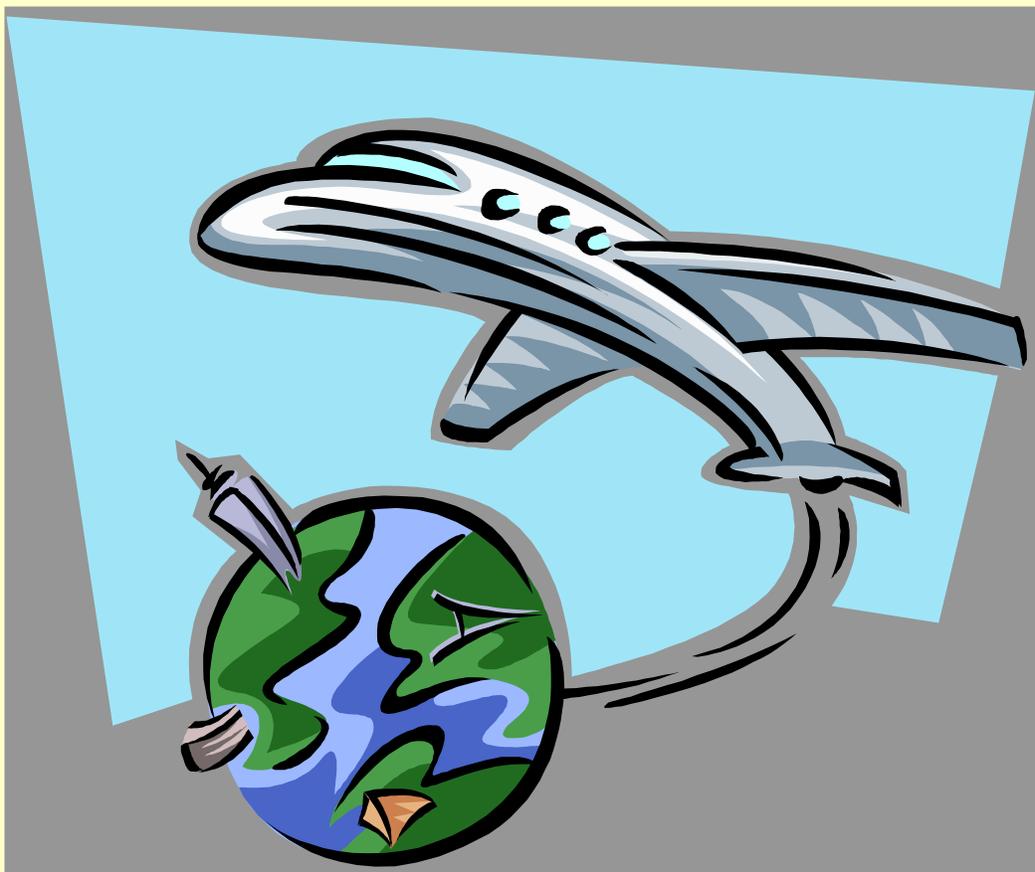


FSA/FAS TRAVEL POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL



SEPTEMBER 2003

INTRODUCTION

This Manual constitutes travel policy and procedures for all Farm Service Agency (FSA) Federal and non-Federal county office employees and Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) employees who conduct official travel. It provides policy and procedure unique to both FSA and FAS. The Manual expands on travel policy contained in both the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) and Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR), which are the basis for travel management policies and procedures, as well as Comptroller General (CG) and General Services Board of Contract Appeals (GSBCA) decisions on temporary duty and relocation travel.

The policy and procedures in Parts 1 through 9 in this Manual pertain to official travel in CONUS (Continental United States) and non-foreign areas (Alaska, Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories and possessions of the U.S., excluding the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands). Parts 10 and 11 set forth general guidelines and administrative requirements for international travel, passports, and visas.

Since the Manual deals with straightforward rules and regulations, routine travel questions and clarification of travel policy should be directed to supervisors/approving officials. Issues and circumstances that are "unusual," or that pose particular difficulties, should be referred (preferably in writing) to the Accounting and Travel Policy Section (ATPS) of the Financial Management Division (FMD) or State Office Administrative Officers. Questions concerning international travel should be directed to the International Travel Section (ITS) of FAS.

Employees will be notified of changes to this Manual via FI Notice. Following issuance of the FI Notice, the web-based version of the Manual will be updated.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this Manual, please contact ATPS at (703) 305-1408.

September 2003

/s/ John Williams

*John Williams
Deputy Administrator for Management*

Revision to FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedure Manual

Major Changes

1. All references to FSA Federal employees and non-Federal county office employees have been changed to read "GS" and "CO," respectively.
2. All references to Executive Director for State offices (EDSO) have been changed to Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO).
3. Part 1, Paragraph 1B, Forms Required, was revised to reflect change in usage of AD-202s by CO and COC employees. Also under the "Note" paragraph, references to both Paragraph J, When to Prepare AD-202s, and Paragraph K, Post Approval of AD-202s, were added.
4. Part 1, Paragraph 1D, Travel During Non-Duty Hours, reference to Notice PM-2033 has been deleted and paragraph has been revised to direct GS and CO employees to refer to Handbook 32-PM for overtime administration.
5. Part 1, Paragraph 1H, Travel to Resort Areas, was deleted.
6. Part 1, Paragraph 1H, added new paragraph for payment of travel expenses for "Interview Travel."
7. Part 1, Paragraph 1K, Responsible Agency, the reference to Karen Bretthauer as an FSA contact for the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS) vendor tables has been deleted. James Flowers and Luedella Dickens have been added as FFIS vendor tables contacts for FAS. A "Note" was added concerning the update of vendor files for new hires and casual employees.
8. Part 1, Paragraph 2B, Types of AD-202s and Who Uses Them, in the table under "Type B," the comment regarding routine travel/Type C authorization was moved from the "Definition" column to the "Is Used By" column. Also, under "Type L," the reference to "covering all employees within the issuing office" was deleted. Following the table, a "Note" was added concerning periods of continuing resolutions.
9. Part 1, Paragraph 2C, Numbering AD-202, the tables have been annotated for both FSA GS and CO employees. The authorization number formats for FSA CO and FAS employees.
10. Part 1, Paragraph 2F, Accounting Classification Codes, the tables have been annotated for both FSA GS and CO employees and the accounting classification code formats have been revised.
11. Part 1, Paragraph 2G, Approving Authorities (FSA), revisions were made to the table of approving authorities.
12. Part 2, Paragraph 1B, Use of Other Travel Agencies Prohibited, emphasized use of TMCs by all GS and CO employees.
13. Part 2, Paragraph 3A, General Rule - Mandatory Use, revised to include information on use of alternate airports from Notice FI-2478, Selecting Alternative Airports With Higher City-Pair Airfares.

September 12, 2003

Major Changes, *continued*

14. Part 2, Paragraph 3E, Free Companion Tickets, was deleted.
15. Part 2, Paragraph 4B, Policy on Use, added notes about using frequent flyer benefits to upgrade to first and premium class travel.
16. Part 2, Paragraph 5A, Policy, revised paragraph to reflect use of frequent traveler benefits per the National Defense Authorization Act. Also updated last paragraph to allow traveler's office to use bonus goods earned on official travel.
17. Part 2, Paragraph 6F, added paragraph on GARS Charge for rental cars.
18. Part 2, Paragraph 7B, Obtaining a GFV, added reference to contacting Management Services Division (MSD) for questions on use of GFV.
19. Part 2, Paragraph 9B, Mileage Rates, updated table to reflect new POV rates effective 1/1/03.
20. Part 2, Paragraph 9E, Accidents While Using POVs, added new paragraph with information concerning accidents while using POVs for official travel.
21. Part 2, Paragraph 10, added new paragraph on reimbursement of local travel from Notice FI-2541, Reimbursing Employees for Official Local Travel (FSA Only).
22. Part 2, Paragraphs 10A, Mileage Claims Definitions, 10D, Actual Mileage, and 10F, Employees Assigned to Multiple Offices, were incorporated into new Paragraph 10, Reimbursement of Local Travel.
23. Part 2, Paragraph 11B, Fixed Mileage, deleted reference to "CMC members" in the second paragraph concerning actual mileage.
24. Part 2, Paragraph 11C, Flat Rate Allowance, deleted "unit rate basis" in first sentence. Reference to "FSA-513" in second paragraph was deleted.
25. Part 3, Per Diem, reference to the term "CONUS" has been changed to read Continental U.S. (CONUS) which includes the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia and the term "OCONUS" has been changed to Non-Foreign Areas Outside CONUS (Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Possessions of the U.S.) per request of FMD/Financial Systems and Procedures Branch.
26. Part 3, Paragraph 2A, Eligibility, added sentence to preclude payment of per diem travel of over 12 hours if within ODS limits.
27. Part 3, Paragraph 2B, Per Diem Within the Vicinity of the ODS, deleted old paragraph and incorporated information on per diem into new paragraph.
28. Part 3, Paragraph 3C, When Does Per Diem Entitlement Begin and End, added sentence that departure and arrival times are based on standard time in effect at the place where travel begins and ends.
29. Part 3, Paragraph 3E, Computing the M&IE Allowance, added reference to \$50 M&IE rate.

Major Changes, *continued*

30. Part 3, Paragraph 4D, Deductions from M&IE, added \$50 M&IE rate to deductions table.
31. Part 3, Paragraph 6B, added paragraph on FPLP.
32. Part 3, Paragraph 7A, General Policy, revised the first sentence to read “All employees,” not just “Federal employees.”
33. Part 4, Paragraph 1B, Who Can Authorize Actual Subsistence, added reference to both GS and CO employees in first sentence.
34. Part 4, Paragraph 1C, AD-202/AD-616 Requirements, added reference to “Section A, Block 14” of the AD-616 for post-approval of actual expense.
35. Part 5, Paragraph 1B, added paragraph on Procuring Transportation Without a Government-Provided Travel Charge Card.
36. Part 5, Paragraph 2, Government Travel Charge Cards, updated per Notice FI-2428, Mandatory Use of Government Provided Travel Charge Card.
37. Part 5, Paragraph 2E, How to Obtain a Travel Charge Card, information has been added in regard to obtaining the Bank of America Application.
38. Part 5, Paragraph 2I, Charge Card Contractor Notification Procedures, “circumstances other than bank error” has been added to the last sentence in the fourth paragraph concerning cancellation of accounts.
39. Part 5, Paragraph 3B, GVTS in USDA, a note was added concerning updating vendor tables for new hires and casual employees.
40. Part 5, Paragraph 5B, When Cash Should Be Used, added “gasoline and other variable expenses” with note that reflects change in policy regarding use of the government-issued travel charge card for purchase of gasoline for POV.
41. Part 5, Paragraph 6G, Repayment of Travel Advances, in the first sentence of the last paragraph, added “at least every 30 days” for filing travel vouchers and added “advance issued by the National Finance Center (NFC) or received through the COE system” in the second sentence.
42. Part 6, Paragraph 1C, Which Form to Use, revised paragraph to reflect forms usage by GS and CO employees.
43. Part 6, Paragraph 1E, incorporated information from Notice FI-2426 on Payment of Late Fees.
44. Part 6, Paragraph 2F, Distributing Copies of AD-616, deleted reference to “National Office FSA employees.”
45. Part 6, Paragraph 2G, Record Retention, added reference to National Archives General Records Schedule.
46. Part 7, Paragraph 1, Telephone Calls, revised to reflect change in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer policy regarding phone calls for FSA employees only.

Major Changes, *continued*

47. Part 8, Paragraphs 1B, Basic Rule, and 1C, Exceptions to the 50-Mile Rule, added information from FTR amendment 98.
48. Part 8, Paragraphs 3B, Approving Officials, and 4B, Entitlements for New Appointees, added reference to Handbook 27-PM for CO employees.
49. Part 8, Paragraph 4C, added paragraph on relocation entitlements for GETA.
50. Part 8, Paragraph 5D, Reimbursement, added statement that lodging taxes incurred on house-hunting trips should be claimed as a miscellaneous expense on Form AD-616 and other expense on Form FSA 164-3.
51. Part 8, Paragraph 6F, Reimbursement, added statement that lodging taxes incurred on enroute travel should be claimed as a miscellaneous expense on Form AD-616 and other expense on Form FSA 164-3.
52. Part 8, Paragraph 7E, Contact, added information on contact for household goods shipment.
53. Part 8, Paragraph 8B, Basic Rules/Requirements, revised second bullet to read “50 or more miles” in accordance with FTR amendment 98.
54. Part 8, Paragraph 8E, Reimbursement, added statement that lodging taxes for temporary quarters are not claimed as a “miscellaneous” or “other” expense on the AD-616, they are part of the “daily lodging” expense.
55. Part 8, Paragraph 9B, Dollar Limitations, table was updated to reflect new miscellaneous rates per FTR amendment 98.
56. Part 8, Paragraph 10E, Time Limitations, revised time limitation for real estate transactions per FTR amendment 98.
57. Part 8, Paragraph 12C, When to File RITA Claims, advised employees to file RITA claim by August 31 of applicable year.
58. Part 9, Paragraph 1B, Meetings With Most Attendees from Washington, D.C., 2A, Cost Benefit Analysis, and 2B, Office of the Secretary Approval, were deleted due to changes in requirements for conferences and meetings.
59. Part 9, Paragraph 2C, Light Refreshments, added reference to Comptroller General decisions that authorize light refreshments only for employees in travel status.
60. Part 10, Paragraph 1C, Advance Notification of International Travel, a “special note” was added after the first paragraph to notify employees of a change in the mandatory method for requesting a passport or visa.
61. Part 10, Paragraph 1D, Approval of Foreign Travel for FAS Employees, a reference to Notice FI-2553, Approving Foreign Travel for FSA Employees, was added.
62. Part 10, Paragraph 2B, How to Obtain Country Clearance, paragraph was revised and the format for preparing a clearance cable was added per FAS.

Major Changes, *continued*

63. Part 10, Paragraph 3, Required Security Briefing, new paragraph added per FAS.
64. Part 10, Paragraph 6, Excess Baggage, revised per FAS.
65. Part 10, Paragraph 7, Premium Class Travel, website revised per FAS.
66. Part 10, Paragraph 8, Fly America Act, website revised per FAS.
67. Part 10, Paragraph 9, Immunizations, website revised per FAS.
68. Part 10, Acceptance of Travel Payment from Non-Federal Sources, web site revised per FAS.
69. Part 10, Paragraph 11A, International Travel with FAS-Funded Authorizations, sentence added for Foreign Service personnel per FAS.
70. Part 10, Paragraph 12, TDY Telephone Use and Reimbursement Policy (FAS Only), new paragraph added per FAS.
71. Part 11, paragraph added after “Part 11,” identifying FAS as the lead Foreign Affairs Agency within USDA.
72. Part 11, Paragraph 1, Requirements for a Government Passport, Department of State website for passport services added.
73. Part 11, Paragraph 2A, Forms Required to Obtain a Passport, new paragraph added on electronic IAPTTTS Passport/Visa request per FAS, websites under DSP-11 and DSP-82 revised, and statement added to end of paragraph on submission of DSP-82 per FAS.
74. Part 11, Paragraph 2C, Passport Photos, time for photos changed from 4 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. per FAS.
75. Part 11, Paragraph 2E, Requesting Birth Records, website revised per FAS.
76. Part 11, Paragraph 3B, Renewal, website revised per FAS.
77. Part 11, Paragraph 3C, Lost or Stolen Passport, website revised per FAS.
78. Part 11, Paragraph 3D, Name Change, new paragraph added per FAS.
79. Part 11, Paragraph 5A, Time and VISA Requirements, revision made to paragraph and website per FAS.
80. Part 2, Paragraph 3A, General Rule—Mandatory Use, revision made to first bullet.
81. Part 2, Paragraph 9, POVs, added 9E (Mileage Between Residence and Office on Day Official Travel is Performed can be Reimbursed when:).
82. All references to FSA-163 and 164 are deleted.

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PART 1: TRAVEL AUTHORIZATIONS

1 Getting Started

A. Things to Consider Before Authorizing Travel

Travel shall be authorized only when it is necessary to accomplish Agency operations effectively and economically. Approving officials are required to have a good working knowledge of travel policies and regulations and must consider:

- alternatives to travel; such as mail, fax, or teleconferencing
- the most economical means of travel considering transportation costs, per diem expenses, and salary expenses
- management of allocated travel funds

Note: The purely personal convenience or preference of the traveler is not a determining factor in authorizing travel or travel allowances.

B. Forms Required

All official temporary duty travel should be authorized on a travel authorization **in advance** of travel expenses being incurred. No other documents are sufficient to authorize travel expenses to be incurred, and authorizations are required for travel expenses to be reimbursed. The following forms are used to authorize official travel:

- AD-202 Travel Authorization/Advance for all GS employees
- AD-202 Travel Authorization/Advance for all CO employees and County Office Committee (COC) members as of October 1, 2003

Note: Verbal authorization does not constitute legal authority to travel. Employees traveling without the required AD-202 may not be reimbursed for expenses incurred during unauthorized travel (See Paragraph J, When to Prepare Travel Authorizations, and Paragraph K, Post Approval of Travel Authorizations). Travelers should carry a copy of the travel authorization while on official travel to ensure that they receive government rates for common carrier travel, rental cars, and hotel/motel accommodations. Refer to Paragraph 2, AD-202 Preparation, for information on preparing the AD-202.

C. Authorizing Actual Subsistence vs. Per Diem

Generally, per diem should be authorized for all non-local travel, in accordance with Part 3 of this Manual. Actual subsistence may be authorized at the time of travel if the per diem rate is inadequate. For additional information, guidance, and limits regarding the authorization of actual subsistence expenses, refer to Part 4, Reimbursement of Actual Subsistence Expenses. Employees attending conferences should refer to Part 9, Conferences and Meetings, for information regarding per diem for attendance at conferences.

D. Travel During Non-Duty Hours

As far in advance as possible, official travel should be planned and scheduled to prevent employees from having to travel during non-duty hours.

Both GS and CO employees should refer to Handbook 32-PM for Agency policy regarding overtime administration.

E. Traveler's Responsibilities -- *Prudent Person Rule*

Travelers are expected to exercise the same care in incurring government travel expenses as a prudent person would exercise when traveling on personal business. These types of excess costs are not authorized:

- indirect travel routes or enroute delays
- luxury accommodations
- unnecessary services

Employees are responsible for paying for the personal portion of indirect travel routes and enroute delays as well as excess costs resulting from luxury accommodations and unnecessary services.

F. Travel Which Combines Official and Personal Travel, Including Deviations from Authorized Method or Itinerary

The travel authorization should show only the official travel. Personal deviations from the official itinerary should **not** be shown on the authorization since it may cause personal travel to be mistakenly considered as part of the official travel.

Stops enroute to, from, or between points of official business for personal preference, regardless of whether leave is involved or not, should be justified. Traveler must receive advanced approval for these travel situations from their immediate supervisors and/or travel approving officials regardless of the type of travel authorization issued for the official trip.

It is recommended that the traveler identify these situations in the "remarks" section of the authorization or attach a memorandum to the authorization for approval by the approving official.

The travel voucher must show the actual travel performed including portions of personal travel and deviations. A comparative cost statement should be included as part of the voucher showing the cost of the actual travel as compared to the cost of the most direct travel. Reimbursement is limited to the actual cost or the estimated direct cost, whichever is less.

G. Travel During Which an Employee Takes Annual Leave

When the amount of leave for a trip is greater than one-half of the number of hours in the employee's work day and the leave time is after official travel begins or ends, it should be noted on the travel authorization. This will ensure that the approving official has sufficient information prior to approval. Refer to Part 3, Per Diem, for the effect of annual leave on per diem.

A more detailed explanation is required when the number of days of annual leave exceeds the number of days of official business, when the travel is to a resort area, or when the employee is deviating from the authorized itinerary or mode of transportation. This should be attached to the travel authorization when forwarded for approval.

For employees traveling on Type A, B, or N authorizations, leave should be noted on a copy of the authorization and attached to the travel voucher for that particular trip.

H. Interview Travel

Payment of travel expenses for interview travel is at the discretion of the Agency. Prior to authorizing travel, the procedures in Handbook 32-PM must be followed for approval of these expenses for GS employees and Handbook 27-PM, Paragraph 460, for CO employees.

I. When to Prepare AD-202s

AD-202s must be issued before travel begins. This is important because the authorization:

- provides the employee with a list of their authorized expenses
- protects the employee in the event of an accident or death by providing proof of official travel status
- may be used as a basis for obligating funds to cover anticipated expenses
- ensures the legal liability of the government to reimburse the employee

J. Post Approval of AD-202s

When urgency of travel or other extenuating circumstances make it impossible to issue an AD-202 in advance of travel, an AD-202 must be prepared at the earliest possible date and must contain a statement that the travel is post approved and the reason why prior approval was not possible.

K. Responsible Agency

For FSA employees, the division or office sponsoring or paying for the travel is responsible for preparing the AD-202. When employees travel for another Departmental agency, the agency paying for the travel is responsible for preparing and controlling the travel documents.

For FAS employees, special requirements, listed below, should be followed:

- When traveling for another agency or organization, the traveler's office prepares the AD-202 for appropriate FAS clearances, stating that all expenses (or which part) will be assumed by the agency or organization sponsoring the travel.
- When outside agency employees or non-government personnel are traveling for FAS, the sponsoring office within FAS is responsible for preparing the AD-202.

New hires, non-government personnel, employees from other government agencies, or any other personnel who are traveling for either FSA or FAS for the first time must be established in NFC's Travel System prior to processing a travel transaction with NFC. Appropriate offices should contact NFC's Travel and Transportation Section at 504-255-4878, prior to submitting the first AD-202, to establish the traveler in a supplemental name file. This will allow NFC to process transactions without delay. Offices should provide the following information on the traveler to NFC:

- traveler's full name
- traveler's social security number
- mailing address (home/agency)
- T&A contact
- accounting classification code

The above information can also be faxed to the Attention of the NFC Inquiry Supervisor at 504-255-5255; however, for a quicker response it is best to call NFC.

