required to accept payment by personal funds, including cash or personal charge card, or travel advances.

Remember - The Government contractor-issued travel charge card may be used only for official travel related expenses. If an employee uses the Government contractor-issued travel charge card for purposes other than official travel, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action.

Paying For Common Carrier Transportation

The employee must use a Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card, centrally billed account, or GTR to procure contract passenger transportation services. For all other common carrier transportation, the employee must use one of the methods specified in the following table:

For passenger transportation services costing:	The employee must use:	Unless:
$10 or less, and air excess baggage charges of $15 or less for each leg of a trip.	A Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card, centrally billed account, or cash payments.	Use of the Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card is not accepted or its use is impracticable, special circumstances justify the use of a GTR or Government excess baggage authorization ticket (GEBAT).
More than $10, but not more than $100.	A Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card, centrally billed account, or GTR.	None of the other methods is practicable, the employee may use cash.
More than $100	Only a Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card, centrally billed account, or GTR.	The agency authorizes the employee to use a reduced fare for group, charter, or excursion arrangements or under emergency circumstances where the use of other methods is not possible.

Payment Methods Equivalent To Cash

Use of one of the following payment methods to procure common carrier transportation is considered the equivalent of cash and the employee must comply with the rules that limit the use of cash for such purposes.

a. Personal credit cards;
b. Cash withdrawals obtained from an ATM using a Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card; and
c. Checks, both personal and travelers (including those obtained through a travel payment system services program).

Unauthorized Cash Purchase Of Transportation

If the employee makes an unauthorized cash purchase of common carrier transportation, the agency may allow reimbursement for the full cost of the transportation if the employee is a new employee or an invitational or infrequent traveler who is unaware of the proper procedures for making such a purchase. In all other instances, the employee's reimbursement will be limited to the cost of such transportation using the authorized method of payment.

Losing A Government Transportation Request (GTR)

The employee is liable for any Government expenditure that is caused by his or her negligence in safeguarding the Government Transportation Request (GTR) or tickets received in exchange for the GTR. To avoid liability, the employee must immediately report a lost or stolen GTR to his or her administrative office. If the lost or stolen GTR shows the carrier service desired and point of origin, the employee should promptly notify in writing the named carrier and other local initial carriers. The employee should not use a GTR that is recovered after having been reported as lost or stolen. Instead, he or she must report the recovered GTR to his or her administrative office.

Receiving A Travel Advance

For:	The employee may receive an advance:
Cash transaction expenses (i.e., expenses that as a general rule cannot be charged and must be paid using cash, a personal check, or travelers check). - M&IE covered by the per diem allowance or actual expenses allowance; - Miscellaneous transportation expenses such as local transportation system and taxi fares; parking fees; ferry fees; bridge, road, and tunnel fees; and aircraft parking, landing, and tie- down fees; - Gasoline and other variable expenses covered by the mileage allowance for advantageous use of a privately owned automobile for official business; and - Other authorized miscellaneous expenses that cannot be charged using a Government contractor- issued charge card and for which a cost can be estimated.	Any time the employee travels.
Non-cash transaction expenses (i.e., lodging, common carrier).	Only in the following situations: - Government contractor-issued charge card not expected to be accepted. - Government contractor-issued charge card issuance denied. The agency has decided not to provide the employee with a Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card. - Official change of station. The agency determines that use of a Government contractor-issued individually billed travel card would not be feasible incident to a transfer, particularly a transfer to another agency. - Financial hardship would be incurred.

Maximum Amount Agency May Advance

The amount the agency advances may not exceed the following amounts:

For:	The Maximum Amount The Agency May Advance Is:
Cash transaction expenses:	The estimated amount of the employee's cash transaction expenses. (For M&IE, the advance is limited to the M&IE rate under the lodgings-plus per diem method.)

Non-cash transaction expenses:	Generally zero. However, the agency may advance up to the full amount of the employee's expected non-cash transaction expenses for an individual trip (or not to exceed a 45-day period for an open authorization).

Accounting For Your Advance

The employee must file a travel claim which accounts for the advance after completion of the assignment, in accordance with the agency's policy. If the employee is in a continuous travel status (e.g., an auditor or inspector), or if he or she submits periodic reimbursement vouchers on an individual trip authorization, the agency may reimburse the full amount of the employee's travel expenses without any deduction of the advance until such time as the employee files a final voucher. If the amount advanced is less than the amount of the voucher on which it is deducted, the employee will be reimbursed the net amount. If the advance exceeds the reimbursable amount, the employee must immediately refund the excess.