In addition, the Vendor Table in FFIS must be updated prior to submission of the first AD-202 and AD-616 for new hires, non-government personnel, employees from other government agencies, or any other personnel who are traveling for FSA or FAS. An e-mail containing the same traveler information required by NFC should be sent to:

- For FSA, Marsha Stevens (mlstevens@kcc.usda.gov)
- For FAS, James Flowers (james_flowers@fsa.usda.gov) or Luedella Dickens (luedella_dickens@fsa.usda.gov)

NOTE: Vendor tables should not have to be updated if new hires and casual (non-permanent) employees have already been added to the personnel files.

L. Expenses Which Must Be Explicitly Pre-Authorized

It is not expected that a traveler and/or approving official will be able to foresee all expenses that will reasonably be incurred on official business. However, some expenses are of such a nature (high cost or high *potential* cost or liability to the government) that they **must** be explicitly approved in advance on a AD-202. These include:

- transportation expenses for other than local travel (see Part 2, Making Travel Arrangements)
- use of a non-contract air carrier (on routes for which they exist) (see Part 2, Making Travel Arrangements)
- per diem or actual subsistence expenses (see Part 3, Per Diem, and Part 4, Reimbursement of Actual Subsistence)
- rental cars (see Part 2, Making Travel Arrangements)
- relocation expenses (see Part 8, Domestic Relocations)

M. Amending AD-202s

Previously established AD-202s should be amended to reflect changes or additions to that data. An AD-202 should be amended whenever estimated costs of a trip change by more than \$500, dates change by 5 days or more, itineraries change, significant expense items change, or items such as rental car or actual subsistence are approved after the fact.

In the event that scheduled trips are canceled, then the travel authorization for that trip must also be canceled.

2 AD-202 Preparation

A. Information Needed to Prepare AD-202

You need to know the following information to complete AD-202:

- AD-202 number
- travel purpose code
- Accounting Classification Code
- itinerary/estimated dates of travel
- estimated costs
- traveler's name and social security number
- Originating Office Number
- amount of cash advance

Step-by-step instructions for completion of AD-202s can be found in the **NFC Procedures Manual** (Title II, Chapter 2, Section 1, Travel System) dated September 1997.

B. Types of AD-202s and Who Uses Them

Type of Authorization	Definition	Is Used By
Unlimited open authorization (Type A)	An unlimited open authorization permits travel for any official purpose for the entire year. "Type A" authorizations are issued annually and are approved by the Secretary or the Under Secretary only.	The Administrator only .
Limited open authorization (Type B)	A limited open authorization is an authorization issued annually for employees required to perform frequent, routine, repetitive travel within a work related geographic area (foreign or domestic). This is called a "Type B" authorization.	STC, SED, DD, compliance specialist, Farm Loan Program employee, warehouse examiner, and similar positions requiring frequent, routine non-local travel within a specified work-related geographic area such as a state, county, region or district. For non-routine travel, a Type C authorization is required.
Trip-by-trip authorization (Type C)	A trip-by-trip authorization is an authorization issued for a specific trip that identifies purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs. This is the most commonly used type of travel authorization.	<p>All other travelers for trips with specific non-local itineraries, including permanent change of station.</p> <p>Travelers with Type B authorizations for travel outside the specified work-related geographic area.</p> <p>Note: Travelers with Type A/B/N authorizations that attend training and/or conferences.</p>

B. Types of AD-202s and Who Uses Them, *continued*

Type of Authorization	Definition	Is Used By
Local travel authorization (Type L)	A local travel authorization is an authorization to permit employees of offices to be reimbursed for local travel and related expenses (mileage, tolls, parking, etc.). Local travel is official travel conducted within the boundaries of the official duty station. "Type L" authorizations are issued annually, to be renewed at the beginning of each fiscal year.	Employees traveling within the area of their official duty station.
Nation-wide travel authorization (Type N)	A nation-wide travel authorization can be issued to an official who would qualify as a Type B traveler, except whose responsibilities require regular, nation-wide, travel. "Type N" authorizations are also issued annually and are approved by the traveler's approving official.	Deputy Administrators, Special Approving Officials, and those positions designated by Deputy Administrators in writing.

Type A, B, N, and L AD-202s can be completed on an annual basis.

Examples of AD-202's can be found in the **NFC Procedures Manual** (Title II, Chapter 2, Section 1, Travel System, dated September 1997).

Note: During a period when a continuing resolution is in effect, an FI Notice will be issued with instructions outlining which specific types of AD-202s should be used for both GS and CO employees until final appropriations are passed.

C. Numbering AD-202

A standard format consisting of 13 positions is used for numbering the AD-202. Each issuing office shall assign their own numbers using this numbering system.

Sample authorization number for FSA GS employees: **3CSFA02550001**

POSITION	FORMAT DESCRIPTION (FSA)
1st	Last digit of fiscal year.
2nd	Type of authorization: A - unlimited open travel B - limited open travel C - individual trips L - local travel N - nationwide travel
3rd	S - single traveler M - multiple travelers on a single authorization (Note: Used by FSA for local (Type L) travel authorizations only).
4 th -5th	2-position alpha-numeric agency code (FA for FSA). Note: The agency code must be the agency paying for the travel expenses if traveler is being reimbursed directly (as opposed to Agency being reimbursed via a transfer of funds).
6 th -9th	Budget organization code. Note: All offices except Farm Loan Program employees located in county offices use "0" plus the first three digits of the budget organization code. Farm Loan Program employees located in county offices use "A" plus the first three digits of the budget organization code. FSA employees should refer to Handbook 98-FI (Rev. 6) for budget organization codes.
10 th -13th	4-position sequential number, beginning with 0001 each fiscal year that is issued by the traveler's office. Use leading zeroes if the code is less than 4 positions (e.g., 0001, 0002, ...).

Sample authorization number for **FSA CO** employees: 3CSCESSCCCXXX

POSITION	FORMAT DESCRIPTION
1st	Last digit of the fiscal year
2nd	Type of authorization: B - limited open travel C - individual trips L - local travel
3rd	Number of travelers – use “S” for single traveler and “M” for multiple travelers
4th and 5th	Agency code “CE” for all County Offices
6th through 10th	The 2-digit State code and 3-digit county code
11th through 13th	Sequential number – begin with “001” and continue issuing numbers sequentially for remainder of FY

Example: 3CSCE40119001

Sample authorization number for **FAS** employees: **3CS1000933069**

POSITION	FORMAT DESCRIPTION (FAS)
1 st	Last digit of fiscal year
2 nd	Type of authorization: A - unlimited open travel B - limited open travel C - individual trips L - local travel N - nationwide travel
3 rd	S - single traveler M - multiple travelers on a single authorization
4th-7th	Agency code (1000 for FAS)
8th-9th	“9” plus last digit of fiscal year
10th-13th	4 position sequential number. Contact the International Accounting Branch (IAB) at 305-1257 for number. Indicate whether the travel to be performed is domestic or international.

Information regarding travel codes for FAS is contained in the Financial Accounting System Coding Manual.

D. Travel Purpose Codes

Show one of the following travel purpose codes on Type C authorizations.

If the purpose of travel is...	then the purpose code is...
A "site visit" to perform operational or managerial activities	01
An "information meeting" to discuss general operations	02
For "training"	03
To make a "speech or presentation"	04
To "attend a conference" for observation or education	05
For "relocation"	06
For "entitlement travel" for eligible service outside the continental U.S., such as tour renewal agreement travel.	07
A "special mission", such as a National defense emergency	08
For "emergency travel" from a temporary duty location to the location of the emergency.	09
"Other purposes"	10
"Pre-employment " interview travel	11
For "first post of duty" relocation expenses for new appointee	12
For "rest and recuperation"	13
For "educational" purposes	14
For "informal training"	15

E. Estimating Costs

Type A, B, C, and N AD-202s must show an estimated cost so that travel funds can be obligated. Estimated costs for Type C AD-202s must be broken down by these categories and calculated using actual rates, if known, as applicable:

- per diem or actual subsistence
- car rental
- other reimbursable costs (includes taxicabs, meeting rooms, special services, etc.)
- airfare, or other transportation costs
- POV mileage
- excess fare or baggage expenses

F. Accounting Classification Codes

All AD-202s for **FSA GS** employees must show the accounting classification code. The accounting classification code format consists of 14 digits:

Sample accounting classification code for **FSA GS** employees: 38405684010000

Digit	Description
1 st	Last digit of fiscal year
2 nd and 3 rd	Fund Code "84" only
4 th through 8 th	5-digit organization code
9 th and 10 th	2-digit sub-object code Note: Use sub-object codes 01 through 15 and 17 through 24, under BOC 2111 in Exhibit 27 of Handbook-98FI (Rev. 6).
11 th through 14 th	4-digit project code number. Always "0000" unless tied to a specific project.

The accounting classification format for **FSA CO** employees' travel documents beginning in FY 2003 is as follows:

Sample accounting classification code structure for **FSA CO** employees: Y87SSCCCXX0000

POSITION	EXPLANATION
Y	Last digit of the fiscal year.
87	Fund code to be used by all CO employees.
SS	Numeric state code.
CCC	Numeric county code.
XX	2-digit sub-object code. Note: Use sub-object codes 01 through 15 and 17 through 24, under BOC 2111 in Example 27 of Handbook 98-FI (Rev 6)
0000	All zeros and shall be used for all CO employees unless advised otherwise.

Example: 38740119010000

Note (FSA only): Listings of specific codes issued for each office are contained in Handbook 98-FI. Offices should ensure that 98-FI (Rev.6) or most recent version of the handbook is used.

Sample accounting classification codes for FAS: 301051304933069

First Field (3 digits)	Second Field (4 digits)	Third Field (2 digits)	Fourth Field (6 digits)
Last digit of fiscal year and 2 digit fund code (301)	Program area (0513)	Activity code (04)	Last 6 digits of travel authorization number (933069)

Note (FAS only): Information regarding FAS accounting classification codes can be found in the Financial Accounting System Coding Manual. Contact the International Accounting Branch (IAB) at (703) 305-1257.

G. Approving Authorities (FSA)

Travel authorizations/vouchers must be approved as summarized in this table.

Traveler	Authorization Approval Authority
Administrator	Secretary/Undersecretary
Associate Administrator	Administrator
Deputy Administrator	Administrator/Associate Administrator
Washington Division or Staff Director	Deputy Administrator
Washington Division or Staff employee	Division/Staff Director, Branch/Staff Chief
Director, KCAO, KCCO or APFO Director, KCFO Director, KCITSD or KCITST	Deputy Administrator Director, FMD Director, ITSD
KC office employee (includes KC employee in St. Louis offices)	Division Chiefs
KCCO, KCITSD, KCITST Division Directors	Director, KCCO, KCITSD, KCITST (Note: May redelegate to Deputy Directors)
APFO employee	Director, APFO

G. Approving Authorities (FSA only), *continued*

Traveler	Authorization Approval Authority
Chairperson, STC	DAFO (Note: Travel vouchers approved by the SED; may redelegate to the AO). Info copy of voucher must be sent to DAFO)
STC member, SED	Chairperson, STC (Note: Travel vouchers also approved by Chairperson, STC)
State office employee, other than SED (CONUS TDY) Note: Official travel outside of State or to contiguous State(s) does not require prior approval from DAFO	SED; may redelegate to AO (Note: Travel vouchers also approved by SED; may redelegate to AO)
Farm Loan Manager (CONUS TDY)	District Director (DD) (Note: Travel vouchers also approved by DD)
Federal credit employee (CONUS TDY)	DD may redelegate to Farm Loan Manager (Note: Travel vouchers also approved by DD may redelegate to FLM)
Non-USDA employee (Note: Payment of travel for pre-employment interview is at discretion of agency)	SED (Note: Requires prior clearance from DAFO) Travel voucher approved by SED; may redelegate to AO
Chairperson, COC	Chairperson, STC (Note: Travel voucher is approved by DD)
COC member	Chairperson, COC
CED	Chairperson, COC (Note: Travel voucher also approved by Chairperson, COC)
CO employee	Chairperson, COC; may redelegate to CED (Note: Travel vouchers also approved by Chairperson, COC; may redelegate to CED)

H. Authority for "Acting" Officials

Individuals formally designated as “acting” for any official designated above does not require a separate delegation of authority and acts with the authority of the office in which they are “acting.” The “acting” individual’s name, title, and social security number should be entered in the appropriate “approving officials” blocks on both the AD-202 and/or AD-616. Processing of the documents by the NFC system may require offices to establish these individuals in the NFC security system.

I. Distribution of Copies of AD-202

For FSA employees (domestic travel):

- Original for employee
- NFC, with travel voucher (if not using NFC on-line system)

For FAS employees (domestic travel):

- Original for employee
- Two copies for International Accounting Branch (STOP 0581)
- Issuing office until original is returned
- NFC, with travel voucher (if not using NFC on-line system)

PART 2: MAKING TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

1. TMCs

A. Definition

TMCs are regional travel agencies with Federal contracts to provide travel services to government employees conducting official travel. TMC's represent a portion of the Travel Management Systems concept implemented by GSA on January 1, 2001.

B. Use of Other Travel Agencies Prohibited

USDA is a mandatory user of the General Services Administration (GSA) travel management center program; therefore, it is **mandatory** that **all GS and CO** employees use the established TMC's to arrange for common carrier transportation, booking of hotel/motel accommodations, and rental cars. There are only three Departmental exceptions to this mandatory use:

- Any travel for which advance reservations are impractical; e.g., when a traveler is on the road and does not know where lodging will be needed.
- For travel situations where only a rental car is needed, travelers may deal directly with the appropriate company (see Paragraph 6).
- Hotel accommodations for a conference, seminar, etc., where the sponsoring organization has arranged for a special rate and ensured that the facility complies with the standards of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act.

No other travel agencies may be used to purchase travel services for official government travel. Using travel agents other than the established TMC for the ODS is a violation of the TMC's contract with the Federal Government and subjects the government to a suit for damages for breach of contract.

If use of the established TMC is not convenient due to time constraints or similar exigencies, common carrier services may be purchased directly from the common carrier using the traveler's government-issued charge card. **No other means of procuring common carrier services are permitted by law. (See Part 5, Sources of Funds, paragraph 1.)** Use of other means may result in a claim for reimbursement being denied.

C. Services Provided by TMCs

TMCs provide a complete range of travel services. These include:

- reservations and ticketing for travel via common carriers (air, rail, bus, ship)
- reservations for rental cars
- hotel/motel reservations and arrangements for conference facilities
- delivery of common carrier tickets
- reservations for bus transportation for groups
- periodic management reports on travel activity
- point of contact for Agency officials when problems arise.

2. Choosing Mode of Transportation

A. Most Advantageous Means

Government employees are generally required by law to use the most expeditious and cost-efficient means of transportation in conducting official travel. Usually (though not always), this will be the use of a common carrier. Other means of transportation, such as use of POV and the payment of mileage, may be authorized if it is considered advantageous **to the Agency**, and the total cost will be less than that incurred through the use of a common carrier. The personal preference/convenience of the traveler is not an issue to be considered except when documented medical considerations are at issue. Deviations from the most advantageous means must be specifically approved on the travel authorization. Any applicable "excess" expenses as well as time charges to leave must be borne by the traveler.

3. Government Contract Fares

A. General Rule -- Mandatory Use

The Federal Government maintains contracts with common carriers for special government fares for travel between certain cities (city-pair fares). As a general rule, use of these fares, when available, is **mandatory** (for exceptions, see paragraph 3C). Failure to use contract fares when otherwise available is a violation of the applicable Federal contracts with the airlines, and may leave the government liable for damages for breach of contract.

In areas served by more than one airport, the airport that offers the lowest contract fare available generally must be used, unless the **approving official**, on a case-by-case basis, determines that use of the higher cost alternative airport is more advantageous to the government. Approving officials should use the following criteria when making this determination:

- There is no cost limitation between airports. Traveler is encouraged to use the airport most convenient to their home or office.
- departure time affects the performance of necessary work at the office before departure or planned work at the destination
- departure and/or arrival times unreasonably infringe on the employee's non-duty hours
- approving official determines that other factors make the higher cost airport more advantageous

In cases where a higher cost alternative airport is approved, the "remarks" section of the travel authorization must contain the following statements:

- the lowest fare airport (name of airport), fare amount is \$\$\$
- the alternate airport (name of airport), fare amount is \$\$\$
- the alternate airport is authorized as more advantageous to the government

It is incumbent upon the approving officials to document this determination and the traveler should not make the reservation for the higher fare airport until the approving official authorizes such use on the approved travel authorization. Failure to document and receive authorization for the higher fare airport may result in the traveler being disapproved for reimbursement of the increased cost. Approving officials will be held accountable for their actions and decisions in these matters.

County offices should contact State offices for information about the availability of contract carriers.

B. Prohibited For Personal Use

Government contract fares are available **only** for official government travel or those portions of a complete trip that are for official government purposes. They may **not** be used by employees for **personal** (non-official) reasons. Employees are liable, at the commercially-available fare, for any portions of a trip that are non-official. Charges for these portions of a trip must be charged directly to an employee's *personal* credit card -- not their government-issued charge card.

Note: See also Part 1, paragraph 1 re: the issues that may properly be considered when arranging for official travel.

C. Exception Codes

Employees may be authorized to fly on a non-contract carrier **only** under the 5 exceptions listed below. The non-use code justifying the exception **must** be approved on the travel authorization and the travel claim forms. **The mere convenience or preference of the traveler is not a consideration under the regulations.** The exception codes are:

- 01: Seating space on the scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel, or use of contract service would require an employee to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip; or
- 02: The contract's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of individual Federal departments and agencies or other mandatory users of scheduling employee travel during normal working hours. (**Note: Policy on the use of this exception code requires authorizing officials to exercise discretion in determining whether or not to reasonably require individual employees to travel during non-duty hours in specific circumstances.**)
- 03: 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 -- including the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses. (**Note: This exception does NOT apply if the contract carrier(s) 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 GTR or government-issued credit card.**)
- 04: Rail service is available, and such service is cost effective and is consistent with the mission.
- 05: Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to the traveler.

D. Use of *Super Saver* or Other Special Fares

The use of a non-contract fare/carrier and/or the use of *Super Saver* or other special, restricted, or limited fares should be used only when it is certain that the trip will not be changed.

Use of a restricted fare **must** be specifically authorized on the travel authorization for one of the reasons cited in subparagraph C on page 2-3 above. The SED must authorize these fares in advance for county office travel.

The travel authorization must include a statement to the effect that the employee is liable for any penalties incurred if the restricted fare is not used, unless caused by Agency-directed changes in travel plans **after** the authorization is approved.

The use of *Super Saver* or other special, restricted, or limited fares may be authorized only in the best interests of the government, and when one of the circumstances in subparagraph C are present. An employee's personal interests (i.e., wants to bring a spouse/child/friend, etc., on the trip, wants to combine business and personal travel, etc.) are not the government's concern and do not provide adequate justification for the approval of a non-contract flight or carrier.

E. Commercial Transportation Ticket Distribution for National Office Employees

The International Services Branch of Foreign Agricultural Affairs is responsible for releasing commercial transportation tickets to National Office employees. ATPS of FMD will continue to control and approve prepaid and special circumstance transportation tickets for FSA personnel only. Employees must use electronic or E-tickets to the maximum extent possible when conducting official travel.

4. Airplane Accommodations

A. Classes of Airline Accommodations

Classes of airline accommodations as defined in the FTR are:

- *Coach-class* - the basic class of accommodations offered to travelers that is available to all passengers regardless of the fare paid. This term applies when an airline offers two or more classes of accommodations, which includes tourist or economy class.
- *Premium-class* - any class of accommodations above coach-class, e.g., first-class or business-class.
- *First-class* - the highest class of accommodations on a multiple-class airline flight. **When an airline flight only has two classes of accommodations, the higher class, regardless of the term used for that class, is considered to be first class.**
- *Premium-class other than first-class* - any class of accommodations between coach-class and first-class accommodations, e.g. business class.
- *Single-class* - this term applies when an airline offers only one class of accommodations to all travelers.

B. Policy on Use

For official business travel, both domestic and international, an employee must use **coach-class** accommodations.

First-class airline accommodations may be used **only** when one of the following conditions exist and the agency specifically authorizes the use of first-class:

- No other coach class or premium class other than first class accommodation is reasonably available (reasonably available means available on an airline that is scheduled to leave within 24 hours of an employees proposed departure time, or scheduled to arrive within 24 hours of an employee's proposed arrival time).
- When use of first-class is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special needs that is substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. First-class travel may also be authorized for an attendant accompanying an employee, if the employee requires the attendant's service enroute.
- First class accommodations are required for security purposes or because special circumstances make their use essential.

Note: Employees may upgrade to first class at their own personal expense, including through the redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

Business or other comparable class accommodations may be used when:

- Coach class accommodations are not available and the travel is so urgent it cannot be postponed
- The traveler is severely disabled and cannot use coach class accommodations
- Business class accommodations are required for security purposes or because special circumstances make their use essential
- Coach class accommodations on foreign carriers do not provide adequate health or sanitation standards
- The use of business class accommodations will result in an overall savings to the government
- Business class accommodations are obtained through the redemption of frequent traveler benefits
- Where the origin and/or destination are non-foreign areas outside the continental U.S. 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 enroute or a rest period upon arrival at the duty station)

C. Approval of Premium-Class Airline Accommodations (FSA Only)

Only General Officers of the Department may approve premium-class travel for FSA employees. Employees may upgrade to premium class at their personal expense, including through the redemption of frequent flyer benefits.

FAS employees should refer to Part 10, Paragraph 4 for policies and procedures regarding premium-class travel.

5 Bonus Goods/Frequent Traveler Benefits

A. Policy

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2002, signed into law on December 28, 2001, contained a provision which allowed Federal employees to retain and make personal use of promotional items such as frequent flyer miles, upgrades, or access to carrier clubs or transportation, earned while on official government travel under the following conditions:

- The promotional items must be obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at no additional cost to the government.
- Applies to both former and current Federal employees and includes all benefits earned before, on, or after December 28, 2001.
- Use of TMCs remains mandatory. Travelers cannot use travel service providers other than the TMC in order to gain frequent traveler benefits for personal use.
- Since it is the policy of the government that employees generally must travel by coach class accommodations and the government cannot pay for any upgrades unless the traveler meets one of the exceptions to the travel regulations. Employees, however, may use frequent traveler benefits to upgrade the transportation class of service at their own expense. Employees who wish to upgrade must first book a coach class ticket through the TMC utilizing the contract carrier and then personally handle the upgrade with the airline.
- It is the responsibility of each traveler to communicate directly with the airline to establish frequent travel promotional benefits accounts. Any associated costs are paid by the traveler and are not a reimbursable expense.
- The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) currently does not tax promotional benefits such as frequent flyer miles. This does not apply, however, to travel or other promotional benefits that are converted to cash, compensation that is paid in the form of travel or other promotional benefits or other instances where these benefits are used for tax avoidance purposes. Travelers should seek further guidance on these issues from either the IRS or a tax professional.

The law does not apply to situations where an employee is “NOT giving up a seat,” such as denied boarding due to a flight being oversold, flight delays, or transfers to another flight because of mechanical failures. Penalty payments or certificates received by the employee in these situations are **not** considered to be “promotional items” and must still be turned over to the government. Bonus goods that must be turned over to the Agency should be used by the office of the traveler who earned them to reduce that office's or division's future travel costs. If that office cannot use the benefit, it should be forwarded to FMD, who in turn, will use it to reduce other Agency travel costs. Unreported earned benefits or their use may subject an employee to disciplinary action or investigation by Department or Agency ethics officers.

Note: Questions regarding use of promotional items should be directed to the traveler's supervisor or approving official.

6. Rental Cars

A. When Authorized

The rental of cars and other vehicles may be authorized in the discretion of the approving official when it is **advantageous** to the government. Personal convenience of the employee alone is not adequate justification for the rental of a vehicle, unless medical documentation is provided.

To be reimbursed, rental car expenses must be expressly authorized on a travel authorization.

B. Federally Contracted Rental Agents - General Rule

A list of Federally contracted rental agents in certain cities may be obtained by contacting your TMC. For cities with Federally contracted agents, one of these agents **must** be used by employees on official travel. Using non-contracted agents in cities with contracted agents is a violation of the contracted agents' contract with the government and may subject the government to damages for a breach of contract. In cities without contracted rental agents, employees may use any available rental agent. Consideration should be given to availability and cost.

C. Benefits of Using Contracted Rental Agents

Under the terms of their Federal contracts, contracted rental agents must:

- provide a toll free “1-800” number for reservations/ emergency calls
- accept a Government-issued credit card
- rent to any Government employee on official travel who is 18 years of age or older
provide a safe, clean, and maintained vehicle that is no more than 2 years old and that has an odometer reading of no more than 40,000 miles.
- provide a full tank of gasoline
- provide shuttle service with a pick-up time not to exceed 15 minutes for off-airport locations
- accept cash for the estimated amount of rental time when a credit card is not used

A copy of the U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement can be found on the MTMC web site at <http://dcsop.mtmc.army.mil/travel/car>.

D. Employee Responsibilities

Employees who rent vehicles while on official travel must:

- be prepared to provide proof of official travel to the rental agent in the form of an approved travel authorization
- use the vehicle for official purposes only
- act prudently when operating the vehicle
- possess a valid driver's license

E. Reimbursable Costs Related to Rental Cars

Employees may be reimbursed for gasoline purchased and other applicable costs in the maintenance of the vehicle.

F. GARS Charge

Beginning October 1, 2002, car rental companies began charging a standard mandatory GARS of \$5.00 per day worldwide. This charge reimburses the rental car company for:

- those costs incurred which are peculiar to doing business with the government, including the application of the agreement terms and conditions on a worldwide basis
- the rental of vehicles to employees under age 25
- acceptance of properly licensed fellow government employees on official business as additional drivers
- guarantee of the maximum rates for at least 60 days

GARS will be paid by all renters and will be listed separately from the rates on the rental agreements.

G. Damage Waiver/Insurance Costs

The Federal Government is self-insured. Employees may **not** be reimbursed for the cost of a collision damage waiver or additional collision damage insurance for official travel conducted within the U.S. (including Alaska and Hawaii), Puerto Rico, or U.S. territories or commonwealths. If official travel is occurring in a foreign country, and foreign statute or legal procedures would cause extreme difficulties for government employees involved in an accident, employees may be reimbursed for the costs of additional collision damage insurance or collision damage waiver.

H. Accidents

If involved in an accident with a rental car:

- do not leave the scene
- summon the police, even in the event of a minor accident. The police will determine if a traffic violation should be issued and will ensure that the parties involved exchange appropriate information such as names, telephone and insurance numbers
- report the accident to the car rental company immediately
- contact your immediate supervisor
- complete and/or provide any reports or documents required by the rental car company, including police reports

Government renters are not subject to any fee for loss/collision damage waiver and in the event of an accident, will not be responsible for loss or damage to the vehicle except in one or more of the following cases:

- willful or wanton misconduct on the part of the driver
- obtaining the vehicle through fraud or misrepresentation
- driver is under the influence of alcohol or any prohibited drug
- use of the vehicle for any illegal purpose
- use of the vehicle in pushing or towing another vehicle
- use or permitting the vehicle to carry passengers or property for hire
- operation of the vehicle in a test, race or contest
- operation of the vehicle by a person other than an authorized driver
- operation of the vehicle outside of CONUS except where such use is specifically authorized by the rental agreement
- operation across international boundaries unless specifically authorized at the time of rental
- operation of the vehicle off paved, graded or maintained roads, or driveways, except when the rental company has agreed to this in writing beforehand

When loss or damage is a result of one or more of the above exceptions, the rental company will submit its bills directly to the employee's agency. If the agency denies liability on the basis that the employee was not operating the vehicle within the scope of employment at the time of the loss, the rental company may handle the matter directly with the employee.

7. GFVs (FSA Only)

A. Definition

GFVs are:

- vehicles owned by USDA, GSA or other Federal executive agencies
- vehicles leased commercially through agreements with car-leasing agencies
- commercially rented vehicles in the Agency's possession obtained through rental agreements

NOTE: As a general rule, dependents or non-government personnel are not allowed to ride in government-owned or leased vehicles. However, if approving officials determine otherwise, it must be done on a case-by-case basis after considering all factors involved, including liability to the Government.

B. Obtaining a GFV

Authorizing officials and employees shall comply with the guidelines set forth in Handbooks 30-AS and 31-AS for obtaining a GFV. Questions concerning the use of GFVs should be referred to the MSD. Kansas City complex employees should contact the Kansas City Finance Office.

8. Taxicabs, Shuttle Services, or Other Courtesy Transportation

A. Reimbursable Expenses

Taxicab fare plus 15 percent tip will be allowed for transportation:

- From the employee's home to office and from office to common carrier terminal on the day of departure on an official trip requiring at least 1 night's lodging, and from common carrier terminal to office and office to employee's home on the day of return from the official trip. (In lieu of taxicab, travelers may use a POV and be reimbursed for the round-trip mileage at the applicable POV mileage rate; refer to Paragraph 9B, Mileage Rates)
- Between a place of lodging and a place of business or between places of business at a TDY station (use of a cab for travel at the TDY site should be specifically authorized on the AD-202)
- 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

Convenience is not adequate justification for using a taxicab. Use of taxicabs should be restricted when:

- Suitable government or common carrier transportation service, including shuttle service, is available for all or part of the distance involved; or
- Courtesy transportation service is provided by hotels/motels between the place of lodging at the TDY station and the common carrier terminal. Tips to courtesy transportation drivers are allowed and should be limited to one dollar.

9. POVs

A. When Use of POV Is Authorized?

POV transportation may be authorized when such travel is:

- deemed advantageous to the government
- due to a personal preference of the employee, provided that adjustments are made to reimbursable expenses and employee's leave are made to cover additional costs incurred by the government due to excess travel time or costs, if any

Note: Using a POV to transport other employees is strictly voluntary. However, if the event that employee(s) travel in another employee's POV, mileage is payable only to one of the employees. No deduction is made from the mileage allowance if other passengers contribute to defraying expenses.

Only mileage driven by the employee and/or other government employee who is also on official travel is reimbursable when use of a POV is authorized due to personal preference of the employee.

If a POV is used instead of a common carrier because of personal preference, an employee is 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.

B. Mileage Rates

Mileage rates for POV use are as follows (effective 1/1/03):

Type of POV	Mileage rate
Automobile	36 cents per mile
Motorcycle	27.5 cents per mile
Private airplane	95.5 cents per mile

Note: GSA makes periodic changes to POV mileage rates. When changes occur, an FI Notice will be issued. The current mileage rates can also be found on the GSA website at: <http://www.policyworks.gov/perdiem>.

C. Mileage Rate Exceptions

Exceptions to the POV mileage rates for automobiles are as follows:

- If employee using a POV is previously committed to a GFV - 10.5 cents per mile

Example: An FSA office has a GFV, which is assigned to a particular employee due to the fact that this employee travels extensively by automobile on official business and it is advantageous to the government that this employee be assigned a GFV. This employee is considered to be "committed" to using this GFV and will ordinarily not be authorized to use a POV. However, if on occasion the employee is approved to use the POV for personal preference, the mileage rate for use of the POV would be 10.5 cents per mile.

- If a GFV is available - 28.5 cents per mile

Example: An FSA office has a GFV, which is not assigned to any one particular employee. Since no one is "committed" to this vehicle, it is then "available" and advantageous to the government to be used for official travel by another employee. If that employee is approved to use his/her POV, the mileage rate would be 28.5 cents.

- Employees designated as high-mileage drivers - 28.5 cents per mile. (Refer to Handbook 30-AS for information in regard to high-mileage drivers)

D. Additional Expenses

An employee using a POV may be reimbursed for the following expenses *in addition to* the mileage rate:

- parking fees (**Note:** Parking fees at a common carrier terminal cannot exceed the cost of taxi fare to/from the terminal)
- ferry fees
- bridge, road, and tunnel fees
- airplane parking, landing and tie-down fees

Note: Mileage rate reimbursements listed in Section 9B and 9C of this part cover all costs incurred in the operation of a POV such as insurance, gasoline, mechanical breakdowns, and wear and tear on the POV. The cost of these items may not be reimbursed as an additional expense.

E. Mileage Between Residence and Office on Day Official Travel is Performed can be Reimbursed When:

- you travel from your home to your office on the day you depart the office on an official trip requiring at least one night's lodging, and
- you travel from your office to your home on the day you return to the office from your trip.

NOTE: The information in Paragraph 9-E was referenced from the FTR 301-10-420, part C.

F. Accidents While Using POVs

If an employee is involved in an accident while using his or her POV when on official business performing duties, the government may be responsible for any tort liability, but generally not damages to the employee's personal vehicle since the mileage reimbursement by the government for use of POV includes costs for the employee's insurance to cover such occurrences. If the accident occurred during personal travel or on the weekend when not in official business status, the employee, not the government, would be responsible for any sort of liability.

An employee may file a claim under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act against the government for damages to, or loss of, property incident to the employee's service. Employees who use their POV's for official travel are encouraged to check their private insurance policies to ensure they are covered under these circumstances.

10. Reimbursement of Local Travel (FSA Only)

A. Reference

Policy for reimbursement of local travel expenses was removed from Handbook 97-FI and published in Notice FI-2541, Reimbursing Employees for Official Local Travel, dated 9/13/02.

B. Definition

Local travel is defined as official travel performed in the vicinity of the ODS. The following terms and definitions apply to local travel:

- *Limits of the ODS* - the corporate limits of the city or town where an employee is stationed **or** an established area around the ODS having definite boundaries. Approving officials are responsible for defining the limits of the ODS and ensuring employees are aware of the limits for travel purposes. **In the absence of such a definition by the approving official**, the limits of the ODS will be an area within a **50-mile** radius of the ODS.
- *ODS* - the location of an employee's permanent work assignment; i.e., the place where an employee is assigned administratively or functionally, whether it be the office that maintains the employee on payroll or provides the employee work space. This could be the county office to which an employee is assigned or if assigned to multiple county offices, it is the place where the employee performs the major part of his/her duties or spends the greater portion of his/her time. For a field employee, the ODS is **established by the CED**, after considering the major area of work. Unless specifically designated as such by DAFO/Human Resources Division (HRD), a residence **cannot** be designated as an ODS.
- *Official residence* - the home or abode from which the employee commutes daily to and from the ODS. Travel between an employee's residence and the ODS is not considered to be "official business" and employees may not be reimbursed mileage for expenses for travel between these locations regardless of the location, or whether regular, overtime, or call back overtime duty is performed.

B. Definition, *continued*

- *Travel headquarters* - designated place from where the employee begins official travel. Expenses may be reimbursed for travel beginning at this point. For most employees, the travel headquarters is the ODS; however, the travel headquarters may be established at a residence for employees who routinely travel to various TDY stations from the residence in order to reduce transportation costs, per diem payments, or the employees time away from duty. **NOTE:** Although management may designate an employee's residence as the travel headquarters (if advantageous to the government), **under no circumstances** can an employee be reimbursed for travel from the residence to the ODS, even if the residence is the travel headquarters.

C. Authority for Travel

Supervisors/approving officials are responsible for determining and authorizing the **mode** of transportation and departure point that is most advantageous to the government for local travel and conveying it to the employee. In most instances, POV will be cost advantageous; however, public transportation, if available, should be utilized. Taxicabs should not be used unless determined advantageous to the government. Personal convenience is not justification for use of a taxicab when other forms of mass transit are available. POV mileage is limited to the most direct, commonly traveled route unless unusual circumstances are cause for the approving official to otherwise authorize another route of travel.

D. Policy

The policy is to make its employees whole if they incur local travel expenses in excess of their normal commuting costs to and from their workplace. Employees should not incur additional cost or receive a windfall as a result of performing local travel.

E. Travel Within the Limits of the ODS

If an employee travels to a location **within the limits** of the ODS for training, meetings, or other official business, reimbursement is limited to those transportation costs that **exceed** the normal commuting costs and should be claimed as follows:

- If the employee normally commutes to the ODS using a POV, then the employee may only claim local travel expenses in excess of the normal POV commuting mileage, plus parking fees and tolls not normally incurred.
- If the employee normally commutes to a workplace using public transportation for which a charge per ride is assessed, then the employee may claim local travel expenses in excess of daily public transportation costs.
- If an employee normally commutes to a workplace using public transportation, a car pool, or van pool, where the employee pays on a weekly or monthly basis, whether the employee rides or not, then the employee may claim all local travel expenses since the employee paid the commuting cost already.

F. Examples of Travel Within the Limits of the ODS

- For travel that begins and ends at the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the ODS or vice versa, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds the normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, including travel to multiple sites within the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.

G. Travel Outside the Limits of the ODS

If the alternate duty point is not located within the limits of the ODS, then normal commuting costs are not deducted.

H. Examples of Travel Outside the Limits of the ODS

- For travel that begins and ends at the ODS, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/toll not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the ODS or vice versa, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, including travel to multiple sites (at least one of which is located outside the limits of the ODS), the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls not normally incurred.

I. Travel to Multiple Sites

For travel to multiple sites that are located both within and outside the limits of the ODS, the employee is reimbursed according to Paragraphs E and G above. This rule applies to all employees including GS and CO employees who are assigned to multiple offices.

11. Mileage Claims

A. Establishment of Travel Headquarters

For the majority of employees, the travel headquarters is the ODS. Travel headquarters at the employee's residence may be established for an employee who routinely travels to various TDY stations directly from the residence in order to reduce transportation costs, per diem, and the employee's time away from duty. Travel headquarters at the residence must not be established for employees who live within a reasonable commuting distance of their ODS or if it will increase mileage and per diem payments.

B. Fixed Mileage

Fixed mileage may be established and used for:

- COC members traveling between their homes and the county office. Established distances, based on commonly traveled routes, must be recorded in the county office files and established travel time may be used in accordance with Handbook 27-PM, subparagraph 699 B.
- CO employees making daily or frequently recurring official trips between the county office and fixed points, such as local businesses or other county offices. The State office should determine whether trips are justified. The established distances for these trips, based on commonly traveled routes, must be recorded in the county office files.

Actual mileage, based on odometer readings, shall be claimed by:

- COC members, if distances have not been established. If a trip is a combination of both established and non-established mileage, use odometer readings for the entire trip. The AD-616 should show non-established mileage or a combination of non-established and established mileage.
- Any employee who is not authorized either an established mileage or flat rate allowance. Employees under a flat rate allowance may not claim mileage in addition to the flat rate allowed for travel.

C. Flat Rate Allowance

A flat rate allowance for travel may be used for field employees paid on an hourly basis, who do not have an established tour of duty. This allowance:

- shall be in place of mileage, common carrier, or per diem.
- may be paid per day, per hour, per unit, or per trip.
- shall not prevent reimbursement for necessary supplies or other incidental expenses the traveler incurs.

A record should be placed in the employee's personnel folder showing the established rate, the method used to determine the rate, and necessary information to justify the rate. If the rate is the same for all employees or groups of employees, one record should be on file for each group. Flat rate allowances should be claimed on an AD-616.

PART 3: PER DIEM

1. General Information

A. Definitions

Familiarity with the following terms is helpful in understanding the rules governing per diem:

Term	Definition
Per Diem Allowance	A daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. This term is also referred to as subsistence allowance.
Lodgings-Plus Per Diem System	Method of computing per diem allowances for official travel in which the per diem allowance for each travel day is established on the basis of the actual amount the traveler pays for lodging, plus an allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE), the total of which does not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned.
CONUS	The 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia.
Non-Foreign Area	The States of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands and the territories and possessions of the U.S. (excludes the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands)
Foreign Area	Any area, including the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside CONUS and the non-foreign areas.
Locality Rates	Maximum per diem rates prescribed for specific geographic localities within CONUS.
Standard CONUS Rate	Per diem rate prescribed for any location within CONUS that is not included in one of the defined areas for which a specific rate is prescribed. The standard CONUS rate is \$85, comprised of \$55 for lodging and \$30 for M&IE.
Calendar Day	24-hour period beginning 1 second after midnight (reflected in this section as "12:01 a.m.") and ending at 12:00 midnight.

B. Types of Expenses Covered by Per Diem

The per diem allowance (also referred to as subsistence allowance) is a daily payment for lodging (excluding taxes), meals and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation expenses and other miscellaneous expenses and covers **all** charges, including any service charges, where applicable, for:

- Lodging -- includes expenses, except lodging taxes, for overnight sleeping facilities, baths, personal use of the room during daytime, telephone access fee, and service charges for fans, air conditioners, heaters, and fires furnished in rooms when such charges are not included in the room rate. Lodging does not include accommodations on airplanes, trains, buses, or ships. Such cost is included in the transportation cost and is not considered a lodging expense.
- Meals -- expenses for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and related tips and taxes (specifically excluded are alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, and any expenses incurred for other persons).
- Incidental expenses related to subsistence, including:
 - Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, stewards or stewardesses and others on ships, and hotel servants in foreign countries;
 - Transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken (personal preference); and
 - Mailing cost associated with filing travel vouchers and payment of government-issued travel charge card billings.

2. General Rules Affecting Entitlement to Per Diem

A. Eligibility

Per Diem should be authorized when an employee performs official travel **away** from the ODS and is in travel status for more than 12 hours. Per Diem is **not** authorized for official travel of 12 hours or less or when travel of over 12 hours is conducted within the established limits of the ODS.

B. Per Diem Within the Vicinity of the ODS - General Rule

Payment of per diem within the established limits of the ODS is **precluded** by the FTR. Each State office was required to establish the limits of the ODS in accordance with Notice FI-2541, Reimbursing Employees for Official Local Travel, and informing all employees of those limits for official travel purposes.

The following are offered as guidelines for establishing the ODS for CO employees:

- COC or CMC member is the member's home.
- Field office employee is the county office.
- Employees assigned to multiple county offices is the county office where the employee performs the major part of their duties or spends the greater portion of their time.
- Field employees is established by the CED or Division Director (DD), considering the major area of work.

C. Definition of ODS for National Office Employees

The limits of the ODS for national office employees are as follows:

- For travel within 1 calendar day, per diem shall not be authorized when travel is conducted within a 25-mile radius of either the employee's:
 - ODS, or
 - home (the place from which the employee commutes daily to the ODS).
- For travel of more than 1 calendar day, per diem shall not be authorized when travel is conducted within a 35-mile radius of the employee's ODS.

D. Meals Taken at the ODS

Employees shall not be reimbursed for meals taken at the ODS. Exceptions to this rule may be granted if a meal is provided as part of:

- an official training session sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM),
- separate from the meal, the meal is incidental to the meeting and the employee is not free to take the meal elsewhere without missing *essential* formal discussions, or
- a formal meeting or conference that includes substantial functions that take place lectures, or speeches concerning the purpose of the meeting. **This rule is interpreted very strictly.**

Generally, meals at Agency-sponsored events are **not** reimbursable for employees whose ODS is the same as the meeting site.

3. Computing Per Diem

A. Where Can Per Diem Rates be Found?

- *CONUS* (48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia) per diem rates are established by GSA. These rates change on an annual basis and are published, along with any changes, in the Federal Register. CONUS rates and corrections can also be found on the GSA web site at <http://www.policyworks.gov/perdiem>. (This website also contains direct links to the non-foreign and foreign per diem rates)
- *Nonforeign areas outside CONUS* (Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands and Possessions of the U.S.) per diem rates are established by the Department of Defense and published periodically in the Federal Register and also in Section 925 of the Standardized Regulations. These rates can be found on the PDTATAC website at <http://www.dtic.mil/perdiempdrates/html>. FAS personnel can access these rates on the U:\ drive (Banyan).
- *Foreign area* (any area, including the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside CONUS and the non-foreign areas) per diem rates are established by the Department of State and published in Section 925 of the Standardized Regulations. If these rates change after travel begins, the traveler will be paid at the changed rate as of the date such new rate becomes effective. Foreign rates are available on the State Department web site at <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm>.

Rates for specific locations can also be obtained from the TMC.

If established rates for specific geographical localities within CONUS are found to be routinely inadequate, a request in writing should be forwarded to FMD for re-evaluation of these rates. FMD will forward the request to GSA for consideration in their annual review of per diem rates. Requests must contain pertinent lodging and meal cost data.

B. What Determines the Per Diem Rate?

The maximum per diem rate is determined by the **TDY location**. If lodging is not available at the TDY location, the approving official may authorize or approve the maximum per diem rate for the location where lodging is obtained.

C. When Does Per Diem Entitlement Begin and End?

Per diem entitlement begins when official travel begins. For computing per diem allowances, official travel begins when the employee leaves his or her home, office, or other authorized point of departure (as indicated on the travel authorization) to begin the trip and ends when the employee returns to his or her home, office or other authorized point at the conclusion of the trip. Both departure and return times are based on the standard time in effect at the place where travel begins or ends.