Trip Canceled Or Postponed Indefinitely

In the event the trip is canceled or postponed indefinitely, the employee must promptly notify the appropriate agency officials and refund any monies advanced in connection with the authorized travel.

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Obtaining Reimbursement Of Expenses

In order to be reimbursed for travel expenses, the employee must file a travel claim. In the travel claim, the employee is required to provide the following information:

(a) An itemized list of expenses and other information (specified in the listing of required standard data elements contained in Appendix C of Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 301, and any additional information the agency may specifically require), except:

(1) The employee may aggregate expenses for local telephone calls, local metropolitan transportation fares, and parking meter fees, except any individual expenses costing over $75 must be listed separately;

(2) When the employee is authorized lodgings-plus per diem, the employee must state the M&IE allowance on a daily basis;

(3) When the employee is authorized a reduced per diem, the employee must state the reduced rate the agency authorizes on a daily basis; and

(4) When the agency limits M&IE reimbursement to the prescribed maximum M&IE for the locality concerned, the employee must state the reduced rate on a daily basis.

(5) The agency may or may not require itemization of M&IE when reimbursement is limited to either the maximum M&IE locality rate or a reduced M&IE rate is authorized.

(b) The type of leave and the number of hours of leave for each day;

(c) The date of arrival and departure from the TDY station and any non-duty points visited when the employee travels by an indirect route other than a stopover to change planes or embark/disembark passengers;

(d) A signed statement, "I hereby assign to the United States any rights I may have against other parties in connection with any reimbursable carrier transportation charges described herein," when the employee uses cash to pay for common carrier transportation.

As soon as the employee's agency migrates to the eTravel Service (eTS), the employee must use the eTS to file all travel claims. (Agencies are required to migrate to the eTS no later than September 30, 2006.) Until that time, the employee's travel claim must be filed in a format prescribed by the agency. If the prescribed travel claim is hardcopy, the claim must be signed in ink. Any alterations or erasures to the hardcopy travel claim must be initialed. If the agency has electronic processing, the employee should use an electronic signature where required.

With the travel claim, the employee must provide:

(a) Evidence of the employee's necessary travel authorizations including any necessary special authorizations;

(b) Receipts for:

(1) Any lodging expense, except when the employee is authorized a fixed reduced per diem allowance;

(2) Any other expense costing over $75. If it is impracticable to furnish any of the required receipts, the failure to do so must be fully explained on the travel voucher. Mere inconvenience in the matter of taking receipts will not be considered; and

(3) Receipts must be retained for 6 years and 3 months, as prescribed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

The agency may exempt an expenditure from the receipt requirement because the expenditure is confidential.

Submitting A Travel Claim

The employee must submit his or her travel claim in accordance with administrative procedures prescribed by the agency. Unless the agency administratively requires the employee to submit his or her travel claim within a shorter timeframe, the employee must submit the travel claim within 5 working days after completing the trip or period of travel, or every 30 days if the employee is on continuous travel status.

Disallowing A Claim
The agency may disallow payment of a claimed item if the employee:

a. Does not provide proper itemization of an expense;
b. Does not provide a receipt or other documentation required to support the claim; or
c. Claims an expense that is not authorized.

If the agency disallows the employee's claim for an expense, it will issue the employee a notice of disallowance, and pay the claim for those items that are not disallowed. The employee may challenge the agency's disallowance of the claim by requesting reconsideration of the claim if the employee has additional facts or documentation to support his or her request for reconsideration.

To challenge a disallowed claim, the employee must:

a. File a new claim;
b. Provide full itemization for all disallowed items reclaimed;
c. Provide receipts for all disallowed items reclaimed that require receipts, except that the employee does not have to provide a receipt if the agency already has the receipt;
d. Provide a copy of the notice of disallowance;
e. State the proper authority for the claim if the employee is challenging the agency's application of the law or statute;
f. Follow the agency's procedures for challenging disallowed claims;
g. If after reconsideration by the agency the claim is still denied, the employee may submit the claim for adjudication to the GSA Board of Contract Appeals.

Penalties For Attempting To Defraud The Government
If an employee attempts to defraud the Government:

a. The employee forfeits reimbursement; and
b. The employee may be subject to one, or both, of the following:
    1. A fine of not more than $10,000, or
    2. Imprisonment for not more than 5 years.