D. Computing the Lodging Allowance

When travel is more than 12 hours and overnight lodging is required, an employee is reimbursed for the actual lodging cost not to exceed the maximum lodging rate for the TDY location or stopover point. If lodging is not available at the TDY location, the employee may be authorized the maximum per diem rate for the location where lodging is obtained.

E. Computing the Meals & Incidental Expense (M&IE) Allowance

An M&IE allowance of either \$30, \$34, \$38, \$42, \$46, or \$50, depending on the rate authorized for the particular temporary duty site, is allowed. Compute the M&IE allowance for official travel according to the following tables:

When travel is...	The M&IE allowance is...
12 hours or less	Prohibited (see paragraph 2, "General Rules Affecting Entitlement to Per Diem")
More than 12 but less than 24 hours	75% of the applicable M&IE rate
24 hours or more, on:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Day of departure</u>, 75% of the applicable M&IE rate • <u>Full days of travel</u>, 100% of the applicable M&IE rate • <u>Last day of travel</u>, 75% of the applicable M&IE rate

For days of travel which...	The applicable M&IE rate is...
Require lodging	The M&IE rate applicable for the TDY location
Do not require lodging, and...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel is more than 12 but less than 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The M&IE rate applicable to the TDY site (or the highest M&IE rate applicable when multiple locations are involved)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel is 24 hours or more and the employee is traveling to a new TDY site or stopover point at midnight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The M&IE rate applicable to the new TDY site or stopover point
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel is 24 hours or more and the employee is returning to the official station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The M&IE rate applicable to the previous day of travel

4. Reductions to Maximum Per Diem Rates

A. M&IE With No Lodging Costs

Employees who incur no lodging costs while in official travel status may be reimbursed transportation expenses to and from a place of free lodging not to exceed the maximum allowable daily lodging cost.

In cases where free lodging is obtained, the employee shall still be authorized the M&IE allowance applicable to the locality.

B. Lodging With Friends or Relatives

When a traveler obtains lodging from friends or relatives (including members of the immediate family), no part of the per diem payable is allowed for lodging unless the host actually incurs identifiable additional costs in accommodating the traveler. In such instances, any additional cost must be substantiated by the traveler, supported by receipts or canceled checks, and determined to be reasonable by the Agency before a lodging cost will be allowed. Neither costs based on room rates for comparable conventional lodgings in the locality, nor flat "token" amounts, will be considered in determining any additional costs to the host.

C. Double Occupancy/Sharing a Room

If an employee shares a room with another government employee who is also on official travel, reimbursement is limited to one-half of the double occupancy rate for each employee. Such fact will be shown on the travel voucher with a note that the room was shared with another Federal/county employee. If the person sharing the room is not another government employee on official travel, reimbursement is limited to the single occupancy rate. Identification of the person sharing the room, in this case, is not required.

D. Deductions from M&IE When Meals are Provided

When meals are provided at nominal or no cost by the Federal Government or are included in registration fees, the M&IE rate must be adjusted according to the following table:

Meal Provided at No Cost to the Federal Government	M&IE Rate					
	\$30	\$34	\$38	\$42	\$46	\$50
Breakfast	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$9	\$10
Lunch	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$11	\$12
Dinner	\$16	\$18	\$20	\$22	\$24	\$26

The deductions above are for CONUS travel only.

No deductions are made to M&IE for a meal(s) provided by a common carrier or for a complimentary meal(s) provided by a hotel/motel.

E. Incidental Expenses When Meals and Lodging are Provided

When there is no charge to the employee for lodging or meals (i.e., lodging and meals are included in the cost of a meeting or training), the employee shall be authorized a flat M&IE rate of:

- \$5 per day for attendance at **residential** training programs such as the Executive Seminar Center, and Federal Executive Institute programs
- \$2 per day, for all other instances

F. Extended Stays

When travel assignments involve extended periods of more than 30 days at temporary duty locations and travelers are able to secure lodging and/or meals at lower costs, the per diem rate should be reduced accordingly. Generally, a per diem rate of 55 percent of the locality rate should be established for extended stays. If reduced lodgings and/or meals cannot be obtained, a higher rate may be established as justified by anticipated costs. When the per diem rate is adjusted downward, the travel authorization must show the reduced rate. Unless arrangements are made prior to the start of travel, the traveler may be allowed full per diem until long-term accommodations can be found (usually no more than 30 days). If the specific rate is not known at the time the travel authorization is prepared, state that an amended travel authorization will be issued authorizing a lower rate.

The daily lodging rate for lodging obtained on a long-term basis 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 an employee rents lodging on a long-term basis, the following types of expenses may be considered part of the lodging cost:

- Rental cost for a furnished dwelling
- If unfurnished, the rental cost of appropriate and necessary furniture and appliances (e.g., stove, refrigerator, chairs, tables, bed, sofa, television, or vacuum cleaner)
- Cost of connecting/disconnecting and using utilities
- Cost of reasonable maid fees and cleaning charges
- Monthly telephone use fee (does not include installation and long-distance call)
- 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)

NOTE: If an employee is assigned to a TDY station for 1 year or more, the IRS considers all travel reimbursements during that period as taxable income. Agency employees, therefore, should **not** be assigned to a temporary duty station for 1 year or more.

5. Interruptions of Per Diem Entitlement

A. Indirect Route or Interrupted Travel

An employee may not be paid extra per diem for extra travel time incurred at the sole convenience/preference of the employee, due to a deviation from the most direct or usually traveled route. Per diem paid may not exceed that which would have been paid had the employee traveled by the direct or usually traveled route.

B. Return to the ODS for Non-workdays

Employees may be required to return to their ODS for non-workdays when the cost of returning is outweighed by savings in costs or savings as measured by increased efficiency and productivity. These employees are entitled to per diem in the amount allowable for return travel.

When an employee *voluntarily* returns to the ODS or residence for non-workdays, he or she may be reimbursed for round-trip transportation and en route per diem *only*, not to exceed the cost that would have been incurred had the employee remained at the temporary duty station. This travel must be completed outside regular duty hours.

Employees who are on extended temporary duty assignments may be allowed to return to their ODS at intervals of not less than 2 weeks, provided that the temporary duty assignment will continue for at least 5 more full business days after the employee returns to the temporary duty station.

For example:

- An employee on a 3-week temporary duty assignment may be authorized to return to the ODS for non-workdays following the second week.
- An employee on a 4-week temporary duty assignment may be authorized to return to the ODS for non-workdays following the second *or* third week.
- An employee on a 5-week temporary duty assignment may be authorized to return to the ODS for non-workdays following the second *and* fourth weeks.

C. Travel Away from Temporary Duty Station on Non-workdays

An employee on a temporary duty assignment who travels to a location *other* than the ODS or residence on non-workdays may still be paid per diem. However, the employee may **not** claim transportation costs in lieu of the per diem rate authorized for the TDY.

D. Leave and Non-workdays

Employees on official business are entitled to reimbursement of per diem for non-workdays (weekend, legal Federal Government holiday, or other scheduled non-workdays) as long as their travel status requires their stay over on the non-workday and the approving official determines that it is cost effective. For example, an employee is on travel through Friday and again starting Monday. The employee will be reimbursed per diem for Saturday and Sunday provided the approving official determines it is cost effective for the employee to stay over at the TDY location.

Taking annual leave, compensatory time, or otherwise entering leave status for one-half, or less, of a workday has no effect on per diem entitlements. However, when annual leave or compensatory time is taken for more than one-half of a workday, the employee is not entitled to per diem (both lodging and M&IE) for that workday. In addition, all leave in excess of 4 hours should be noted on the travel authorization for any day in which it will be taken.

Per diem may not be paid for a non-workday(s) when the employee is:

- in leave status both at the end of the workday before the non-workday(s) and at the beginning of the workday following the non-workday(s); **and**
- the period of leave on either workday is more than one-half of the employee's regularly prescribed working hours for that day.

For example:

Employee *A* normally works Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Employee *A* is sent on a 2-week temporary duty assignment. On Friday afternoon of the first week, the employee takes annual leave at 2:00 p.m.

If the employee returns to work on Monday at...	Per diem ends...	And resumes...
7:30 a.m. (no Monday leave taken)	No effect on per diem entitlements.	
12:30 p.m. (5 hours Monday leave taken)	Friday at midnight	Tuesday at 12:01 a.m.

E. Incapacitating Illness or Injury of Employee or Personal Emergency Situations

Whenever a traveler takes leave of absence of any kind because of illness or injury not due to the traveler's own misconduct, per diem may be continued for periods not to exceed 14 calendar days in any one period of absence unless, under the circumstances, a longer period is approved. Emergency leave requests for both FSA and FAS personnel in travel status must be approved by the appropriate Deputy Administrator or equivalent.

A separate travel authorization will be prepared confirming the approval and specifying the circumstances that caused the emergency travel and the extent to which the government will reimburse the employee. The claim for emergency travel will be on a travel voucher separate from the one prepared for the official travel interrupted due to illness or personal emergency.

Per Diem is not payable where the traveler receives hospitalization and meals or reimbursement for them under any Federal statute. Refer to Part 301-30, Emergency Travel, of the FTR for provisions regarding payment of transportation and per diem under these circumstances.

6. Hotel/Motel Fire Safety Act

A. Policy

The Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1994 set standards for fire prevention and control in places of public accommodation. The Act requires:

- installation of hard-wired, single-station smoke detectors in each guest room and an automatic sprinkler system in each place of public accommodation that is more than three stories.
- each State to submit to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) a list of hotels and motels that comply with the Act. A national master list is published by FEMA in the Federal Register. This list is also available on the following websites:
<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.htm>

Although employees traveling on official business may stay in lodging facilities of their choice, they are strongly encouraged to stay in lodging facilities that have been designated by FEMA as "approved accommodations." To ensure that they are staying in an approved facility, travelers are encouraged to make lodging arrangements through the TMC.

B. FPLP

When selecting a commercial lodging facility, first consideration must be given to the commercial lodging facilities contracted by GSA under the FPLP that meet the fire safety requirements, where available, unless one or more of the following conditions exist:

- there are no FPLP facilities under contract within a reasonable proximity of your TDY location
- there are no vacancies at the FPLP facility
- your agency has other contractual arrangements with commercial lodging facilities that meet the FEMA fire safe requirements
- your agency determines on a case-by-case basis that it is not practical to use FPLP facilities to meet mission requirements
- you are attending a conference with prearranged lodging accommodations and to ensure that the set aside rooms are used attendees are required to book lodging directly to the lodging facility
- your travel is to non-foreign area outside CONUS

If a FPLP facility is not available in the location needed, the TMC must provide a list of alternative facilities that meet the FEMA fire safety requirements. Information in regard to FPLP as well as a list of FPLP facilities can be found at: <http://policyworks.gov/fplp>.

7. Hotel/Motel Tax Exemption

A. General Policy

All employees on official business are required to pay applicable lodging taxes unless exempted by State and local jurisdictions. Exemptions from tax for travelers, and the forms required to claim them, vary from location to location. When available, travelers are encouraged to use these tax exemptions on official travel.

B. Taxing Authorities That Offer Tax Exemptions

A table containing State tax exemption information can be found on GSA's Office of Governmentwide Policy's website at: www.policyworks.gov/perdiem. This table contains a listing of locations that offer specific exemptions to individual travelers, exemption certificates and other information pertaining to tax exemptions. Although many other States, cities, and local municipalities, not listed on this website offer tax exemption certificates, care should be taken in their use since many instances of counterfeit or non-valid certificates have been reported. Employees should also check with their TMC for available information on tax exemption certificates and information.

PART 4: REIMBURSEMENT OF ACTUAL SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES

1. General Information

A. When May Actual Subsistence be Authorized?

Reimbursement of actual subsistence for official travel may be authorized when the applicable maximum per diem rate is inadequate due to special or unusual circumstances. The following situations may warrant authorization of actual subsistence:

- attendance at a meeting, conference, or training session away from the ODS where accommodations are prearranged, and lodging and meals must be taken at the prearranged site and the conference lodging allowance has not been authorized
- travel to an area where the applicable maximum per diem allowance is generally adequate, but subsistence costs have escalated for short periods of time because of special events (e.g., missile launching periods, sporting events, World's Fair, conventions, and natural disasters)
- affordable lodging is not available or cannot be obtained within a reasonable commuting distance of the temporary duty station, and transportation costs to commute from a less expensive lodging facility will consume most or all of the savings achieved from occupying the less expensive lodging

If actual subsistence is required solely because of excess lodging costs, **only** the lodging allowance, and **not** the M&IE allowance, will be increased by the amount needed to cover additional costs. As a general rule, FSA authorizes actual subsistence only for excess lodging costs. Actual subsistence for M&IE is normally authorized when unique situations, such as disasters, occur.

Request for authorization for reimbursement of actual subsistence should be made in **advance** of travel. However, "after the fact" or post approval can be granted by the approving official who originally authorized the travel, when supported by an acceptable explanation from the traveler. It is the **traveler's** responsibility to ensure lodging is available within the established per diem rate. If not, actual subsistence should be approved before the travel occurs, on the travel authorization.

B. Who Can Authorize Actual Subsistence Expense Reimbursement?

The approving official who normally would approve travel, can approve reimbursement of actual subsistence in lieu of per diem for both GS and CO employees. The traveler is responsible for requesting authorization for actual subsistence expense reimbursement when conditions appear to warrant such reimbursement and to furnish appropriate written justification to support the request, including the cost of lodging.

C. Travel Authorization/Voucher Requirements

Reimbursement of actual subsistence expenses should be authorized on the travel authorization before travel begins. The approving official, however, can post-approve actual expense on the AD-616 (Section A, Block 14) if he/she determines that additional costs were justified. The applicable travel documents must indicate:

- the total maximum actual subsistence amount authorized, and a breakdown of the total into separate amounts for lodging and meals per day
- the part of the trip for which actual subsistence is authorized, if actual subsistence is authorized for only part of the trip
- a justification statement along with a statement of the amount(s) authorized.

D. Mixed Travel (Per Diem and Actual Subsistence Expense Reimbursement)

An employee may be reimbursed both per diem and actual expense during a single trip. Generally, the applicable rate and/or reimbursement method for each calendar day will be determined by the traveler's status and location at 12:00 midnight of that calendar day. Only one rate and reimbursement method will be authorized for each day. The reimbursement method and maximum rate for the day of departure from the official station will be the same as that authorized for the first location where lodging is required. On the day of return to the official station, the same method and maximum rate of reimbursement applicable to the previous calendar day shall apply.

2. Calculating Actual Subsistence Expense Amounts

A. Maximum Reimbursement Amounts

The maximum daily amount that can be reimbursed under actual expense may **not** exceed **300 percent** of the locality's prescribed per diem rate (rounded to the next highest dollar). When authorizing actual expense, approving officials should **limit** the amount to only that which will cover the added costs. In cases where actual expense is authorized and expenses are less than the locality per diem rate or the authorized amount, reimbursement is limited to the expenses incurred.

To compute actual subsistence only for excess lodging costs:

- Multiply the locality's total per diem rate times 3 (300 percent) to determine the maximum total actual subsistence amount allowed.
- Subtract the per diem M&IE rate from the maximum total to determine the maximum lodging amount allowed for actual subsistence.
- Authorize only the amount needed to cover lodging costs, rounded to the next whole dollar.
- Authorize M&IE at the locality's per diem M&IE rate.

B. Documentation of Expenses/Receipt Requirements

Under actual subsistence expense reimbursement:

- If actual subsistence is authorized only for lodging, and the M&IE is limited to the locality's prescribed M&IE rate, M&IE is claimed according to the rules governing per diem.
- If actual subsistence is authorized for both lodging and M&IE, an employee must itemize all expenses, including meals (each meal must be authorized separately).
- Receipts are required for lodging, regardless of the amount, and any individual meal that exceeds \$75.

PART 5: SOURCES OF FUNDS

Employees may use the centrally-billed GVTS account, their government-issued travel charge card, cash advances drawn against their travel charge card, and/or travel advances received from NFC to pay for travel expenses. Information on the use of the different payment methods follows.

1. GVTS

The GVTS is a centrally-billed charge account used by TMCs to directly bill the Agency for commercial transportation tickets. Costs are billed directly to the Agency.

A. Authorized Methods of Payment for Commercial Transportation Expense

In general, employees **must** use their government-issued travel charge card to pay for commercial transportation (airplane, train, and bus). Employees without travel charge cards, and all WDC-based FAS and FSA employees, obtaining tickets for foreign travel, must use the centrally-billed GVTS account. Using other forms of payment for commercial transportation are **not** permitted and may not be reimbursed.

When GVTS is used for new hires, casual (non-permanent) employees, non-government personnel, employees from other government agencies, and other personnel who are traveling for FSA, the Vendor Tables in FFIS need to be updated prior to submission of the first travel authorization and voucher. An Email containing the information on the traveler contained in Part 1, Paragraph 1K should be sent to Marsha Stevens mlstevens@kcc.usda.gov).

NOTE: Vendor tables should not have to be updated if new hires and casual (non-permanent) employees have already been added to the personnel files.

B. Procuring Commercial Transportation using GVTS (FSA only)

FSA will procure transportation through a GVTS account for newly employed FSA employees who have not received their government-provided travel charge cards or for FSA employees who have had their travel charge cards canceled due to misuse or non-payment of bills. The GVTS account at the National Office Travel Management Center (Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT)) is the **only** means by which GVTS transportation can be procured, and the following procedures must be followed:

- Before procurement can begin, a travel authorization for the travel and a memorandum requesting the use of the WDC GVTS account must be prepared, signed by the traveler's approving official, and faxed to FMD at 703-305-1147.

NOTES GVTS:

- For National Office employees, the approving official must be at the DD level or higher.
- If the traveler's ODS is a State or county office, the travel authorization and memorandum must be sent to DAFO for approval. DAFO will forward the documents to FMD.
- State office funds should be used for transportation for GS employees and county office funds should be used for transportation for CO employees. If additional funding is needed, the State office shall contact the Budget Division through DAFO.

NOTES GVTS, *continued*:

- The traveler must contact CWT at 877-832-6579 and make transportation reservations. CWT's hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 p.m. EST. When calling, traveler's must identify themselves as traveling for FSA, which Deputy Administrator's office and division that they are traveling with, and provide both the travel authorization number and accounting classification code shown on their approved travel authorization. State and county office employees must identify themselves as DAFO employees.
- Employees can call CWT after hours at 1-800-383-6723 **only** when emergency situations, such as being stranded in an airport or other similar types of emergency exist. The after hours phone number should **not** be used to make regular or routine non-emergency reservations that could be made during normal working hours.
- After receipt of the signed travel authorization and memorandum, FMD will approve the release of the transportation tickets from CWT to the traveler. CWT will issue and provide the traveler either a ticket to board transportation when using a train, bus, or boat or an e-ticket itinerary/receipt to check in at the airport when using aircraft as the mode of transportation. Air transportation tickets must be procured from CWT in WDC and travelers will be issued **e-tickets only**.
- The cost of the air transportation ticket and the TMC transaction fee will be paid through the FSA GVTS account. The traveler will at no time, and in no way, be billed for the transportation.

2. Government Travel Charge Cards**A. Policy on Use of Travel Charge Card**

The policy of GSA is that Federal employees are required to use the government travel charge card for all official travel expenses unless they have an exemption. The following circumstances constitute GSA, USDA, and FSA exemptions to GSA policy:

GSA exemptions:

- employees that have an application pending for the travel card
- individuals traveling on invitational travel
- new appointees

USDA exemptions:

- new employees who may be required to perform TDY travel en route to their first post of duty
- employees who have had their travel cards canceled for cause by the issuing bank
- intermittent or seasonal employees
- employees not expected to travel more than 4 times a year
- employees with credit issues

A. Policy on Use of Travel Charge Card, *continued*

FSA exemptions:

- the Administrator, FSA, or designee, may grant exemptions from the mandatory use of the travel charge card
- the Administrator, FSA has issued no additional exemptions

Exemption from the required use of the travel charge card does not prevent an employee, on a voluntary basis, from using the travel charge card for official travel expenses.

B. When to Use the Government Travel Charge Card?

USDA policy is that employees **must** use their government-issued travel charge cards for all official expenses except for out-of-pocket expenses, which include:

- laundry or dry cleaning
- parking
- local transportation systems
- taxicabs
- tips
- expenses covered by the M&IE allowance (when the use of the travel charge card is impractical, such as group meals or where the travel charge card is not accepted)
- telephone calls (when the government calling card is available for use according to Agency policy)
- expenses incurred at a vendor that does not accept the travel charge card

With the exception of common carrier transportation, if a traveler has been granted an exception from using the travel charge card, they may pay for official travel expenses with any combination of personal funds (cash or personal charge card) or travel advance. Travel advances are not available for employees who have had their travel cards canceled for cause by the issuing bank and they must use personal sources of funds.

C. Misuse of the Travel Charge Card

The travel charge card may only be used for official travel expenses incurred while in travel status away from the ODS. Personal items that are **not** reimbursable as official expenses may **not** be purchased using the government travel charge card simply because they are bought while an employee is in a travel status. The travel charge card is not transferable and must only be used by the employee to whom it is issued. If the card is used for any purpose or expenses other than official travel, disciplinary action may be taken.

Employees who have lost their charge card privileges because of delinquency or use of the card for non-official purposes and need to perform official travel will charge their common carrier transportation to their agency centrally billed accounts. All other travel related costs must be paid by the employee using a personal charge card or with personal funds.

D. Employee Liability

The **employee** is liable for all charges to his or her government travel charge card account and it is the **cardholder's** responsibility to pay the account, in full, by the due date of the statement of account. The employee must notify their Agency Program Coordinator (APC) or Responsible Official (RO) and the card issuer (currently Bank of America) when there is a change in address and/or phone numbers for either work or home.

Employees are responsible for contacting their APC or RO when transferring from:

- one agency to another within the Department
- headquarters to State office
- State office to headquarters
- one Deputy Administrator to another (Office of the Administrator, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, Deputy Administrator for Management, Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, and DAFO)

E. Who should Obtain an Activated Government Travel Charge Card?

Cardholders that traveled 4 or more times a year. Members of emergency response teams or of similar positions, managers, and all supervisors should remain activated regardless of the 4-times-a-year criteria. All cardholders who travel 4 or less times a year will have their cards reactivated at time of travel and deactivated when travel status is completed.