Employees should definitely keep itemized records of their expenses while on travel. Employees may find it helpful to keep a record of expenses by the date of the expense to aid them in preparing their travel claims or for tax purposes.

If an employee has any travel advance outstanding at the time he or she submits the travel claim, the employee must account for the travel advance in accordance with the agency's procedures.

If the employee has any passenger coupon for transportation costing over $75, purchased with cash, the employee must submit the passenger coupons to the agency in accordance with the agency's procedures. Similarly, if the employee has any unused tickets, coupons, or other evidence of refund, he or she must submit these to the agency in accordance with the agency's procedures.

Agency Reimbursement
The agency must reimburse the employee within 30 calendar days after the employee submits a proper travel claim to the agency's designated approving office. The agency must ensure that it uses a satisfactory recordkeeping system to track submission of travel claims. For example, travel claims submitted by mail, in accordance with the agency's policy, could be annotated with the time and date of receipt by the agency. The agency could consider travel claims electronically submitted to the designated approving office as submitted on the date indicated on an e-mail log, or on

the next business day if submitted after normal working hours. However, claims for the following relocation allowances are exempt from this provision:

a. Transportation and storage of household goods and professional books, papers and equipment;
b. Transportation of mobile home;
c. Transportation of a privately owned vehicle;
d. Temporary quarters subsistence expense, when not paid as lump sum;
e. Residence transaction expenses;
f. Relocation income tax allowance;
g. Use of a relocation services company;
h. Home marketing incentive payments; and
i. Allowance for property management services.

The agency must notify the employee as soon as practicable after the employee submits his or her travel claim of any error that would prevent payment within 30 calendar days after submission and must provide the reason(s) why the travel claim is not proper. After May 1, 2002, agencies have a maximum time period of seven working days to notify the employee that his or her travel claim is not proper.

The agency must pay the employee a late payment fee, in addition to the amount due, for any proper travel claim not reimbursed within 30 calendar days of the employee's submission of it to the approving official.

The agency must either:

a. Calculate late payment fees using the prevailing Prompt Payment Act Interest Rate beginning on the 31st day after submission of a proper travel claim and ending on the date on which payment is made; or
b. Reimburse the employee a flat fee of not less than the prompt payment amount, based on an agencywide average of travel claim payments; and
c. In addition to the fee required by paragraphs (a) and (b), the agency must also pay the employee an amount equivalent to any late payment charge that the card contractor would have been able to charge the employee had the employee not paid the bill.

A late payment fee will only be paid when the computed late payment fee is $1.00 or more. Late payment fees will not be reported as wages on a Form W-2. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined that the late payment fee is in the nature of interest (compensation for the use of money). The agency will report payments in accordance with IRS guidelines.

However, the additional fee, which is equal to any late payment charge that the card contractor would have been able to charge had the employee not paid the bill, is considered income. The agency will report this payment as additional wages on Form W-2.

Mandatory use of the Government contractor-issued travel charge card does not change the employee's obligation to pay his or her travel card bill by the due date.

11

Keeping Frequent Flyer Miles & Other Promotional Benefits

The law concerning frequent flyer miles has changed in recent years. Previously, federal employees who earned frequent flyer miles when they traveled on official Government business were prohibited from retaining those miles for their own personal use. Federal agencies viewed those miles as the property of the Federal Government, not as the employee's property.

The situation changed on December 28, 2001, when the President signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002. That law authorized federal employees to retain for personal use promotional items received incident to official travel, including frequent flyer miles. This meant that federal employees could use those airline miles earned while on official travel to qualify for free, personal airline trips, or to upgrade from coach to business and first class on official travel. This change in the law is explained more fully below.

Promotional Benefits Received From A Travel Service Provider

Any promotional benefits or materials received from a travel service provider in connection with official travel, such as frequent flyer miles, may be retained for personal use, if such items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public and at no additional cost to the Government.

Note, however, that promotional benefits or materials an employee receives from a travel service provider in connection with the employee planning and/or scheduling an official conference or other group travel (as opposed to performing official travel him or herself) are considered the property of the Government, and the employee may only accept the benefits or materials on behalf of the Federal Government.

Employees may use promotional materials and frequent traveler benefits earned on official travel to obtain travel services for a subsequent official travel assignment. However, they may also retain such benefits for their personal use, including upgrading to a higher class of service while on official travel.