F. How to Obtain a Government Travel Charge Card (FSA only)?

The employee must submit application forms to the authorizing official and applicable APC for approval. This includes the signed statement of cardholder responsibilities and liabilities. Note: The overall APC is FMD.

Employing Office	Authorizing official	Agency Coordinator
County Offices and Ag Credit Teams	State Executive Director	Administrative Officer
State Offices	State Executive Director	Administrative Officer
APFO	Director, APFO	Office of the Director, APFO
KCFO/KCCO and St. Louis FSA Office	Division Director	KCFO/DDM/ASD
National Office	Division Director Bank of America Agency Program Coordinator	FMD Travel Unit, (ATPS) Washington, D.C. (WDC)
FAS	Bank of America Agency Program Coordinator	FMD/IAB

NOTE: The Bank of America Application for the government travel charge card can be obtained on the Bank of America website by following the instructions noted below. After completion, the application can be faxed to 703-305-1147 and the original mailed to FMD Travel Unit, ATPS, Stop 0581. The APC must approve the application. Bank of America will not accept an application without FSA approval. Once received, cardholders must activate their new cards by calling 1-800-311-7810.

The Bank of America’s website for retrieving the government travel charge card application is: <http://www.gsuthdbankofamerica.com>. After getting on the website, do the following:

- Click on “Forms” located at far right-hand side of the screen
- Scroll down to “Account Setup Forms”
- Click on “Arrow”
- Highlight “Individually Billed Account (IBA) Setup/Application Form for Non-DOD”
- Scroll down to “Application”
- Click on the “IBA Card Setup/Application-S01N1198.pdf or IBA Card Setup/Application-S01N1198.doc

G. How to Obtain a Government Travel Charge Card (FAS only)?

Forms can be obtained from Peter Hogan (703-305-1236) of the International Fiscal Operations Section, IAB, located at Park Office Center, 11th floor. After completing the application, the RO must approve the application. Bank of America will not accept an application without a FAS approval. Allow 30 days for processing the application and receipt of the card.

H. What is the Credit Limit for Government Travel Charge Card?

FSA and FAS has established a credit limit of \$8,000 (\$4,000 per monthly cycle). Individuals with a high volume of foreign travel, who may need a higher limit, or Foreign Service Officers with a longer reimbursement cycle, will be given a credit limit of \$15,000 (\$7500 per monthly cycle). Please see the following for increasing the default credit limit:

- Authorization for an increase is made on a case-by-case basis. Employees should submit an approved written justification to their APC for FSA and RO for FAS, 3 to 7 days before the travel dates.
- An increase should not be required for relocation since the employee is expected to file travel vouchers in a timely manner for reimbursement. The cardholder will be authorized to receive a travel advance for relocation to cover expenses that can not be charged to the government travel charge card. However, if an employee lost their charge card privileges because of delinquency or use for non-official business, they will not be authorized a travel advance.
- Submit all requests to increase credit limits, signed by the approving official, to FMD's ATPS.

NOTE: Please refer to Notice FI-2596 - Part 2, Section A, Steps 3 and 4 for the increasing credit limit instructions.

I. How to Reactivate a Government Travel Charge Card?

APCs and ROs shall take the following action:

- Reactivate a government travel charge card if the cardholder submits an application 3 to 7 days before the travel dates. The reactivation process may take up to 3 days through the Bank of America EAGLS system. APCs or ROs may call Bank of America's customer service and reactivate a card within 24 hours for travel assignments given without ample notice.

NOTE: Please refer to Notice FI-2596 - Part 2, Section A, Steps 1 and 2 for the reactivation instructions.

J. Lost/Stolen Card Reporting

Cardholders must promptly report lost or stolen cards immediately. Bank of America Government Card Service Unit (GCSU) representatives are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week, including holidays. Cardholders within the U.S. should call 1-800-472-1424; cardholders outside the U.S. should call Bank of America collect at 1-757-441-4124. Cards reported lost or stolen are immediately "blocked" from accepting additional charges and a replacement card with a new account number will be sent to the cardholder.

K. Disputes and Billing Errors

For all merchant issues, the cardholder should make every attempt to resolve the problem directly with the merchant. If the issue cannot be reasonably resolved with the merchant or the problem is an unresolved transaction or “billing error,” the cardholder must submit a dispute form, in writing, to Bank of America before 60 days from the date that the erroneous charge first appeared on the cardholder’s billing statement. Cardholders that require assistance should call the Bank of America GCSU at the phone numbers listed in Paragraph G above.

L. Current Government Travel Charge Card Contractor Notification Procedures

Bank of America provides APCs and ROs with Pre-Suspension/Pre-Cancellation Reports to identify undisputed amounts that are past due on a cardholder’s IBA.

Accounts will be considered *delinquent* if payment has not been received within 45 calendar days from the billing date.

Suspension occurs when account balances are over 60 days past due from the billing date. When an account is suspended, the employee will be prohibited from making further charges.

Accounts, which have balances that are over 126 calendar days past due from the billing date, will be *cancelled*. These accounts will be closed and the account holder may be reported to the credit bureau. Once a card is cancelled, an employee will not be permitted to receive another card under any circumstances other than bank error.

An account that has balances over 210 days past due from the billing date will be considered *charged off* and may be referred to an attorney or collection agency.

M. USDA Zero Tolerance Policy

Zero tolerance strictly prohibits the following uses of the card:

- a Unauthorized charges and charges not associated with official travel.
 - (1) Personal and family member use of the card is forbidden.
- b Charges while not in an official travel status.
 - (1) Use of the card in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence is forbidden unless used in connection with officially ordered travel.
 - (2) Cash withdrawals from an automated teller machine are also forbidden.
- c Shared use of the card with another employee for official travel purposes.
- d Account delinquency beyond a 30-day period.
- e Failure to use the card while on travel.
- f Failure to pay accounts with sufficient funds.
- g Failure to use Government voucher reimbursements to repay travel expenses.
- h Excessive cash advances, or cash advances not commensurate with official travel.

Please refer to Notice FI-2591, Interim Guidance on USDA's Travel Charge Card Program for the following policies and procedures not listed in this FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedure Manual:

PART 3

- DEFINITIONS

PART 5

- RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE:
 - Office of the Chief Financial Officer,
 - Office of Human Resources Management,
 - Agency Heads,
 - Cardholder's Immediate Supervisor,
 - Agency/Organization Program Coordinators, and
 - Employees.

PART 6

- PROCEDURES:
 - Travel Card Issuance,
 - Use of the Travel Card,
 - Exemptions to the Use of the Travel Charge Card,
 - Travel Voucher Reimbursement,
 - Cumulative Use of the Travel Card Reports, and
 - Collection of Delinquent Amounts.

3. Cash Payments

A. Definition

In this paragraph, the term "cash" includes:

- personal checks
- travelers checks
- personal credit cards
- cash withdrawals obtained from an ATM using a government-issued travel charge card

B. When Cash Should be Used?

Cash should be used:

- when the expense is \$100 or less,
- for excess baggage charges costing \$15 or less for each leg of the trip (**Note:** these expenses must be authorized on the travel authorization.),
- for meals and incidental expenses,
- for 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, and
- for gasoline and other variable expenses.

Note: A recent change in Departmental policy permits use of the government-issued travel charge card to purchase gasoline for a POV when used for official travel. Travelers, however, should limit their purchase with the card to the amount of gasoline that they will need for official travel.

B. When Cash Should be Used?, *continued*

Gasoline purchases are reimbursed as part of the mileage rate allowance, and are **never** allowed as a **miscellaneous expense** claim on a travel voucher.

4. Travel Advances

A. Request for Travel Advance

To alleviate the use of personal funds on official travel, employees without travel charge cards may be issued travel advances for certain expenses. Travel advances are not available for employees who have had their travel cards canceled for cause and they must use personal sources of funds.

B. Ways of Obtaining a Travel Advance

The **primary** method for obtaining cash advances for FSA and FAS employees who have been issued the government travel charge card is through the ATM program. FSA and FAS employees who have not been issued the government travel charge card can obtain an advance of funds for official travel from NFC by requesting it on the AD-202 or the advance can be requested, separately, on its own AD-202 (refer to the NFC Procedures Manual for instructions for obtaining travel advances).

C. Authorized ATM Cash Advances

ATM cash advances should be made only after an employee is officially authorized to travel and as close as possible to the actual beginning date of travel. All cash advances are to be used for cash transaction expenses (refer to Paragraph 5B) incurred while on official travel and may never be used to procure common carrier transportation such as air, rail or bus. The advance amounts should be within the guidelines set forth in the table found in Paragraph 4E and are limited by the Department. Cash needs should not exceed \$50 per day. Travelers will be reimburse for service fees for ATM advances not exceeding \$50 per day multiplied by the number of calendar days in domestic travel status, for a maximum of seven calendar days or \$375 per week. USDA's weekly limit for international travel is \$1021.

ATM surcharges and service fees are reimbursable as a "miscellaneous expense" item on the travel voucher.

The government issued travel charge card should not be used to obtain cash for any purpose other than official travel expenses and misuse may result in disciplinary action.

D. Authorizing Official

For GS employees, the approving official authorized to approve the travel authorization approves a travel advance request on the AD-202. The employee must sign and date the travel advance section of the AD-202. The CED authorizes the travel advance for CO employees on the AD-202 and sends it to the State office for approval.

Both employees and approving officials are responsible for ensuring that advances are not requested until needed and that the amount requested is commensurate with the travel to be performed.

E. Amount of Advance

Approving officials should ensure the travel advance amount is within the guidelines set forth in the table below:

Type of travel	If traveler is eligible for Government-issued travel charge card	If traveler is not eligible for Government-issued travel charge card
Temporary duty travel, domestic or international	Amount not to exceed the M&IE allowance, mileage reimbursement, local transportation costs and miscellaneous expenses stated on travel authorization	80 percent of the estimated per diem and miscellaneous expense amount stated on the travel authorization
Official change of station	80% of estimated expenses employee is expected to incur, and which would not be payable by the charge card. This may not exceed \$5,000.	80 percent of estimated expenses employee is expected to incur, not to exceed \$5,000

F. Exceptions

Exceptions to granting more than the stated limits of advances is limited to situations where commercial establishments, either domestically or internationally, do not accept the government-issued travel charge card or when eligible employees do not have a government-issued travel charge card. In these cases, the travelers should prepare a memorandum justifying the need for the additional amount and attach it to the advance request.

G. Repayment of Travel Advances

Employees who receive a travel advance through the ATM program are liable for the cash received. The ATM cash advance and associated fees (surcharge/handling fee) are billed to the traveler on the cardholder statement each month and the amounts are due and payable. Associated fees, which are also annotated on the ATM receipt at the time of the cash transaction, are reimbursable as “miscellaneous” expense items on the travel voucher.

Employees who receive a travel advance must account for the travel advance by submitting a travel voucher. Approving officials are responsible for ensuring that travel advances no longer needed for official travel are liquidated. Generally, an advance is considered excessive if it exceeds the amount commensurate with the travel to be performed.

G. Repayment of Travel Advances, *continued*

Travel vouchers should be submitted within **5** working days after completion of the trip or period of travel, or at least every 30 days if the employee is in a continuous travel status. On the voucher, the employee must show the total amount of the advance issued by NFC or received through the County Office Expense system that is outstanding at the time of voucher preparation and enter the amount of the travel reimbursement that is to be applied to the outstanding advance balance. Any advance balance not completely liquidated by the travel voucher should be repaid by direct remittance (refer to the NFC Procedures Manual for instructions).

5. Payment of Travel Expenses By Outside Sources

A. General Rule (FSA Only)

Generally, government employees are prohibited from accepting payment of travel expenses from non-Federal sources. This prohibition applies to all travel, whether in connection with official duty or otherwise. Employees should not accept any payments directly from non-Federal sources. **Employees should consult the Agency ethics officer before accepting payment of any expenses from non-Federal sources.**

FSA employees should refer to Part 10, Paragraph 10, for policies and procedures relating to this subject.

6. GTRs

The use of GTRs was discontinued on June 1, 2003. The procedure for returning unused and accounting for used GTRs is contained in Notice FI-2588.

PART 6: CLAIMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT

1. Preparing to File a Travel Voucher

A. When to File Travel Vouchers?

Employees must submit travel claims for all official travel in accordance with administrative procedures. Travel vouchers should be submitted within five working days after completion of the trip or period of travel, or every thirty days if the employee is in a continuous travel status. Employees involved in a transfer of station should submit vouchers after each phase of the move.

To facilitate funds control, FSA personnel authorized to travel on type A, B, or N travel authorizations should make every effort to file travel vouchers no later than 5 calendar days after the close of the last month in the semiannual period covered by the travel authorization and 5 calendar days after the close of the month at fiscal yearend. The last voucher filed for travel during the semiannual period should be designated as such by marking the word "FINAL," in red, in the upper right hand corner of all copies of the travel voucher.

B. Receipt Requirements

All expenses must be documented on the travel voucher. Receipts are required for allowable cash expenditures in excess of \$75, plus any applicable tax. Receipts **are** required for the following expenditures regardless of amount:

- Lodging
- Common carrier transportation (plane, train, car rental)
- Laundry, cleaning, and pressing of clothing (Part 7, Paragraph 2A)
- Excess baggage (Part 7, Paragraph 4)

C. Which Form to Use

- AD-616/Travel Voucher (TDY Travel) for FSA GS employees
- AD-616/Travel Voucher (TDY Travel) for all CO employees COC members as of October 1, 2003

D. Fraudulent Claims

False claims will result in forfeiture of the claim. In addition, there are criminal provisions under which severe penalties may be imposed (18 U.S.C. 287 and 1001). The employee is also subject to potential disciplinary action.

E. Payment of Late Fees

As of May 1, 2000, travelers who submit a proper travel voucher to their approving official and are not paid within 30 calendar days after the approving official receives the proper voucher, will be paid a late fee.

The approving official should record the date that a travel voucher is received for payment in the "Date Approved" field on the AD-616. If there are no errors on the voucher, the approving official should sign off on the voucher and submit it for payment. If errors are discovered, the approving official must notify the traveler of those errors and provide reasons why the voucher will not be paid within 7 calendar days after receipt. The traveler should then correct the voucher and resubmit it for approval and payment. If a proper voucher has been submitted and payment does not occur within 30 calendar days, the employee is then entitled to a late fee payment which is calculated using the prevailing Prompt Payment Act Interest Rate beginning on the 31st calendar day after submission of the voucher and ending on the date on which payment is made. The late payment fee is considered interest income for the recipient and will be reported to the IRS.

2. Preparing AD-616

A. Information Required on AD-616

Form AD-616 is used to claim reimbursement for official travel expenses through the NFC Online Travel System. The following information is needed on the form:

- The dates of all departures and arrivals.
- A chronological itemization of official expenses incurred.
- Date and time of leave status. Show "leave" at the top of the voucher to identify it for audit by NFC

Instructions for completion of the AD-616 can be found in the NFC Procedures Manual.

B. Supporting Documents

Attach these documents to the completed AD-616:

- AD-202 and all amendments

Note: Only the first travel voucher submitted under a Type A, B, L, or N authorization needs a copy of AD-202 attached. Future travel vouchers must reference the AD-202 number and indicate that the AD-202 was previously submitted.

- Receipts, as required by paragraph 1 above
- Used ticket receipts, passenger coupons

C. Certifications

Both the traveler and approving official should sign the travel voucher certifying that all entries have been reviewed and verified as reasonable in accordance with travel regulations. Original signatures are required.

D. Approving Officials for Travel Vouchers

Travel vouchers should be approved by the same official (may be two different people serving at different times in the same position, such as an "acting" official) as the official approving the travel authorization. **Exception:** For officials traveling on Types A, B, or N authorizations, the official designated to sign Type C authorizations may also sign vouchers for Type A, B, or N travelers.

E. Approving Own Travel Expenses

No traveler is authorized to approve their own travel vouchers.

F. Distributing Copies of AD-616

Following submission to NFC for payment, the original travel voucher and all receipts and supporting documents should be returned to the traveler for retention. National office FSA employees must send copies of the travel vouchers, as well as travel authorizations, to FMD's International Accounting & Exports Programs Branch, Attn: Pete Hogan.

G. Record Retention

All employees are required to keep copies of all travel vouchers and supporting documentation for a 6-year, 3-month period as prescribed by the National Archives and Records Administration under General Records Schedule 6, Paragraph 1.

For employees who mail paper transactions to NFC for processing, the official record is the paper form. NFC is the official record keeper of these paper transactions and retains these forms for the retention period.

For employees who electronically enter their travel transactions, the official record is the electronic record submitted to NFC for processing. However, the employee in this case, is responsible for keeping a paper record of the transactions for the required retention period. NFC system-generated paper facsimiles and/or the official Departmental travel forms satisfy the retention requirements. Each transaction must bear the original signatures of the traveler and/or approving official, as applicable and supporting documentation, such as receipts, must be attached.

H. Post Payment Audit

All TDY travel vouchers are subject to post payment audits conducted by NFC. If a voucher that has been entered on the NFC Online Travel System is selected for audit, NFC will mail a report to the approving official and the traveler requesting that the original voucher, with all attachments, be mailed to NFC for audit. After the audit, NFC assumes the responsibility of official record keeper and retains the paper documents for the remainder of the record retention period.

I. Disallowance of a Travel Claim

Payment of items claimed on travel vouchers may be disallowed when expenses are not properly itemized, documentation required to support claims is not provided, or employees claim expenses that were not authorized.

If an expense is disallowed by an Agency approving official prior to the voucher being sent to NFC, an employee may request reconsideration of the claim by submitting a written request to FMD supported by facts or documentation which support the claim.

If the claim is disallowed by NFC, a letter will be sent to the employee with information regarding the disallowance as well as instructions for filing a reclaim voucher. If the claim is still denied after reconsideration, an employee may submit the claim for adjudication to the GSA Board of Contract Appeals in accordance with 48 CFR part 6104.

PART 7: MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

1. Telephone Calls (FSA Only)

A. Authorized Calls

Effective December 1, 2002, authorized telephone calls include:

- official calls authorized by an approving official as a necessary expense to accomplish the mission/purpose of both TDY **away** from the ODS and transfer of station travel
- brief, long-distance personal calls when an employee travels for more than one night; however, reimbursement may not exceed the daily, authorized reimbursement rate
- personal telephone calls placed to the ODS commuting area on the day of return from official travel for notification of a change in schedule. An employee's ODS is defined as the area or location of the employee's permanent work assignment and may include areas of their regular commute or the corporate limits or towns where they are permanently stationed
- personal calls to daycare providers or non-family members as long as the amount of the telephone call does not exceed the daily maximum rate

B. Reimbursable Rates When Using Commercial Systems

- if travel is within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands, the maximum reimbursement is \$5.00 per day
- if travel is outside the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands, the maximum reimbursement is \$15.00 per day
- the maximum aggregated amount that may be approved for each travel period; i.e., consecutive days of official travel, cannot exceed the amount equal to the daily reimbursement rate multiplied by the number of lodging nights
- The authorized amounts exclude any access charges for telephone usage from a hotel. These access charges should be claimed as a "miscellaneous" travel expense on the AD-616.

Notes:

- Reimbursement for personal phone calls is not an "automatic" entitlement. In order to receive reimbursement, the traveler must make the call.
- Calls placed from family members to the traveler are not reimbursable; the traveler must make the call in order to be reimbursed.

C. Making Telephone Calls

Whenever possible, employees should make official telephone calls using any of the following:

- Agency-provided phone card
- government-issued cell phone
- government-provided telephone system

When these services are not available, commercial systems may be used.

Based on the costs savings associated with long distance rates in cell phone contracts, employees must use the long distance service, when available on the government-issued cell phone for international calls while on official foreign travel.

Notes:

The Department **prohibits** reimbursement to employees for the use of airplane phones.

Personal cell phones should:

- **not** be used for official business unless an approving official determines, in advance, that an employee's job requires using a personal cell phone and agrees to reimbursement for these calls
- used **only** if no other means of communication such as government telephone systems or public phones are available

The government-issued calling card may be used for personal calls while on official travel, however, usage must not exceed the daily dollar limit prescribed in Chapter 7, Item 1, Telephone Calls.

According to Department Regulation 3300-1, which provides guidelines on Telecommunications and Internet Services and Use, pre-paid phone cards cannot be used for personal calls while on official business.

D. Claims for Reimbursement

When a commercial telephone system is used, claim reimbursement as:

- "miscellaneous expenses" on AD-616
- code "B" telephone expense on SF-1164

Note: The SF-1164 option is available to Federal employees who do not claim reimbursement for telephone calls on a travel voucher.

E. Approving Claims

Employees and approving officials are responsible for ensuring that the calls were made in accordance with the regulations governing communication expenses incurred while on official travel.

Employees **do not** have to provide documentation for their personal telephone calls in order to be reimbursed, unless the approving official deems the amount claimed is excessive. Employees will be reimbursed for amounts in excess of those authorized only with proper justification and when the approving official determines that there were extenuating circumstances, such as an emergency situation. The traveler **must** request a waiver in these situations and submit a written itemization of the telephone calls with an explanation for the waiver.

2. Laundry, Cleaning and Pressing of Clothing

A. Rules for Reimbursement

Employees traveling on official business in CONUS, who incur expenses for laundry, dry cleaning, or pressing of clothing, may be reimbursed for those expenses as a miscellaneous expense item on the travel voucher, only when the following requirements are met:

- the traveler must incur more than 4 (5 or more) consecutive nights lodging on official travel
- a receipt, from an establishment at the TDY site, must be provided to substantiate the claim
- the cost of the cleaning must be reasonable, as determined by the approving official

This reimbursement applies to official travel in CONUS only.

3. Taxes on Lodging

A. Rules for Reimbursement

Lodging taxes paid by an employee are reimbursable as a miscellaneous travel expense limited to the taxes on reimbursable lodging costs. This reimbursement applies to official travel in **CONUS and Non-Foreign Areas outside CONUS only**. These taxes should be claimed as a “miscellaneous expense” item on the AD-616.

In addition, energy surcharges for lodging are reimbursable and should also be claimed as “miscellaneous” or “other” expenses on travel vouchers.