Employees who are offered such benefits as a result of their role as a conference planner or as a planner for other group travel may not retain such benefits for their personal use. Rather, the employee may only accept such benefits on behalf of the Federal Government. Such accepted benefits may only be used for official Government business.

Employees may not select travel service providers for which the agency is not a mandatory user in order to maximize their frequent traveler benefits. They must use the travel service provider for which the agency is a mandatory user. This includes contract passenger transportation services and travel management systems. Employees may not choose a travel service provider to gain frequent traveler benefits for personal use.

A denied boarding benefit (e.g., cash, free ticket coupon) is not a promotional item given by an airline. See "Compensation Received If Airline Denies The Employee A Seat" and "Compensation Given For Voluntarily Vacating Seat" in Chapter 3 of this handbook, which discusses when an airline denies an employee a seat either involuntarily or when an employee vacates his or her seat voluntarily.

12

Collecting Delinquent Amounts

By law, the agency is allowed to collect undisputed delinquent amounts that an employee owes to a Government travel charge card contractor. These amounts may be collected from the employee's disposable pay by the agency, upon written request from the contractor.

Disposable Pay

"Disposable pay" is defined as the compensation remaining after the deduction from the employee's earnings of any amounts required by law to be withheld. These deductions do not include discretionary deductions such as savings bonds, charitable contributions, and so forth. Deductions may be made from any type of pay the employee receives from the agency, for instance, basic pay, special pay, retirement pay, or incentive pay.

There are certain due process requirements with which the agency must comply before collecting undisputed delinquent amounts on behalf of the charge card contractor. Specifically, the agency must:

a. Provide the employee with written notice of the type and amount of the claim, the intention to collect the claim by deduction from the employee's disposable pay, and an explanation of the employee's rights as a debtor;
b. Give the employee the opportunity to inspect and copy the agency's records related to the claim;
c. Allow an opportunity for a review within the agency of the agency's decision to collect the amount; and
d. Provide the employee with an opportunity to make a written agreement with the contractor to repay the delinquent amount of the claim.

The agency cannot initiate collection of undisputed delinquent amounts if it has not reimbursed the employee for amounts reimbursable under the applicable travel regulations. The agency may only collect undisputed delinquent amounts for which the employee has been reimbursed under the applicable travel regulations. However, if the employee has not submitted a proper travel claim within the required timeframe, and there are no extenuating circumstances, the agency may collect the undisputed delinquent amounts based on the amounts charged on the travel charge card.

Maximum Amount That Can Be Deducted

The maximum amount the agency may deduct from an employee's disposable pay is **15 percent per pay period**, unless the employee agrees in writing to a larger percentage.

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Conference Planning

There are particular rules that apply when an agency is planning a conference. These rules primarily address cost considerations, as explained in this chapter.

When planning a conference, agencies must:

a. Minimize all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees' travel costs, and conference attendees' time costs;
b. Maximize the use of Government-owned or Government-provided conference facilities as much as possible;
c. Identify opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility (e.g., through the availability of lower rates during the off-season at a site with seasonal rates);
d. Ensure that the conference planner or designee does not retain for personal use any promotional benefits or materials received from a travel service provider as a result of booking the conference; and
e. Develop and establish internal policies to ensure these standards are met.

Costs To Be Considered When Planning A Conference
When planning a conference, agencies should consider all direct and indirect conference costs paid by the Government, whether paid directly by agencies or reimbursed by agencies to travelers or others associated with the conference. Some examples of such costs are:

a. Authorized travel and per diem expenses;
b. Hire of rooms for official business;
c. Audiovisual and other equipment usage;
d. Computer and telephone access fees;
e. Light refreshments;
f. Printing;
g. Registration fees;
h. Ground transportation; and
i. Employees' time at the conference and on en route travel.

To determine conference expenditures, agencies are required to:

a. Assure there is appropriate management oversight of the conference planning process;
b. Always do cost comparisons of the size, scope, and location of the proposed conference;
c. Determine if a Government facility is available at a cheaper rate than a commercial facility;
d. Consider alternatives to a conference, e.g. teleconferencing; and
e. Maintain written documentation of the alternatives considered and the selection rationale used.

Cost Comparisons
Cost comparisons should include, but not be limited to, a determination of adequacy of lodging rooms at the established per diem rates, overall convenience of the conference location, fees, availability of meeting space, equipment, supplies, and commuting or
travel distance of attendees.