4. Baggage

A. Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used in this section:

- "Baggage" means government property and personal property of the traveler necessary for official travel.
- "*Excess baggage*" means baggage that is not carried free by the transportation company due to excess:
 - weight
 - size
 - number of pieces

B. Authorization for Excess Baggage Expenses

Excess baggage expenses must be authorized prior to travel. The excess baggage must be authorized on:

- AD-202 for FSA employees
- AD-202 for CO employees and COC members as of October 1, 2003
- OICD-94 for ICD "participant" travel

C. Payment/Documentation for Excess Baggage

For excess baggage expenses, receipts are required to show:

- weight of the baggage
- points between which it was shipped
- extra cost

D. Other Reimbursable Baggage Charges

Other baggage charges that are reimbursable include:

- transfer of baggage
- storage of baggage when it is shown that the storage was solely on account of official business
- checking and handling of baggage. Charges or tips at transportation terminals shall be allowed for handling **government property** carried by the traveler. Tips for handling personal luggage are considered incidental expenses and are reimbursed as part of M&IE.

E. Claim for Lost or Damaged Baggage

When baggage is lost or damaged by the carrier during official government travel, the traveler should file a claim according to this table.

Step	Action
1	File claim with carrier. If claim exceeds amount paid by the carrier, go to Step 2.
2	If government travel charge card was used, file claim with travel charge card contractor who may carry additional baggage insurance at no additional cost. If the claim exceeds the amounts received in steps 1 and 2, go to Step 3.
3	File claim with government. Contact FMD or administrative officer for proper forms.

5. Other Miscellaneous Expenses

A. Other Expenses Authorized

Other expenses related to official business are reimbursable provided authorization is included on the AD-202 for FSA employees and CO and COC employees as of October 1, 2003.

B. Types of Other Expenses

Examples of other miscellaneous expenses include:

- stenographic or typing services
- rental of typewriter/personal computer in conjunction with the preparation of reports or correspondence that must be completed by the employee while the employee is on travel
- services of guides, interpreters, or drivers
- lodging taxes (**CONUS and non-foreign areas outside CONUS only**)
- energy surcharges for lodging
- laundry, cleaning, and pressing of clothing (CONUS only)
- hire of conference center room or hotel room for official business
- storage of government property used on official business
- faxes, telegrams, etc.
- official telephone calls/service (when government provided services not available)
- fees for travelers checks, money orders, or certified checks

B. Types of Other Expenses, *continued*

- transaction fees for use of ATM's - government travel charge card program only
- commissions on conversion of foreign currency
- passport and/or visa fees
- costs of photographs for passports and visas
- foreign country exit fees
- costs of birth, health, and identity certificates
- charges for inoculations that cannot be obtained through a Federal dispensary

Note: For the procurement of certain goods and services by contract subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulation, a contracting officer's approval or action may be necessary. If in doubt, contact MSD.

C. Receipts Required for Miscellaneous Expenses

Receipts are required to support miscellaneous expenses in excess of \$75 with the exception of:

- laundry, dry cleaning and pressing of clothing
- excess baggage
- personal phone calls considered to be "excessive" by the approving official

PART 8: DOMESTIC RELOCATIONS

1 Persons Eligible

A. Persons Eligible

Persons eligible for permanent change of station (PCS) allowances include:

- Government employees
- New appointees to a shortage category who meet the criteria established under the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990, and who are approved for specific allowances under procedures in Handbook 32-PM

B. Basic Rule

Eligible persons may be reimbursed for PCS expenses when they are transferred from one ODS to another, provided:

- the vacancy announcement does not state that these allowances are not payable,
- the transfer is in the best interests of the Federal Government,
- the transfer is **not** primarily for the convenience or benefit of the employee, and
- the new duty station is at least 50 miles distant from the old duty station.

C. Exceptions to the 50-Mile Rule

Exceptions to the 50-mile distance rule may be granted on a case-by-case basis when it has been determined that a relocation is in the best interest of the government and any of the following criteria are met:

- the one-way commuting pattern between the old and new official station increases by at least 10 miles but no more than 50 miles
- there is an increase in the commuting time to the new official station
- a financial hardship is imposed because of increased commuting costs

Offices must submit an exception letter to the Director, FMD, requesting an exception to the 50-mile rule. Letters should address the above criteria as well as:

- the mileage differences between residences and old/new duty stations
- total estimated cost for each transfer
- any additional supporting information that would aid in determining whether or not relocation allowances should be granted

2 Service Agreements

A. Basic Rule

Prior to incurring any relocation expenses, an employee must sign a Service Agreement. Both GS and CO employees should sign the service agreement located at the bottom of Form AD-202R. FSA employees may complete Form FSA 164-1, Service Agreement, in lieu of the service agreement on the Form AD-202R. If Form 164-1 is used, it must be attached to the first travel voucher submitted to NFC.

By signing the service agreement, the employee also accepts withholding tax allowance (WTA) that is applicable to certain relocation reimbursements. A relocation income tax (RIT) claim must be filed on all taxable expenses in the year following the year in which the expenses are paid. If a RIT claim is not filed, the employee is liable for the WTA paid. (Refer to Paragraph 12, Relocation Income Tax Allowance)

B. Terms

The Service Agreement:

- is the employee's contractual agreement to remain in the Federal service for 1 year after the effective date of their transfer
- requires the repayment of all PCS expenses incurred by the Agency in the event the employee does not complete the agreed-upon year of Federal service

C. Exceptions to Terms

Exceptions from the terms of the Service Agreement may be granted if the failure to complete the terms of the agreement is for reasons:

- beyond the control of the employee, and
- acceptable to the Agency. An exception to the terms of the Service Agreement must be approved by the applicable Deputy Administrator

3 Preparing Forms

A. Forms to Use

The following travel forms are used for relocation:

- AD-202, Travel Authorization/Advance
- AD-202R, Attachment for Relocation Travel
- AD-202RE, Attachment for Election of Separate Relocation Allowances
- AD-616R, Travel Voucher (Relocation)
- AD-424, Employee Application for Reimbursement of Expenses Incurred Upon Sale or Purchase (Or Both) of Residence Upon Change of Official Station
- AD-569, Expense Record for Temporary Quarters
- Form AD-1000, Claim for Relocation Income Tax Allowance

NOTE: Form AD-202R is an attachment to Form AD-202 that is used to authorize relocation travel. Form AD-202R is always completed in conjunction with the AD-202 and must be attached to the AD-202 for submission to NFC for processing. The AD-202 and AD-202R should be transmitted to NFC via the NFC Online Travel System. Travel vouchers and associated forms must be submitted to NFC in paper format. Directions for completion and examples of completed forms can be found in the NFC Procedures Manual, Title II, Chapter 2, Section 1, dated September 1997.

B. Approving Official

Relocation allowances may generally be approved by any official delegated authority to approve travel authorizations. Relocation allowances for State office employees may be approved by the SED, who may redelegate this authority to the AO. Relocation allowances for CO employees (Federal and non-Federal) must be approved by the State office.

Relocation allowances for new appointees must be approved following the procedures in Handbook 32-PM for GS employees and Handbook 27-PM, Paragraph 460, for CO employees. (Refer to Paragraph 4B, Entitlements for New Appointees)

C. Time to Complete Paperwork

Relocating employees must receive written authorization **prior** to incurring any relocation expenses. The employee and the office to which the employee is relocating are responsible for completing the necessary paperwork to effect the employee's relocation. Forms AD-202 and AD-202R should be completed as soon as an employee is officially notified of a transfer to ensure adequate time is permitted to complete the necessary transactions at the ODS.

No expenses may be reimbursed that are incurred prior to the date they are authorized. Because of the personal disruption caused by a relocation to the lives of employees and their families, offices should work cooperatively with employees in setting effective dates for personnel actions and reporting dates for their relocating employees that reasonably take the time necessary to complete relocation transactions into account. By the same token, employees are expected to diligently endeavor to complete their relocations expeditiously and cost effectively, particularly if the Agency is paying temporary quarters subsistence expenses.

For authorizations that require post approval, the reason for post approval must be annotated in the remarks section of the travel authorization.

4 Entitlements

A. Eligible Employees

Both Federal and non-Federal county office employees may be authorized the following PCS allowances:

- travel expenses to seek a new residence (house-hunting trip) (Paragraph 5)
- transportation expenses from old residence to new duty station (en route travel) (Paragraph 6)
- shipment and storage of household goods (Paragraph 7)
- temporary quarters subsistence expenses (TQSE) (Paragraph 8)
- miscellaneous expense allowance (Paragraph 9)
- real estate expenses (Paragraph 10)
- participation in the Relocation Services Program (Paragraph 11)
- relocation income tax allowance (RITA) (Paragraph 12)
- administrative leave (Paragraph 13)
- expenses for the shipment of a mobile home (refer to Chapter 302-7 of the Federal Travel Regulation)

All of the entitlements noted above, with the exception of house-hunting and temporary quarters, are mandatory entitlements. House-hunting and temporary quarters are authorized at the discretion of the approving official. In addition, use of RSP is at the discretion of the transferring employee.

B. Entitlements for New Appointees

Under the authority of the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act, the Agency may pay certain **limited** travel and transportation expenses to first duty post. Payment of these allowances is not an automatic entitlement and is at the discretion of the Agency.

Handbook 32-PM establishes procedures to be followed by the requesting office to obtain approval to pay relocation allowances for new GS appointees.

If the Agency makes this determination, the appointee may be authorized the following allowances:

- transportation expenses -- one-time common carrier fare or mileage by POV for themselves and their immediate families, from original residence to the location of their first appointment
- en route per diem for the appointee only. Per diem is not authorized for travel of 12 hours or less that begins and ends within the same calendar day
- transportation and temporary storage of household goods and personal effects, or shipment of the employee's mobile home, from original residence to location of first employment
- non-temporary storage of household goods if appointed to an isolated location

A copy of the Agency approval (in accordance with Handbook 32-PM) should be attached to the travel authorization when completed. Handbook 27-PM, Paragraph 460 should be referred to for CO employees.

C. Entitlements For Employees Covered Under the GETA

County Office Trainees and Farm Loan Officer trainees fall under the under the GETA for relocation purposes. When assigned to a training site, the following relocation allowances may be authorized:

- en route transportation of employee and immediate family members
- en route per diem (if more than 12 hours) for the employee only
- movement of household goods and temporary storage

Upon successful completion of the training program and reassignment, the employee is entitled to full relocation allowances from the ODS to the new duty station, provided the transfer meets the required criteria for relocation.

5 House-Hunting Trip

A. Discretion of Authorizing Official

House hunting refers to a trip made by the employee and/or spouse at government expense, to the new ODS locality to find permanent living quarters to rent or purchase. The allowance is intended to facilitate and expedite the move and reduce the overall cost of relocation by reducing the amount of time in temporary quarters.

A house-hunting trip is **not** an automatic entitlement. It may be authorized at the **discretion** of the approving official only when circumstances indicate it is actually needed.

B. Basic Rules/Requirements

Travel on house-hunting trips must meet the following criteria:

- Both the old and new duty stations are located within the CONUS and are 75 or more miles apart (as measured by map distance) via a usually traveled route.
- Travel must be to seek a new residence. House-hunting trips may not be authorized when the purpose of the trip is to assist the employee in deciding whether he or she will accept the transfer.
- Travel is for **one round trip** for the employee and/or spouse **only**, no other family members. Separate trips may be authorized for the employee and spouse; however, reimbursement is limited to the cost that would have been incurred if the employee and spouse had traveled together on one round trip.
- The employees house-hunting trip must be completed by the day before the employee reports to the new duty station. The spouse's trip must be completed by the day before the immediate family relocates to the new official station or the day before the maximum time for beginning allowable travel expires, whichever is earliest.
- The house-hunting trip should be for a reasonable period, not to exceed 10 calendar days, including travel time. The employee is considered to be in duty status while on the trip.
- A travel authorization for the relocation must be approved and a service agreement must have been signed by the relocating employee prior to conducting the house-hunting trip.
- New appointees, new hires, and employees assigned under the GETA are not entitled to house-hunting trips.
- House-hunting trips are not authorized when either the old or new duty station, or both, are located outside CONUS, except for the States of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Territories and possessions of the United States.
- Employees who will be assigned to government or other prearranged residence quarters at the new duty station are not entitled to house-hunting trips.

C. Allowable Expenses

While on the house-hunting trip, an employee and/or spouse are entitled to transportation costs and subsistence expenses. The maximum per diem rate for the employee is the lesser of the locality rate where the employee seeks residence quarters or the locality rate where the employee obtains lodging accommodations. A spouse, traveling with the employee, is allowed 75% of the per diem rate. If the spouse travels without the employee, the full per diem rate is allowed.

In addition to per diem, transportation by common carrier, local transit systems, rental car or POV mileage are also reimbursable. Expenses for the use of taxis are limited to transportation between residences and/or places of lodgings and airport terminals. Mileage for POV use to and from airports is allowed at the applicable TDY mileage rate (Part 2, Paragraph 9B); however, if travel by POV to and from the old and new duty stations is authorized for the house-hunting trip, mileage is reimbursed at the transfer of station mileage rates (Paragraph 6D). Travel by POV on house hunting trips should only be authorized when it is advantageous to the government.

Personal telephone calls are allowed while on house-hunting trips to the extent allowed by Agency regulations.

D. Reimbursement

Form AD-616R, Travel Voucher (Relocation) is used to claim reimbursement for house-hunting trips. An advance of funds may be allowed for house-hunting trips. Lodging taxes incurred on house-hunting trips should be claimed as a miscellaneous expense on Form AD-616.

6 En Route Travel

A. Transportation Expenses

The transferring employee and immediate family, whether traveling together or separately, may be reimbursed **one-way** transportation expenses between the residence at the old duty station and the new residence. Transportation expenses include per diem, a mileage allowance for privately owned vehicles and/or common carrier tickets. These allowances are payable from the actual time of departure to the time of arrival, based on the most direct route and uninterrupted travel time. Per Diem may not be authorized when the entire one-way trip is 12 hours or less.

The employee's immediate family are the members of the employee's household at the time the employee reports for duty at the new permanent duty station. This includes:

- spouse (if the spouse's last name is different from that of the employee, a copy of the marriage certificate is required)
- dependent children or dependent brothers and sisters of the employee or spouse who are unmarried and under 21 years of age or who, regardless of age, are physically or mentally incapable of self-support (medical certificate must be provided)
- dependent parents of employee or spouse

B. En Route Per Diem

Per Diem expenses will be paid in accordance with the tables below. (**NOTE:** The per diem rate for en route travel is based on the standard CONUS per diem rate of \$55 for lodging and \$30 for M&IE)

Person(s) Covered	Travel of more than 24 hours with lodging			Travel of more than 12 hours, but less than 24 hours
	Lodging NTE	M&IE rate	Total NTE	3/4 M&IE
Employee or unaccompanied spouse	\$55.00	\$30.00	\$85.00	\$22.50
Spouse and dependents 12 years of age and older	\$41.25	\$22.50	\$63.75	\$16.88
Dependents under 12 years of age	\$27.50	\$15.00	\$42.50	\$11.25

C. Mileage Requirements

Travelers must *average* at least 300 miles per day for each full day they are in en route travel in order to qualify for en route per diem. Mileage reimbursements are limited to the official mileage guide.

D. Mileage Rates for Use of POV

Employees or dependents that travel by POV may be authorized mileage expenses based on the number of occupants in the POV in accordance with the table below:

Number of Occupants	Mileage Rate
One occupant	15 cents/mile
Two occupants	17 cents/mile
Three occupants	19 cents/mile
Four or more occupants	20 cents/mile

NOTE: FSA and FAS **do not** ship POVs for employees transferring within CONUS.

E. Use of More Than One POV

Use of more than 1 POV may only be authorized under one of the following circumstances:

- If there are more members of the immediate family than reasonably can be transported with luggage in 1 vehicle.
- Special accommodations are required in transporting a member of the immediate family because of age or physical condition.
- If an employee must report to the new duty station in advance of travel by members of the immediate family who delay travel for acceptable reasons such as completion of a school term, sale of property, shipment of household goods, unavailability of adequate housing at the new duty station, etc.
- If a member of the immediate family performs unaccompanied travel between authorized points other than those for the employee's travel (such as a dependent child returning home from college).
- If immediate family members must travel to the new official station in advance of the employee's reporting date for acceptable reasons such as to enroll children in school at the beginning of the term.

F. Reimbursement

Form AD-616R is used to claim reimbursement for enroute travel expenses. An advance of funds may be allowed for en route travel. Lodging taxes incurred on enroute travel should be claimed as a miscellaneous expense on Form AD-616.

7 Shipment and Storage of Household Goods

A. Basic Rule

The Federal Government will pay the costs of packing, shipping, unpacking, and/or storing an employee's household goods and personal effects when an employee is transferred to a new official duty station.

B. Limitations

Limits on the shipment and storage of household goods are:

- Weight may not exceed 18,000 pounds. Employees are liable for paying the costs associated with transporting and/or storing household goods exceeding the maximum weight allowance. No exceptions are allowed.
- Authorized storage may not exceed an initial 90-day period. **Note:** An additional 90-day period may be authorized. Written requests for extensions should be submitted to the Director, FMD, for headquarters employees. State office and county office employees should submit requests to the State office. The SED can approve these extensions (SED may redelegate authority to AO). Under no circumstances may authorized storage of household goods exceed 180 days. Justification for extensions of temporary storage may include, but are not limited to:
 - an intervening TDY or long-term training assignment
 - non availability of suitable housing
 - completion of residence under construction
 - serious illness of employee or illness or death of a dependent
 - strikes, acts of God, or other circumstances beyond the control of the employee

C. Means of Shipment

There are two methods for moving household goods:

- Commuted rate
- Actual expense

Note: If an employee is authorized movement of household goods by the actual expense method and chooses to perform a **do-it-yourself** move, reimbursement is limited to the actual costs (truck rental, material handling equipment, packing materials, gasoline, oil, and tolls,). Labor by the employee or other family members not reimbursable. Actual costs cannot exceed what the government would have paid to the lowest cost carrier listed on the GSA cost comparison. Reimbursement requires receipts and a weight certificates (unloaded w/full tank of gas and loaded w/full tank of gas). If a weight certificate cannot be obtained, the dimensions of the vehicle used to transfer the goods must be provided in the Remarks section of the AD-616R, when filing for reimbursement.

D. Reimbursement

An advance of funds may be allowed if the Commuted Rate Method is authorized or if the employee elects to perform a **do-it-yourself** move under the Actual Expense Method. Reimbursement is claimed by submitting a Form AD-616R.

E. Contact

To arrange shipping and storage of household goods or obtain information on shipment and storage of household goods, contact Jerald Greenwood of the Recurring Requirements Section of the MSD in WDC at 202-690-1922.

8 TQSE

A. Discretion of Authorizing Official

Relocating employees may be reimbursed for expenses incurred while occupying temporary quarters prior to moving into a permanent residence. Reimbursement for TQSE is **not** an automatic entitlement. It must be specifically authorized. The need for TQSE and the length of time required are determined on a case-by-case basis, subject to limitations and approvals by the approving official. It is the employee's responsibility to plan the relocation in order to minimize or eliminate the need for TQSE, whenever possible, and to limit expenses to those that are reasonable and prudent.

B. Basic Rules/ Requirements

TQSE:

- may be authorized only if the employee's new duty station is located in the U.S.
- may be authorized only when the old and new official duty stations are 50 or more miles apart (as measured by map distance) over a usually traveled surface route.
- are limited to an initial 30 days when an employee participates in the home purchase service portion of the RSP or 60 days when an employee does not participate in the home purchase service portion of the RSP.

NOTE: Employees may request extensions to temporary quarters by submitting a written request, which contains a detailed justification that warrants the extension. Additional time beyond the initial 30 or 60 days may be approved, in 30-day increments, when compelling reasons justified by the employee, exist.

The FTR defines compelling reasons as an event beyond the employee's control and acceptable to the Agency approving official. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- delivery of household goods to the employee's new residence is delayed due to strikes, custom clearances, hazardous weather, fires, floods, or other acts of God, or similar events
- an employee cannot occupy a new residence because of unanticipated problems (e.g. delay in settlement on the new residence or short-term delay in construction of the residence)

B. Basic Rules/ Requirements, *continued*

- an employee is unable to locate a permanent residence which is adequate for the family's needs because of housing conditions at the new ODS
- sudden illness, injury, death of the employee or death of a member of the employee's immediate family

According to the ATR and FSA policy, the following are **not** considered to be compelling reasons for an extension to temporary quarters:

- poor housing market (as opposed to inadequate housing conditions)
- general economic conditions of the locale the employee is moving from/to
- personal financial problems of the employee
- inability, for whatever reason, to sell a residence does not by itself justify an extension

NOTE: Delays in construction of a residence at the new duty station are not considered reasons to extend an employee's period of temporary quarters beyond 60 days.

Requests for extensions from **all** employees enrolled in the home purchase service portion of relocation services must be submitted through the appropriate supervisor/approving official to the Director, FMD. Requests from state and county office employees should be sent to the Director, FMD, through the State office.

Requests for extensions from State and county office employees **not** enrolled in the home purchase service portion of relocation services must be sent to the State office. The SED or AO, if redelegated authority by the SED, may approve/disapprove these requests. Headquarters employees must submit requests to the Director, FMD.

- cannot be authorized for more than 120 days, under any circumstances
- may only be interrupted for "official" circumstances, (e.g., temporary duty assignment, and military leave). Annual leave away from the new duty station or return to the old duty station on weekends, is not considered an interruption of the consecutive-day time frames. Expenses incurred while away from the temporary quarters location may not be claimed
- may begin as soon as the travel authorization is issued; however, TQSE should begin no later than 30 days after the reporting date or no later than 30 days after the date the family vacates the old residence
- may be occupied at a location within reasonable proximity of the old or new duty stations, but it cannot be the employee's old residence. An employee may also occupy TQSE at one location while members of the immediate family occupy quarters at another location

B. Basic Rules/ Requirements, *continued*

- expenses begin the first day the employee or immediate family begins TQSE and extends in consecutive days from that date. Fractions of days are counted as whole days within a particular period
- ceases when the employee or immediate family members move into permanent quarters or the authorized period of TQSE ends

NOTE: If the intent of the employee, upon entering TQSE, is to occupy those quarters on a permanent basis, they are not considered temporary and do not qualify for reimbursement as TQSE.