Selecting A Location And Facility
Site selection is a final decision as to where to hold the agency's conference. The term "site" refers to both the geographical location and the specific facility(ies) selected. In determining the best site in the interest of the Government, agencies should exercise strict fiscal responsibility to minimize costs. As part of the cost comparison, they must use the established per diem rate for the locations for which they are comparing costs.

While it is always desirable to obtain lodging facilities within the established lodging portion of the per diem rate for the chosen locality, it may not always be possible. In negotiating lodging rates with the properties in the chosen location, agencies may exceed the established lodging portion of the per diem rate by up to 25 percent, if necessary. This will provide flexibility in selecting an appropriate property at the most advantageous location. It will also permit agencies to reimburse their employees' subsistence expenses by using the conference lodging allowance method, rather than the actual expense method.

Conference Lodging Allowance

The conference lodging allowance is a pre-determined maximum allowance of up to 25 percent greater than the applicable locality lodging portion of the per diem rate. Under this reimbursement method, employees will be reimbursed the actual amount incurred for lodging up to the conference lodging allowance.

The approval authority for the conference lodging allowance is the Government agency sponsoring the conference. The sponsoring agency will determine the appropriate conference lodging allowance, up to 25 percent above the established lodging allowance for the chosen location, and that rate shall be allowable for all employees of any agency authorized to attend the conference. The determination must be made by a senior agency official at the sponsoring agency.

If a Government employee is authorized to attend a non-Government sponsored conference, the employee's travel approving official may authorize the employee to be reimbursed for lodging expenses incurred up to the conference lodging allowance rate.

Remember that the conference lodging allowance may not be more than 25 percent above the applicable locality lodging per diem rate.

Light Refreshments At An Official Conference

Agencies sponsoring a conference may provide light refreshments to agency employees attending an official conference. Light refreshments for morning, afternoon or evening breaks are defined to include, but are not limited to, coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, or muffins.

Using Both Conference Lodging Allowance Method & Actual Expense Method

Agencies may not use both the conference lodging allowance method and the actual expense method of reimbursement concurrently. They must only use one reimbursement method per day.

Agencies may not include conference administrative costs in an employee's per diem allowance payment for attendance at a conference. Per diem is intended only to reimburse the attendee's subsistence expenses. Agencies must pay conference registration fees separately, either directly or by reimbursing employees who pay such expenses and submit travel claims.

Special Requirements For Sponsoring Or Funding A Conference

When an agency sponsors or funds, in whole or in part, a conference at a hotel, motel or other place of public accommodation in the United States, it must generally use an approved accommodation, except as provided below. This rule also applies to the government of the District of Columbia when it expends Federal funds for a conference and any non-Federal entity which uses Government funds to sponsor or fund a conference.

However, this rule can be waived if the head of an agency makes a written determination on an individual case basis that waiver of the requirement to use approved accommodations is necessary in the public interest for a particular event. The agency head may delegate this waiver authority to a senior agency official or employee who is given waiver authority with respect to all conferences sponsored or funded, in whole or in part, by the agency.

Advertisement Or Application Form For A Conference
Any advertisement or application for attendance at a conference must include a notice of the prohibition against using a non-FEMA approved place of public accommodation for conferences and a notice that the conference lodging allowance applies to Federal attendees, if applicable. In addition, any executive agency shall notify all non-Federal entities to which it provides Federal funds of this prohibition.

Special Rules For The District Of Columbia
In addition to these general rules, there are special rules that apply when a conference is held in the District of Columbia. The rules are that:

a. Agencies may not directly procure lodging facilities in the District of Columbia without specific authorization and appropriation from Congress; and
b. It is no longer mandatory that agencies contact GSA for meeting or conference facilities in the District of Columbia. However, agencies are encouraged to contact the GSA Public Buildings Service (PBS) of the National Capital Region to inquire about the availability of short-term conference and meeting facilities in the District of Columbia.

Note: This does not prohibit payment of per diem to an employee authorized to obtain lodging in the District of Columbia while performing official business travel.

Policies And Procedures For Selecting Conference Attendees
Agencies must establish policies that reduce the overall cost of conference attendance. The policies and procedures must:
a. Limit the agency's representation to the minimum number of attendees determined by a senior official necessary to accomplish the agency's mission; and
b. Provide for the consideration of travel expenses when selecting attendees.