C. Dollar Limitations

TQSE is reimbursed under the **actual expense method** only. Dollar limitations, per day, for **all** TQSE are:

Person	Days 1-30	Days 31-120
Employee or unaccompanied spouse	\$85/day (applicable per diem rate)	\$63.75/day (.75 times the applicable per diem rate)
Accompanying spouse/ family members over 12 years of age	\$63.75/day (.75 times the applicable per diem rate)	\$42.50/day (.5 times the applicable per diem rate)
Family members under 12 years of age	\$42.50/day (.5 times the applicable per diem rate)	\$34/day (.4 times the applicable per diem rate)

Maximum limitations within the U.S., regardless of location, are based upon the standard CONUS per diem rate of \$85.00 per day (includes both lodging and meals). For non-foreign areas outside of CONUS, the maximum limitations are based on the established per diem rate for the locality of the TQSE.

D. Expenses Covered

Allowable expenses for TQSE can be found in the following table. Reimbursement will be for **reasonable, actual expenses** incurred.

Expense	Reimbursable	Receipt Required
Lodging	Yes	Yes
Any basic monthly utility fees charged in connection with the temporary rental of an apartment	Yes	Yes
Long distance calls	Yes, if to old residence when spouse/ dependents remain at the old residence	No Yes, if \$75 or more
Dry cleaning/pressing of clothes	Yes	Yes
Coin operated laundry	Yes	No
Meals/Groceries	Yes	Yes, if \$75 or more

E. Reimbursement

Actual daily costs are itemized on Form AD-569, Expense Record for Temporary Quarters. Actual expenses incurred may be claimed not to exceed the maximum amounts allowed (maximum daily rate x 30 days = maximum allowed).

If an employee stays with friends or relatives, certain rental subsistence expenses may be reimbursed, however, lodging costs may not be based on amounts that would have been paid at a hotel or other lodging facility. Costs should be based on the additional expenses incurred by your host such as extra utilities, bed linen, laundry, etc. An itemized receipt issued by your host must be attached to the AD-569 showing proof of payment, number of people involved, and pertinent facts necessary to determine the reasonableness of the expenses.

An advance of funds may be allowed for TQSE in 30-day increments. Daily costs for TQSE are itemized on Form AD-569, which is filed with Form AD-616R for TQSE reimbursement. Taxes on lodging are considered to be part of the daily lodging cost, not a miscellaneous expense.

9 Miscellaneous Expense Allowance

A. Purpose of Allowance

A miscellaneous expense allowance is authorized to defray miscellaneous costs associated with discontinuing a residence at one location and establishing a residence at another location.

B. Dollar limitations

Miscellaneous expenses should be authorized in accordance with the following table:

Type of Documentation	Employee With Family	Employee Without Family
None	\$1000	\$500
Receipts and/or documentation of expenses	Up to 2 week's basic gross pay.	Up to 1 week's basic gross pay.

When miscellaneous allowance expenses exceed \$1000 for the employee and family or \$500 for the employee traveling alone, the expenses must be itemized in the Remarks block of the Form AD-616R and receipts must be submitted for all expenses claimed. An employee with family, who transfers to the new duty station ahead of the family, can be reimbursed \$500.00. The remaining \$500.00 can be reimbursed upon transfer of the family to the new duty station.

C. Examples of Miscellaneous Expenses

Expense	Reimbursable
Fees for disconnecting and connecting appliances, equipment, utilities, and converting appliances for operation on available utilities.	Yes
Fees for unblocking and blocking, and related expenses in the relocation of a mobile home. (Does not include transportation expenses.)	Yes
Fees for cutting and fitting rugs, draperies, and curtains moved from old to new residence.	Yes
Forfeiture losses on medical, dental and food locker contracts that are not transferable; and contracts for private institutional care, such as that provided for handicapped or invalid dependents only, which are not transferable or refundable.	Yes

C. Examples of Miscellaneous Expenses, *continued*

Expense	Reimbursable
Costs of automobile registration, driver's license, and use taxes imposed when bringing automobiles into certain jurisdictions.	Yes
Losses in selling or buying real and personal property and items related to such transactions.	No
Costs which are reimbursed under other provisions of the Federal Travel Regulations.	No
Additional insurance on shipment/storage of household goods.	No
Additional costs of movement of household goods in excess of 18,000 pounds.	No
Costs of items newly acquired specifically for use in the new residence (i.e. new carpet, draperies).	No
Increased taxes as a result of the relocation. (See paragraph 11.)	No
Fines for traffic violations imposed while en route to the new duty station.	No
Losses sustained as a result of the sale or disposal of personal property not considered convenient or practicable to move.	No
Damage or loss of clothing, luggage, or other personal effects while traveling to the new location.	No
Medical expenses incurred by employee or family members while en route to the new duty station.	No
Costs for structural alterations to new dwelling.	No

D. Reimbursement

An employee can file for reimbursement of miscellaneous expenses on Form AD-616R. No advance of funds is authorized for miscellaneous expenses.

10 Real Estate Expenses

A. Purpose

Real estate expense benefits are designed to reimburse a transferred employee for costs associated with the sale and/or purchase of a residence, or the breaking of a lease incident to that transfer. Employees who elect to sell their residences at the old duty station can either sell the home themselves and be reimbursed under the real estate transaction rules discussed below or they can use the Relocation Services Program (Paragraph 11).

B. Covered Expenses

The following table provides examples of real estate expenses reimbursable and not reimbursable:(refer to FTR Chapter 302-11)

Type of Expense	Old Station	New Station
Abstract	Yes	Yes
Advertising	Yes	No
Application fee (FHA and VA only)	Yes	Yes
Appraisal fee (determine market value of residence)	Yes	No
Appraisal fee (lender's)	No	Yes
Assumption fee (not in addition to origination fee)	No	Yes
Attorney's fee	Yes	Yes
Broker's commission	Yes	No
Construction charges	No	No
Cost of litigation	No	No
Credit report	No	Yes
Escrow agent's fee (not escrow deposits)	Yes	Yes
Hazard insurance	No	No
Inspection fees	Yes	Yes
Interest on loans	No	No
Lender's service fees (except as specifically listed)	No	No
Loan discounts (points)	No	No
Loan origination fee (not to exceed 1 per cent)	No	Yes

B. Covered Expenses, *continued*

Type of Expense	Old Station	New Station
Loan transfer fee (in addition to assumption or origination fee)	No	Yes
Losses due to prices or market conditions	No	No
Mortgage insurance	No	No
Mortgage prepayment penalty	Yes	No
Mortgage title insurance (lender's coverage)	No	Yes
Mortgage title insurance (owner's coverage)	Yes	No
Notary fees	Yes	Yes
Operating and maintenance costs	No	No
Pest inspection fee (but no services performed)	Yes	Yes
Pest eradication services	No	No
Property taxes	No	No
Recording fees	Yes	Yes
Record title insurance	Yes	Yes
Repair costs	No	No
State/county/city revenue stamps	Yes	Yes
Survey	Yes	Yes
Title insurance binder (instead of title search)	Yes	Yes
Title insurance opinion	Yes	Yes
Transfer charges	Yes	Yes
Unexpired lease termination	Yes	No

C. Reimbursement Limitations

For employees whose effective date of transfer is on or after March 22, 1997, the total amount of expenses that may be reimbursed in connection with the sale of the residence at the old duty station shall not exceed 10 percent of the actual sales price. For purchase of a residence at the new duty station, reimbursement is limited to 5 percent of the actual purchase price.

An employee who chooses to construct a home at the new duty station will be permitted to recover real estate expenses to the same extent as an employee who purchased an existing home.

D. Lease Termination

An employee who rents a home or apartment may be reimbursed expenses incurred with settling a lease, including month-to-month rentals. Reimbursement includes broker's fees for obtaining a sub-lease or charges for advertising an unexpired lease if:

- applicable laws or terms of the lease provide for the payment of settlement expenses,
- the expenses cannot be avoided by sub-lease or other arrangements,
- the employee has not contributed to the expenses by failing to give proper lease termination notice promptly after notification of transfer, and
- broker's fees or advertising charges are customary for the area.

If the unexpired lease is in the name(s) of anyone other than the employee or immediate family members, only a pro rata share of the expenses incurred to settle the lease are reimbursable.

E. Time Limitations

The settlement dates for the sale, lease termination, and purchase must be completed within 2 years from when the employee reported for duty at the new ODS. Upon an employee's written request, the 2-year time limitation may be extended for up to 2 additional years if the transfer took place on or after February 19, 2002. The request must be submitted as soon as the employee becomes aware of the need for an extension, but not later than 30 calendar days after the expiration of the initial 2-year period. Approval of the additional period of time will be based on a determination that extenuating circumstances, directly related to the transfer, prevented the employee from completing the sale, lease termination, or purchase transactions during the initial 2-year time period. No extensions beyond the 4-year limit are permitted. Headquarters offices should submit requests for extensions to the Director, FMD. State office and county office employees should submit requests to the State office for approval by the SED (SED may redelegate this authority to the AO).

F. Reimbursement

Following settlement, employees should submit Forms AD-616R and/or AD-424, Employee Application for Reimbursement of Expenses Incurred Upon Sale or Purchase of Residence Upon Change of Official Station, and all other required documentation for reimbursement of real estate expenses. Approving officials must review the real estate expenses claimed for reimbursement to determine that all charges represent usual and customary fees prevailing in the area involved. In the case of lease termination, the employee must also submit a copy of the executed lease and paid receipts, a written statement from the landlord indicating the fee being charged to terminate the lease, and proof of payment such as a canceled check or written receipt for termination fees. **No** advance of funds is authorized in connection with real estate transactions.

11 Relocation Services Program

A. About the Program

The Agency has contracted with private relocation service companies to provide relocation services to assist eligible employees in relocating to the new ODS. The RSP provides a number of services to eligible employees who elect to participate in the program or the home purchase service in lieu of reimbursement for expenses of sale of the residence at the old duty station. A relocating employee may choose to use any or all of the following:

- Home purchase service

Regular sale. The relocation service company will make an offer to purchase the employee's residence for its fair market value as determined by *independent* appraisals. This offer will be valid for 60 calendar days. The employee may reject the relocation services company's offer and be reimbursed for residence sales expenses under direct real estate reimbursement rules. The employee will not be reimbursed for any charges (inspection fees, appraisal fees, etc.) that duplicate fees paid to the relocation services company.

Amended value sale. Immediately after their enrollment in RSP, employees must begin to market their homes independently. An "exclusion clause" must be included in the listing contract with the broker. If the employee receives a higher bona fide offer before the expiration of the relocation service company's offer to purchase the home, the relocation company will amend the employee's offer to the higher amount (less any non-reimbursable items agreed to in the outside offer). The employee immediately sells the home to the relocation services company, which in turn accepts the outside offer.

Amend from zero sale. If an employee receives an outside offer to purchase his/her home prior to the completion of the appraisal process, the employee should notify the relocation services company immediately. The employee must not sign any papers with the proposed offer. The relocation services company will advise the employee of the documentation needed to review the offeror's terms. The relocation services company also will counsel the employee throughout the negotiation of the offer. The contractor will obtain a broker's market analysis as a benchmark of market value to help determine the reasonableness of the outside offer. In order to qualify for the amend-from-zero sale, the offer must not exceed the broker's market analysis by more than 5 percent and financing must be available to the prospective offeror. If the employee is satisfied with the new sale amount, the contractor may make a guaranteed offer to purchase the property if (1) the contractor determines the offer to be bone fide and (2) the broker's market analysis indicates it is a reasonable offer.

- Home marketing assistance.

The relocation services company will assist in developing a marketing strategy for the employee's old residence. This will include helping the transferring employee to select a real estate broker, to establish a realistic listing price, and to make the best use of the home purchase offer received from the relocation services company.

A. About the Program, *continued*

- Home finding assistance.

The relocation services company will provide individual counseling services to familiarize transferring employees with the real estate markets (including rental properties), schools, commuting, community life, etc., at the new duty station. Use of this free help service may help to reduce the house-hunting expenses.

- Mortgage finding assistance.

The relocation services company will provide information on the types and availability of mortgage financing and qualification requirements.

B. Limitations and Procedures

Employees who elect to participate in the RSP:

- are limited to 30-days of temporary quarters,
- must specifically indicate their election to participate in RSP when they sign their "Service Agreement." Employees who decide not to use RSP may not, at a later date, be provided these services for the same move, and
- must submit a completed Form 164-2 (Government Wide Relocation Services Program Transferee Information) as well as an approved travel authorization and signed service agreement to FMD. Employees will not be enrolled in the program until FMD receives these forms. A request for a delay in the initiation of services must be explained in Section D of the Form 164-2 and must include a justification for the delay. Examples of acceptable reasons for delayed entry are waiting for children to complete a school term or need for the spouse to find new employment. Employees who are authorized a delay in the initiation of services should delay marketing their homes, because this is viewed as evidence that the request for delay in services is not valid.

Prior to authorizing RSP on the Form AD-202R, the office completing the paperwork should call FMD/ATPS at 703-305-1408 for assignment of a relocation contractor and estimated cost for the program.

Upon entering the home purchase service portion of the RSP, the employee must market the home independently with a real estate agent. There is an exclusion clause that must be put into this contract. The employee can get information concerning this exclusion clause from the assigned relocation contractor. Failure to market the home independently may exclude the employee from enrollment in this program.

C. Cost of Program to Employee

There is no cost to the employee for electing to participate in any aspect of the RSP.

D. Employee to be Contacted by RSP Contractor

Based on the government-wide contracts held with the relocation services company, an employee must be contacted within 24 hours after being enrolled in the program. Within 5 business days, the employee will be provided additional written information on the program.

E. Additional Details

There are a great many details regarding participation in the RSP, and in the completion of an employee transfer. **Any employee who is relocating should work very closely with their travel contact and the relocation services contractor** to ensure that they understand these details, and are able to take full advantage of available programs.

12 RITA

A. Purpose

Moving expenses reimbursed and certain services provided to employees are considered taxable income. RITA is an allowance to reimburse transferred employees for the additional income taxes incurred as a result of this additional income. RITA covers moving expenses:

- actually paid or incurred, and
- not allowable as a moving expense deduction for tax purposes.

B. Taxable and Nontaxable Moving Expenses

If the employee's new duty is not at least 50 miles farther from his/her former home than the old duty station, all of the moving expenses incurred in conjunction with the move will be considered taxable.

If the move is 50 miles or greater in distance, some expenses will automatically be taxed. The expenses that are taxed will be reported on the employee's W-2 as taxable income along with the amount withheld. Those expenses not taxed will be reported on the W-2 as nontaxable income. The expenses that fall into each of these categories are listed below:

Taxable moving expenses are limited to:

- M&IE portion of per diem for enroute travel
- real estate expenses, including lease termination
- temporary quarters
- house hunting trip
- temporary storage of household goods and personal effects over 30 calendar days

Nontaxable moving expenses are limited to:

- mileage for enroute travel
- lodging portion of enroute per diem
- common carrier tickets
- shipment and 30 calendar days temporary storage of household goods and personal effects

C. When to File RITA Claims?

A RITA claim is filed as a final accounting of WTA payments made to transferred employees. WTA payments offset the Federal income tax withholding that the transferred employee incurs. These claims are filed in the calendar year following the year in which the WTA payments were received. To file a RITA claim, employees must submit Forms AD-616R and AD-1000, Claim for Relocation Income Tax. Failure to file a RITA claim by August 31 of the applicable year will result in the employee's repayment for the entire amount of WTA paid.

13 Administrative Leave

Policy concerning administrative leave for change of official station is covered in the Departmental Personnel Manual, Chapter 630, Subchapter 11-5i and Subchapter 12-6a. Supervisors and relocating employees should refer questions regarding administrative leave to the HRD.

PART 9: CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

1 Selection of Meeting/Conference Sites

A. Most Cost Effective Location

Unless identifiable programmatic considerations dictate otherwise, all conferences, meetings, and seminars shall be held at the most cost-effective location, after considering such cost factors as:

- meals
- lodging
- transportation
- rental of conference rooms

If employees from more than one ODS are to attend the meeting or conference, choose the site which results in the lowest overall cost to the Agency.

B. Contact

When planning meetings that involve either numerous attendees or the expenditure of significant Agency resources, contact the Resource Coordination Staff of MSD, at 202-205-7832.

2 Required Cost-Benefit Analysis & Office of the Under Secretary Approval

A. Cost Benefit Analysis

If a meeting of 7 or more employees requires the payment of transportation expenses, a cost-benefit analysis must be made and kept on file by the approving official. At a minimum, this analysis should contain:

- the name and official duty station of each attendee or group of attendees,
- the estimated total travel costs of each attendee,
- other anticipated expenses, such as: meeting room rental, and
- justification of choosing the selected site over at least three other reasonable sites.

B. Office of the Under Secretary Approval

Do not commit to any off-site meetings or conferences for overall management, strategic planning, or reorganization with a total cost exceeding \$25,000, *including travel costs*, without the approval of the immediate Office of the Under Secretary. Proposals for off-site meetings that exceed this threshold should be submitted to the Under Secretary through the Administrator with specific justification for the function, location, expected number of USDA attendees, and an estimate of costs, including travel and per diem costs of USDA attendees.

Refer to Notice AS-1934, dated September 19, 1996, and follow Departmental procedures regarding approval of meetings, conferences, events, and training costing over \$25,000

3 Per Diem for Attendance at Conferences

A. Conference Lodging Allowance

A conference lodging allowance has been established to allow an agency sponsoring a conference flexibility in negotiating lodging rates at chosen conference locations when it is not possible to obtain lodging facilities within the established lodging portion of the locality per diem rate. It is a pre-determined maximum allowance of up to 25 percent greater (rounded to the next highest dollar) 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. When conference lodging costs exceed the maximum conference lodging allowance, actual subsistence for lodging should be authorized. The M&IE portion of the locality per diem rate is not affected when either the conference lodging allowance or actual expense for lodging is authorized.

B. Conference Lodging Allowance Subsistence Code

The subsistence code should be used on travel authorizations when the conference lodging allowance is approved for official travel.

C. Light Refreshments

Agencies sponsoring a conference may provide light refreshments, at government expense, for Agency employees as long as the majority of the attendees are in travel status. In addition, the Comptroller General has ruled that light refreshments, when authorized, can only be made available to those employees that are **in** TDY travel status and agencies have no authorization to provide light refreshments for employees that are **not in** TDY travel status.

4 Award Ceremonies

The Administrator has the authority to designate the specific award ceremonies for which employees (and one individual related by blood or affinity of the employee's choosing) may be reimbursed for travel expenses. Handicapped employees may be authorized expenses for a special assistant, such as a nurse, seeing-eye dog, etc.

PART 10: INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

1 Guidelines

A. General Information

This part sets forth general guidelines and administrative requirements for international travel. The FAS' ITS will assist in processing all USDA foreign travelers to ensure that all required preparations, immunizations, introductions, and itineraries are completed. ITS is also responsible for:

- obtaining official visas
- obtaining transit visas
- securing Official Passports
- securing Diplomatic Passports
- releasing airline tickets for Washington-based FFAS employees

B. Forms Required

All international travel must be authorized on Form AD-202, or in some cases, an ICD-94. ICD-94 is the travel authorization for domestic and international travel for non-government participant travel. The ICD-94 is used for authorizing single or group travel.

Refer to Part 1 for guidance on preparation of the AD-202. Contact ITS at (202) 720-7815 for information regarding ICD-94.

C. Advance Notification of International Travel – FAS and FSA

All employees traveling overseas are reminded to forward advance notification to ITS. Early notification will facilitate ITS in obtaining the required visas. Employees should follow the following processes:

- *If a passport is available* - Traveler should forward a copy of the AD-202 or complete the Advance TDY International Travel Notification form (ITS-1), which contains all of the information necessary for the ITS to obtain the required visas. The ITS-1 is available on the following site: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>

SPECIAL NOTE: This advance notice process is being automated via the web and it will be the mandatory method for requesting issuance of a passport and/or visas. Each program area will need to have designated staff attend the training on this new IPATTS Travel Request web site. This will supersede the present procedure for submitting a hard copy of the AD-202 or ITS-1 form. The web site will be: http://199.129.100.31/appscripts/ipatts_web/travel_request/engine/home/index.asp.

- *If a passport is not available* - Refer to Part 11 for information on how to obtain an official passport.

D. Approval of Foreign Travel for FSA Employees

All foreign travel by FSA employees requires prior clearance and approval by the Administrator, FSA. Employees must submit requests to the Administrator, through the Director, FMD, at least 2 weeks in advance of the scheduled departure date. Requests are required from each traveler and must include:

- a Type C (trip-by-trip) AD-202, that includes the itinerary and all estimated expenses for the trip
- a completed Foreign Travel Justification Form
 - FFAS Employee Forms Online website at:
<http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/dam/ffasforms>
 - select current forms keyword: foreign travel

Emergency foreign travel requests must be:

- submitted to the Administrator as soon as possible
- state the urgent nature of the travel

Emergency requests will be considered by the Administrator on a case-by-case basis.

(Refer to Notice FI-2553, Approving Foreign Travel for FSA Employees)

NOTE: Travelers should refer to Paragraph 1C, Advance Notification of International Travel.

2 International Travel Country Clearance

A. Definition

International travel must be cleared in the country of destination to ensure that all post responsibilities, including official traveler support, can be carried out effectively and to protect the health and welfare of U.S. Government employees in official travel status.

The initiating USDA agency is responsible for obtaining the country clearance from the Agricultural Counselor/Attaché (AC/A) well in advance of the proposed visit. If no AC/A resides near the country to be visited, the clearance must be obtained from the post nearest the country to be visited. An information copy must be sent to the country where the AC/A resides. Clearance of the communication by the appropriate FAS Area Officer, Foreign Agricultural Affairs (FAA) is mandatory. This approval is necessary before the traveler departs the U.S.