Records Documenting Selection Of Conference Site
For each conference an agency sponsors or funds, in whole or in part for 30 or more attendees, the agency must maintain a record of the cost of each alternative conference site considered. Agencies must consider at least three sites. They must make these records available for inspection by their Office of the Inspector General or other interested parties.

M&IE Rate When Meals Are Provided At Nominal Cost By Government
When meals or light refreshments are furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or are included in the registration fee, the applicable M&IE is calculated as follows:

a. If meals are furnished, the appropriate deduction from the M&IE rate must be made.
b. If light refreshments are furnished, no deduction of the M&IE allowance is required.

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Pre-Employment Interview Travel

The purpose of the allowance for pre-employment interview travel expenses is to help agencies recruit highly qualified individuals. Agencies may pay pre-employment interview travel expenses, if they determine it is in the best interest of the Government to do so. However, pre-employment travel expenses may not be authorized to offset or defray other expenses not allowable under the regulations.

With respect to pre-employment interview travel policies and procedures, agencies must establish policies and procedures that govern:

a. When they will pay pre-employment interview travel expenses, including the criteria for determining which individuals or positions qualify for payment of such expenses;
b. Who will determine, in each individual case, that a person qualifies for pre-employment interview travel expenses; and
c. Who will determine what expenses will be paid for each individual interviewee.

Agencies must also:

a. Provide interviewees with a list of FEMA-approved accommodations in the vicinity of the interview, and encourage them to stay in an approved accommodation;
b. Inform the interviewee that he or she is responsible for excess cost and any additional expenses that he or she incurs for personal preference or convenience;
c. Inform the interviewee that the Government will not pay for excess costs resulting from circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations or services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business;
d. Assist the interviewee in preparing the travel claim;
e. Provide the interviewee with instructions on how to submit the claim; and
f. Inform the interviewee that he or she may subject himself or herself to criminal penalties if he or she knowingly presents a false, fictitious, or fraudulent travel claim.

Travel Expenses
Many agencies have questioned whether they must pay all of the interviewee's pre-employment interview travel expenses. The answer is that if the agency decides to pay the interviewee per diem or common carrier transportation costs, it must pay the full amount of such cost to which the interviewee would be entitled if the interviewee were a Government employee traveling on official business.

Travel Expenses Agencies May Pay
Agencies may pay the following pre-employment interview travel expenses:

a. Transportation expenses;
b. Per diem expenses;
c. Miscellaneous expenses; and
d. Travel expenses of an individual with a disability or special need.

Travel Expenses Agencies May Not Pay
Agencies may not pay pre-employment interview travel expenses for:

a. Use of communication services for purposes other than communication directly related to travel arrangement for the Government interview; and
b. Hire of a room at a hotel or other place to transact official business.

Using Common Carrier Transportation

Agencies have certain responsibilities when they authorize an interviewee to use common carrier transportation to perform pre-employment interview travel. Agencies must provide the interviewee with one of the following: a common carrier ticket; a GTR; or a point of contact with the agency's travel management center to arrange the common carrier transportation. If the agency chooses this last option – providing the interviewee with a point of contact - then the agency must notify the travel management center that the interviewee is authorized to receive a ticket for the trip.

The agency must also give the interviewee written instructions explaining the agency's procedures and the liability of the interviewee for controlling and accounting for passenger transportation documents, if common carrier transportation is required. Additionally, the agency must provide a credit/refund address for any common carrier transportation provided for unused government furnished tickets.

Agency Payment For Expenses

For common carrier transportation expenses (other than local transportation), agencies must bill the expenses to a centrally billed or other agency established account, or provide the traveler with a GTR when no other option is available or feasible. For other expenses, agencies must require payment by the interviewee and reimburse the interviewee for allowable travel expenses upon submission and approval of his or her travel claim.

Agencies may not allow the interviewee to use individual Government contractor-issued charge cards for pre-employment interview travel.

If the interviewee exchanges the ticket he or she has been issued, and the new ticket is more expensive than the ticket the agency provided, then the agency will inform the traveler that he or she must pay the difference using personal funds and will not receive reimbursement for the extra amount. If the interviewee exchanges the ticket he or she has been issued, and the new ticket is less expensive than the ticket the agency provided, then the agency will provide the interviewee with a credit/refund address by attaching a copy of the GTR, or some other document containing this information, to either the ticket or the travel authorization.

Providing Interviewees With Travel Advances Or Travelers Checks

Agencies may not provide the interviewee with a travel advance. In addition, agencies may not use Government contractor-issued travelers checks to pay for the interviewee's travel expenses.

Interviewees' Submission Of A Travel Claim

Interviewees generally are not required to submit a travel claim to the agency. The only circumstance in which the interviewee must submit a travel claim is if he or she wants to be reimbursed. In that case, the interviewee must submit a travel claim in accordance with agency procedures in order to receive reimbursement for pre-employment interview travel expenses.

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Accepting Payment Of Travel Expenses From A Non-Federal Source

This chapter explains the rules governing when an agency may accept payment for travel expenses from a non-Federal source for employees to attend meetings. It also describes how such payments must be accepted by the agency for travel of agency employee(s) and/or his or her spouse for official Government travel. In general, advance agency approval is required to receive such payments.

An agency or employee may accept payment for travel expenses to a meeting from a non-Federal source, but an employee may only accept when the agency specifically authorizes such acceptance. In most instances, the agency must approve acceptance of such payments in advance of the employee's travel.

An agency or employee may accept payments other than cash from a non-Federal source for all of the employee's official travel expenses to attend a meeting of mutual interest, or any portion of those travel expenses mutually agreed upon between the agency and the non-Federal source. For the most part, an employee may not accept payments for travel that is not to attend a meeting. However, the employee may be able to accept payments under other authorities, as explained later in this chapter.

Soliciting Payment Of Travel Expenses
Employees may not solicit payment for travel expenses from a non-Federal source to attend a meeting. However, an employee or agency may inform a non-Federal source of the agency's authority to accept payment for travel expenses to attend a meeting.

Non-Federal Source Offers To Pay Travel Expenses
If an employee is contacted directly by a non-Federal source offering to pay any part of his or her travel expenses to attend a meeting, the employee must inform the agency, so that the authorized agency official can determine whether to accept the payment.

Accommodations When Non-Federal Source Pays For Travel
If the payment or ticket was paid in full directly by the non-Federal source or reimbursed to the agency by the non-Federal source, the provisions of the Fly America Act do not apply.

An employee may use business class accommodations when a non-Federal source pays in full for the employee's transportation expenses to attend a meeting, as long as the agency authorizes the employee to do so. Generally, an employee may not use first-class common carrier accommodations unless he or she receives agency authorization and meets one of the criteria for first class travel (such as when no coach or business-class accommodations are reasonably available; when required by the agency's mission; when use is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need; when exceptional security circumstances require first-class travel; or when foreign coach-class accommodations are inadequate).

As a general matter, an employee is limited to the maximum subsistence allowances (per diem, actual expense, or conference lodging) prescribed in applicable travel regulations for travel expenses paid by a non-Federal source. However, acceptance of payment for, and when applicable, reimbursement by an agency to an employee and the employee's accompanying spouse are not subject to the maximum per diem or actual subsistence expense rates when traveling in CONUS or in non-foreign areas under the following conditions:

a. The non-Federal source pays the full amount of the subsistence expense, as authorized by the agency; and
b. The subsistence expense paid by the non-Federal source is comparable in value to that offered to or purchased by other meeting attendees; and

c. The agency has approved acceptance of payment from the non-Federal source prior to the employee's travel. If the agency has not approved any acceptance from the non-Federal source, the employee may not exceed the maximum allowances.

Note: The maximum subsistence allowances established by the Secretary of State for travel to foreign areas may not be exceeded.

Advance Approval By The Agency

As stated above, employees generally must receive advance approval from their agency before performing travel that is paid for by a non-Federal source to attend a meeting. However, there are a few exceptions to this general rule.

In some cases, an employee may have already begun traveling to a meeting when a non-Federal source offers to pay for one or more of the employee's travel expenses without the employee's or the agency's prior knowledge. If the agency has already authorized acceptance of payment for some of the employee's travel expenses for that meeting from a non-Federal source, then the employee may accept on behalf of the agency, payment for any of the employee's additional travel expenses from the same non-Federal source as long as the expenses paid or provided in kind are comparable in value to those offered to or purchased by other similarly situated meeting attendees, and the agency did not decline to accept payment for those particular expenses in advance of the employee's travel.