The importance and requirement of obtaining proper country clearance is to:

- Obtain needed post support
- Accomplish traveler responsibilities
- Protect and inform post of U.S. Government employees in official travel status

B. How to Obtain Country Clearance?

USDA FAS cable or State cable are the official means of communication with overseas posts. FAS travelers should contact FAS/ITS at (202) 720-7815 and FSA travelers should contact FSA/ITSD at (202) 720-2962 for assistance or questions in preparing the clearance cable. The following cable format shall be used:

 SUBJECT: USDA COUNTRY CLEARANCE REQUEST: [Last Name, First Name]

[If request is for a group traveling together for the same purpose, then use the word >GROUP= instead of traveler's name]

1. COUNTRY CLEARANCE IS REQUESTED FOR: [Name], [Position Title], [Agency Name]

[If request is for a group traveling together for the same purpose, enter info for each traveler]

2: TO VISIT: [city or cities, country and dates - see examples below]

PRETORIA 11/02 TO 11/05
 CAPETOWN 11/06 TO 11/10

3. PURPOSE VISIT:

[--- provide a detailed explanation of the official business, to be conducted in each city (if more than one), requiring this country visit, -----]

4. EMBASSY OR FAS SUPPORT REQUIRED:

[If none, so state; otherwise, see various examples below]

A. LODGING: PLEASE MAKE APPROPRIATE HOTEL RESERVATIONS IN [cities] AND ADVISE ON RATES TO INCLUDE ALL TAXES.

B. TRANSPORTATION: PLEASE ADVISE ON TRANSPORTATION FROM AIRPORT TO HOTEL OR OFFICE.

C. ITINERARY: [details required only if needing assistance -

- at airport or transportation, indicate arrival and departure times and respective airline and flight number.
- in making lodging arrangements - provide details]

D. Identify and request any other support requirement- such as;

- working with staff members to install PC LAN system or post communication/computer office
- access for PC parts, tools, etc. Request arrangements be made with security office to allow for entry into embassy of specified items and for customs clearance at airport as necessary.
- arrangements with security office to allow entry of laptop PC, video camera, etc., into the Embassy offices where working/visiting.

5. SECURITY CLEARANCE: [i.e., >TOP SECRET=, >SECRET=, >NONE=]

[If clearance request is for more than one person, list persons name and respective clearance]

6. CONTACT POINTS WHILE IN COUNTRY: [see examples below]

[Pretoria - Hilton Hotel, tele #] and/or [SA Food Aid Conference, Jim Jones, tele #]

[Capetown - Marriott Hotel, tele #]

[Basically list cities, telephone numbers and persons that could reach you at that location]

7. TRAVELER CONTACT POINT PRIOR TO DEPARTURE:

[Name, telephone number]

8. EMERGENCY CONTACT AT HOME OFFICE:

[Name, telephone and fax numbers]

C. State Department Clearance

Travel to Taiwan and China requires the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, State Department, clearance. Travelers should contact ITS at (202) 720-7815 to obtain copies of the clearance forms required for travel to these countries. Forms are also available from the North Asia Area Officer.

D. Diplomatic Contacts

Employees traveling to a foreign country on official business must comply with the following requirements regarding U.S. diplomatic contacts abroad:

- Contact foreign consular officers for information regarding any additional requirements for entry into a foreign country
- Contact the AC/A upon arrival in the foreign country and before transacting business with officials of Foreign Governments
- Cooperate with any directions given by U.S. representatives during the visit
- Consult the American Embassy or consulate if itinerary changes after arrival in the country

3 Required Security Briefing

All U.S. Government employees traveling overseas to specific countries are **REQUIRED** to have a special briefing by the Department of State before traveling to that country. Travelers should contact the following offices **IMMEDIATELY** upon scheduling an international trip. The traveler shall indicate the country or countries that they are traveling to and they will be told if they must have this special briefing.

- For FAS, contact the Compliance Review Staff, FAS Security Officer at 202-720-6713
- For FSA, contact the Department's Personnel and Document Security Division at 202-720-7373

4 Foreign Per Diem Rates

A. Method of Calculation

Foreign per diem rates are calculated using the lodgings-plus or actual subsistence methods, as applicable. Refer to Parts 3 and 4.

B. Who Sets the Rates?

The Department of State sets the applicable rates. These rates are changed periodically, as often as monthly, as announced by the Department of State. Foreign per diem rates are available at the following web site: <http://www.state.gov/www/perdiems/index.html>

5 Rest Stops

A. When a Rest Stop is Allowed?

When travel is direct between duty points which are separated by several times zones and at least one duty point is outside CONUS, a rest period not in excess of 24 hours may be authorized or approved when air travel between the duty points is by **less-than premium-class accommodations** and the scheduled flight time, including stopovers, exceeds 14 hours by a direct or usually traveled route.

B. Where a Rest Stop Should be Taken?

The rest stop may be authorized at any intermediate point, including points within CONUS, provided the point is midway in the journey or as near to midway as requirements for use of U.S. flag carriers and carrier scheduling permit.

C. When a Rest Stop is Not Allowed?

A rest stop shall not be authorized when an employee, for personal convenience, elects to travel by an indirect route resulting in excess travel time.

When airline carrier schedules or the requirements for the U.S. flag carrier preclude an intermediate rest stop, or a rest stop is not authorized, it is recommended that the employee be scheduled to arrive at the TDY point with sufficient time to allow a reasonable rest period before reporting for duty. A rest period shall not be allowed when a traveler is approved/authorized to travel by premium-class accommodation.

D. Allowable Per Diem

The per diem rate for the rest stop shall be the rate applicable for the rest stop location.

6 Excess Baggage

Each airline has different allowances; therefore, the traveler should contact TMC to inquire what their baggage allowance might be. Currently, the average allowance is one carry-on bag that fits in the bag measurement rack (usually located at the check-in counter) and meets airline weight limits. The traveler will be responsible for any additional cost assessed by the airlines for baggage that exceeds the airline allowances. For employees on extended international trips, arrangements can be made through the TMC for authorized payment of the excess baggage. This must be done at time of booking and included on the Form AD-202.

7 Premium-Class Travel

Policies, procedures, and forms for business class travel are available at the following site:

- <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>

8 Fly America Act - Use of U.S. Flag Carriers

The Fly America Act, as implemented by the Comptroller Generals guidelines, requires Federal employees and their dependents, consultants, grantees, and others performing foreign air travel financed by U. S. Government funds to travel on U.S. flag carriers. Travelers should contact ITS for special exceptions to policy and guidelines. This information can be found in Sections 301-10.131 through 301.10.143 of the FTR on GSAs website at:

<http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/FTR/ch301-10.html>

9 Immunizations

Washington-based travelers are responsible for consulting the USDA Health Unit on immunizations as soon as an overseas trip is planned. Employees outside the Washington area should make arrangements for the necessary immunizations to be given at a public health facility or by a private physician. More information concerning immunizations may be obtained from the following web sites:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/vaccinat.htm>
- <http://www.who.int/ith>

10 Acceptance of Travel Payment from Non-Federal Sources (FAS Only)

Policies and procedures for acceptance of payment for travel from non-Federal sources is available at the following web site: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>

11 Trip Reports (FAS Only)

A. International Travel with FAS-Funded Authorizations - TDY

Trip reports are required from all FAS/Washington travelers for international travel. It is the responsibility of all supervisors to ensure that trip reports are submitted by travelers within 30 days of completion of travel. Foreign Service personnel on permanent change of station, home leave or rest & recuperation travel are not required to prepare a trip report.

B. Section 108 Travel

A traveler is required to prepare a trip report regardless of domestic or international travel when Section 108 funds are expended. The traveler must prepare the report within 30 days of completion of travel. Travelers are responsible for providing the Marketing Operations Staff with a copy of the trip report.

12 TDY Telephone Use and Reimbursement Policy (FAS Only)

The USDA/FAS policy can be viewed on the FASTNET Travel Services website at:

- <http://fastnet.usda.gov/isd/travel/newtravel.htm>

PART 11: PASSPORTS AND VISAS

NOTE: Diplomatic, Official, and Personal passports are issued by the Department of State. FAS, as the lead Foreign Affairs Agency within USDA, has been designated as the USDA agency responsible for requesting Diplomatic and Official passports for USDA employees.

1 Requirements for a Government Passport

(http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)

A. Who Needs a Government Passport?

All employees who are U.S. citizens traveling to a foreign country to conduct official business shall travel using either an Official or Diplomatic passport. *Employees are not permitted to use their Personal passport to travel overseas to conduct official government business.* There are no exceptions other than those stated in paragraph C below.

B. Types of Passports

- *Official passports* are issued by the Department of State to employees of the U.S. Government proceeding, traveling, or on assignment abroad and have a maximum validity of five years.
- *Diplomatic passports* are issued to Foreign Service officers, persons in the diplomatic service, or persons who have diplomatic status either because of the nature of their foreign mission or by reason of the office they hold. Diplomatic passports also have a maximum validity of 5 years.

C. Exception to Required Use Policy

- *Travel to Taiwan* - U.S. Government employees traveling to Taiwan must use a Personal passport. If the agency pays for the Personal passport, it remains the property of the U.S. Government and the passport must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after returning from the trip.
- *Travel to Canada* - U.S. Government employees traveling to Canada are not required by the Canadian Government to use an Official passport to enter the country to conduct U.S. Government business. However, it is considered advisable to use an Official passport.

D. Prohibited Use of Passport

- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on personal travel shall not use an Official or Diplomatic passport in any capacity.
- U.S. Government employees detailed to a private or international organization shall not use an Official or Diplomatic passport. The fact that the government employees salary is still being paid by the employing agency does not constitute a reason to use an Official or Diplomatic passport.

E. Provisional Use of Passport

- U.S. Government employees assigned overseas in an official capacity may use their Official or Diplomatic passport for personal travel during their tour.
- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on official business (TDY) may use their Official or Diplomatic passport for Agency approved personal stops incident to the official trip.
- U.S. Government employees traveling abroad on military travel orders to countries requiring a passport. A copy of the signed military travel order must be presented to ITS.

2 Application Process to Obtain a Passport

A. Forms Required to Obtain a Passport

- **Electronic IPATTS Passport/Visa Request** - this form must be completed in conjunction with the appropriate DSP form listed below. Failure to use the proper form will result in a delay in the issuance of your passport. **NOTE:** Form AD-121 will soon be replaced with electronic IPATTS Travel Request System. The AD-121 is available on the web at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>
- **DSP-11, Application for Passport** - this form must be presented to and signed in person of an authorized passport agent (refer to paragraph D). If you have never had a passport or if your most recent passport was lost or stolen, you must use this form. Refer to Section 3C for additional information concerning lost or stolen passports. The DSP-11 can be downloaded from the web site at: http://travel.state.gov/passport_obtain.html
- **DSP-82, Application for Passport by Mail** - this form should be used for renewing a previously issued U.S. passport. Refer to Paragraph 3B, Renewal, for additional information concerning renewal of passports. The DSP-82 is available for downloading from the web site at: http://travel.state.gov/passport_renewal.html

A. Forms Required to Obtain a Passport, *continued*

There are four criteria for using Form DSP-82. Use the following checklist to see if you are eligible to apply with form DSP-82:

- I can submit my most recent passport
- I was at least 16 years old when my most recent passport was issued
- I was issued my most recent passport less than 15 years ago
- I use the same name as on my recent passport, OR, I have had my name changed by marriage or court order and can submit proper documentation to reflect my name change

If you answered NO to any of the above.....STOP! You cannot use form DSP-82!! You must apply on application form DSP-11.

If the DSP-82 is used it must be submitted to the USDA/FAS/FAA International Travel Section through your agency travel coordination, NOT to the Department of State.

B. Other Documents Required

Depending on which application form is used, there are other documents required to complete the passport application package.

- If using form **DSP-11**, submit the following:
 - A previous U.S. passport (if less than 15 years old use form DSP-82), or
 - If born in the U.S., a certified copy of your birth certificate issued by the state, city, or county of your birth. A certified copy will have a registrar's raised, embossed, impressed or multicolored seal and the date the certificate was filed
 - If you have neither a passport nor a certified birth certificate, submit a notice from the registrar of the state of your birth that no birth record exists
 - If born abroad, submit a Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. Citizen, or a Certificate of Birth issued by the Department of State
 - Two passport photos
- If using form **DSP-82**, submit the following:
 - Personal or official passport less than 15 years old
 - Two passport photos

C. Passport Photos

Two identical photographs are required to be attached to the passport application. Photos must be 2x2 inches in size and taken within the past six months.

For Washington, D.C.-based employees:

- Photos are taken daily in Room 1069-S between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Schedule photo appointment by calling (202) 720-7815.

For field office employees:

- Field office employees are responsible for obtaining their own photos, which must be attached to the passport application. Photos must be clear, front view, full face, normal street attire **without** a head covering (unless a signed statement is submitted indicating that the head covering is worn daily for religious or medical reasons), **and/or without** dark glasses, unless they are normally worn for medical reasons (a statement from a doctor must be submitted supporting this).
- Photos must be printed (1) on thin paper (2) with a white or off-white background (3) in black and white or color, and (4) capable of withstanding a mounting temperature of 225 degrees Fahrenheit. Photographs that are retouched so that your appearance is changed are unacceptable, as are snapshots. MOST vending machine print magazines or full-length photos are unacceptable.

D. Where to Apply for a Passport?

WDC.-based employees should schedule an appointment with the Passport Agent in ITS at (202) 720-7815. Travelers must appear in person and present a complete passport package.

Field office employees can apply for a passport at many Federal and State courts, probate courts, and some post offices. More than 2500 courts and 900 post offices accept passport applications. Use the following web site to locate the closest facility: <http://travel.state.gov/cgi-bin/search.accept.cgi>

NOTE: If you are using form DSP-11, **DO NOT** sign the form until instructed to do so. You must also have a form AD-121 signed by the Chief, International Services Branch, attached to your passport package.

E. Requesting Birth Records

The Federal Government does not maintain copies of birth records of persons born in the U.S. or its Territories. Therefore, if the traveler must obtain their birth record, they can request a copy in writing from the State vital statistics office or the city, county or other local office where the birth occurred. The addresses of all States and Territories are listed and the fees that each State or Territory charges for a copy(s) of birth records and additional information needed to obtain birth records is available on the following web site: <http://www/cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm>

F. Submission

For Washington, D.C.-based employees, the traveler must submit the required forms to obtain a new or renewal passport 15 working days prior to the date of departure. Forms submitted less than 15 working days in advance of departure will require a letter of justification for expedited handling. Travel to more than two countries or to Russia, China, or Vietnam will require additional working days.

For field offices, the traveler must submit the required forms to obtain a new or renewal passport 40 working days prior to the date of departure. Forms submitted less than 40 working days in advance of departure will require a letter of justification for expedited handling. Travel to more than two countries or to Russia, China, or Vietnam will require additional working days.

3 Other Passport Actions

A. Expiring Passports

Official and Diplomatic passports issued by Department of State (DOS) are valid for 5 years from the date of issuance. Employees who have passports on file which are expiring just before or during a proposed trip, must allow adequate time for renewal. Some embassies will not put a visa in a passport which has less than six months of validity and/or less than three months of validity beyond the end of the visit to that country.

Passports are accountable property of the U.S. Government and when they expire they must be returned to DOS for cancellation or destruction. ITS generates a report each month that lists the passports which will expire during the next ninety days. For Washington, D.C.-based employees, ITS sends an email message to the employee and respective DD notifying them of the date the designated employee's passport will expire. This message is sent only once and it then becomes the employee's responsibility to take action to renew the passport if required.

B. Renewal

DOS allows Foreign Service Officers to renew their Diplomatic Passport without evidence of an overseas assignment or pending TDY trip. DOS does not allow for the renewal of an Official Passport without certification that the employee will be traveling overseas within the next 60 days. The employee will have to complete a Request to Renew Passport letter signed by their Division Director, a Passport Application form (DSP-82), a form AD-121 and have passport pictures taken. These actions must be accomplished prior to the current Passport expiration date. The renewal request form letter is available on the web site at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/generalforms>

C. Lost or Stolen Passport

Form DSP-64 is required when a traveler's passport has been lost or stolen. The information on the form should be as accurate as possible and include date and location of loss or theft. The applicant should also document what efforts were made to recover the passport. The employee should indicate whether or not the loss was reported to the police and if so, the police report number. The completed form should be submitted to ITS for processing, **NOT** to the Department of State. The DSP-64 is available for downloading from the following web site: http://travel.state.gov/report_ppt.html

D. Name Change

The following website explains the process for a name change on your passport; however, the required forms and supporting information are to be sent to the ITS instead of the Department of State.

- http://www.travel.state.gov/name_change.html

4 Accountability of Government Passports

A. Traveler's Responsibility

In compliance with 2 CFR 51.9, a passport shall at all times remain the property of the U.S. Government and shall be returned to the government upon demand. In order to maintain continuous accountability of the Official and Diplomatic passports, USDA regulation, DM 2300-1, 301-18.4(j)(1), demands that the passports be returned to ITS.

Upon returning from official travel, passports must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after completion of the trip for which it was used.

FAS employees returning from an overseas trip should return their passport either to the ITS office, Room 1069-S, in person or by a designated staff member and wait for a receipt. **DO NOT** return passports via a chain messenger envelope or any mail envelope as these are Government accountable documents.

B. ITS Responsibility

ITS has been delegated the authority by DOS to manage procurement, execution, control, and distribution of Official and Diplomatic passports for USDA employees. Passports are released to travelers with the understanding that all proper clearances are in order. As noted above, passports must be returned to ITS within 5 working days after completion of trip.

5 VISAS

A. Time and VISA Requirements

VISA requirements are different for each country and it is recommended that travelers check the following website when making travel plans to help determine how long it may take to obtain the necessary visa(s): http://www.fas.usda.gov/scripts/w/visa_requirements/default.htm

ITS has no control over the timing in which foreign embassies will issue visas. Most foreign embassies require that the passport be left for at least 24 hours to obtain a visa. A number of embassies only accept visa applications and allow the pickup of visas between specified hours on specified days. Countries such as China, Russia, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Cuba require from 7 to 20 working days dependent on the purpose of the trip. In addition, most foreign embassies observe their country's holidays as well as U.S. holidays, which may increase the time requirements to obtain visas.

B. Restrictions

Only **ITS** has the signature authority to request visas. No other USDA agency, organization or individual employee is authorized to acquire visas from foreign embassies. Travelers **should not** attempt to contact embassies unless asked to do so by ITS. Employees **must not** try to pick up passports/visas directly from embassies/consulates unless directed to do so by ITS. Failure to follow this requirement may jeopardize authority for the trip to occur.

TRAVEL RELATED WEBSITES

WHERE TO LOOK.....	TO FIND.....
http://www.policyworks.gov/fttr	Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)
http://policyworks.gov/perdiem	GSA travel home page and CONUS per diem rates
http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm	Foreign per diem rates
http://www.dtic.mil/perdiempdrates.html	Non-foreign (OCONUS) per diem rates
http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.cfm	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hotel-Motel Master List
http://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com	EAGLS support services and training schedules and travel charge card application
http://www.fss.gsa.gov/services/citypairs	City-pair airfares
http://www.fss.gsa.gov/training/transtrav	GSA travel training schedules
http://www.fss.gsa.gov/travel/tmc	GSA Travel Management Center (TMC) website
http://www.nfc.usda.gov	NFC's homepage with link to Online training
http://www.gsbca.gsa.gov	General Services Board of Contract Appeals (GSBCA)
http://policyworks.gov/fplp	Federal Premier Lodging Program (FPLP)
http://intranet.fsa.usda.gov/fsa/travel/travel.htm	FSA Travel Information Center

September 12, 2003

ACRONYMS

ATR	=	(Agriculture Travel Regulations)
ATPS	=	(Accounting & Travel Policy Section)
AD-202	=	(Travel Authorization)
AD-616	=	(Travel Voucher)
AD-616R	=	(Travel Voucher "Relocation")
APFO	=	(Aerial Photography Field Office)
AO	=	(Administrative Officer)
AD-569	=	(Expense Record for Temporary Quarters)
AC/A	=	(Agricultural Counselor/Attache)
ASD	=	(Administrative Services Division)
APC	=	(Agency Program Coordinator)
CG	=	(Comptroller General)
CONUS	=	(Continental U.S.)
COC	=	(County Office Committee)
CED	=	(County Executive Director)
CWT	=	(Carlson Wagonlit Travel)
COE	=	(County Office Expense)
DAFO	=	(Deputy Administrator for Field Operations)
DMD	=	(Debt Management Division)
DD	=	(Division Director)
DOS	=	(Department of State)
FSA	=	(Farm Service Agency)
FAS	=	(Foreign Agricultural Service)
FTR	=	(Federal Travel Regulation)
FMD	=	(Financial Management Division)
FPLP	=	(Federal Premier Lodging Program)
FFIS	=	(Foundation Financial Information System)
FTB	=	(Frequent Traveler Benefit)
FEMA	=	(Federal Emergency Management Agency)
FEPCA	=	(Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act)
GSBCA	=	(General Services Board of Contract Appeals)
GARS	=	(Government Administrative Rate Supplement)
GFV	=	(Government Furnished Vehicles)
GVTS	=	(Government Transportation System)
GTR	=	(Government Travel Requests)
GETA	=	(Government Employees Training Act)
GSA	=	(General Services Administration)
GCSU	=	(Government Card Service Unit)
HRD	=	(Human Resources Division)

ACRONYMS, *continued*

ITS	=	(International Travel Section)
IAB	=	(International Accounting Branch)
IRS	=	(Internal Revenue Service)
IBA	=	(Individually Billed Account)
IAEPB	=	(International Accounting & Exports Programs Branch)
ITSD	=	(Information Technology Services Division)
KCCO	=	(Kansas City Commodity Office)
KCFO	=	(Kansas City Finance Office)
MSD	=	(Management Services Division)
M&IE	=	(Meals and Incidental Expense)
NFC	=	(National Finance Center)
NARA	=	(National Archives and Records Administration)
ODS	=	(Official Duty Station)
OCONUS	=	(Outside Continental U.S.)
OCFO	=	(Office of the Chief Financial Officer)
OPM	=	(Office of Personnel Management)
POV	=	(Privately Owned Vehicle)
PCS	=	(Permanent Change of Station)
RO	=	(Responsible Official)
RSP	=	(Relocation Services Program)
RITA	=	(Relocation Income Tax Allowance)
RIT	=	(Relocation Income Tax)
SED	=	(State Executive Director)
TMC	=	(Travel Management Centers)
TQSE	=	(Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense)
TDY	=	(Temporary Duty)
TTS	=	(Travel and Transportation Section)
TMS	=	(Travel Management System)
WDC	=	(Washington, D.C.)
WTA	=	(Withholding Tax Allowance)