If the agency did not authorize acceptance of any payment from a non-Federal source prior to the employee's travel, then the employee may accept, on behalf of the agency, payment from a non-Federal source:

a. Only the types of travel expenses that are authorized by the employee's travel authorization (i.e., meals, lodging, transportation, but not recreation or other personal expenses); and
b. Only travel expenses that are within the maximum allowances stated on the employee's travel authorization (e.g., if the travel authorization states that the employee is authorized to incur lodging expenses up to $100 per night, the employee may not accept payment from the non-Federal source for a $200 per night hotel room.

The employee must request the agency's authorization for acceptance from the non-Federal source within 7 working days after the trip ends.

If the agency does not authorize acceptance from the non-Federal source, the agency must either reimburse the non-Federal source for the reasonable approximation of the market value of the benefit provided, not to exceed the maximum allowance stated on the employee's travel authorization, or require the employee to reimburse the non-Federal source that amount and allow the employee to claim that amount on his or her travel claim for the trip.

Employees who accept payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses in violation of the travel rules may be subject to penalties, as discussed below.

Non-Federal Source Offers To Pay For Accompanying Spouse

A non-Federal source may pay for an employee's spouse to accompany the employee when it is in the interest of, and authorized in advance by, the agency. The same limitations and requirements apply to the acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses and/or agency reimbursement of travel expenses for an accompanying spouse.

The agency may determine that the spouse's presence at an event is in the interest of the agency if the spouse will:

1. Support the mission of the agency or substantially assist the employee in carrying out his or her official duties
2. Attend a ceremony at which the employee will receive an award or an honorary degree
3. Participate in substantive programs related to the agency's programs or operations.

Reporting Requirements
Agencies are required to submit to the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) a semiannual report (SF 326) of all payments it accepts for travel from a non-Federal source. Employees must be prepared to give their agency the information it needs in order to submit its report.

Reimbursement Claims
When a non-Federal source pays all or part of an employee's travel expenses to attend a meeting, the employee must submit a travel claim listing all allowable travel expenses he or she incurred that were not paid in kind by a non-Federal source. Employees should not claim travel expenses that were furnished in kind by a non-Federal source. The employee's reimbursement is limited to the types of expenses authorized by the Federal Travel Regulation or analogous provisions of the Joint Travel Regulations or Foreign Affairs Manual. Reimbursement from the agency for expenses will not in any case exceed the amount of the expenses the employee incurs. Such reimbursement will also adhere to established regulatory limitations except where the agency accepts payments under 41 C.F.R. sections 304-5.4, 304-5.5 or 304-5.6.

Reports
An employee who is required to file a confidential or public financial disclosure report is generally not required to report travel payments he or she receives from a non-Federal source on that report. As long as the payments the employee receives from a non-Federal source are made to, or on behalf of, the employee's agency, the employee is not required to report them as gifts on any confidential or public disclosure report the employee is personally required to file pursuant to law or Office of Government Ethics (OGE) regulations. However, the employee may be required to report any such payments received on his or her own behalf, or on the behalf of an accompanying spouse, rather than on the agency's behalf, pursuant to other reporting requirements (e.g., those required by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978).

Penalties
If an employee accepts payment from a non-Federal source in violation of the Federal Travel Regulation, the employee may be required, in addition to any other penalty provided by law and applicable regulations, to pay the general fund of the Treasury an amount equal to any payment the employee accepted. In the case of reimbursement, the employee will not be entitled to any reimbursement from the Government for travel expenses that the payment was intended to cover.

Relation To Other Authorities
Employees may also accept payment of travel expenses from a non-Federal source under the following authorities:

a. Under 5 U.S.C. 4111 for acceptance of contributions, awards, and other payments from tax-exempt entities for non-Government sponsored training or meetings (see regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management at 5 C.F.R. part 410);
b. Under 5 U.S.C. 7342 for travel taking place entirely outside the U.S. that is paid by a foreign government, where acceptance is permitted by the agency and any regulations that may be prescribed by the agency;
c. Under 5 U.S.C. 7324(b) when payment is for travel to be performed for a partisan rather than an official purpose in accordance with the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 7321-7326); or
d. Pursuant to the applicable standards of ethical conduct regulations concerning personal acceptance of gifts. For example, 5 C.F.R. 2635.204(e) authorizes executive branch employees to accept gifts based on outside business employment relationships. (Note: The employee may also be able to accept attendance at – but not other travel expenses to – a widely attended gathering under 5 C.F.R. 2635.204(g)(2) when the gathering is not a meeting and the employee is not attending in his or her official capacity.)