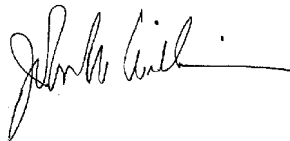


For: FSA Offices

Frequently Asked Travel Questions and Answers

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Travel Questions and Answers

A

Background

Travel questions are often asked by FSA employees. To ensure that the answers are known by all FSA employees, FMD has compiled a list of frequently asked:

- FSA Office travel questions and answers (Exhibit 1)
- State and County Office travel questions and answers (Exhibit 2).

Note: The questions and answers will be placed on the FSA internet at a later date, but are being provided now for employee's information.

B

Purpose

This notice provides a copy of the travel questions and answers that will be available on the FSA internet at a later date.

Note: FSA offices will be notified through e-mail when the questions and answers are on the FSA internet.

C

**Labor
Management
Obligations**

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

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| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Disposal Date</p> <p>October 1, 2003</p> | <p>Disposal</p> <p>All FSA Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices</p> |
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Notice FI-2539

1 Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

D

Contact

If there are questions about this notice, contact the appropriate office in the following table.

| Issues | Office | Contact |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Accounting | National Office | Arthur Holmes, FMD at 703-305-1240 |
| | Field Offices | Rosanne Bales at 816-926-5603 |
| Travel | National Office | FMD, ATPS at 703-305-1408 |
| | Kansas City and St. Louis complexes | Wendy Collins at 816-926-3266 |
| | State Offices | EDSO |
| | County Offices | State Office |

FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers

The following questions are answered in Exhibit 1.

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FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

What is local travel?

Local travel is defined as official travel performed in the vicinity of the employee's official duty station. To further clarify this the following definitions apply.

Official duty station (ODS) is 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. For non-Federal County Office employees, the official duty station is the County Office to which the employee is assigned. For the non-Federal County Office employees assigned to multiple County Offices, the official duty station 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 official duty station is established by the County Executive Director (CED), after considering the major area of work.

Limits of official duty station are the corporate limits of the city or town where an employee is stationed or an established area around the official duty station having definite boundaries. Approving officials are responsible for establishing and documenting the mileage radius for the official duty station using either the corporate limits of the city or town or a defined area around the duty station. In the absence of such definition by the approving official, it is defined as an area within a **50** mile radius of the official duty station. Once defined, approving officials are responsible for ensuring that all employees are aware of the mileage definitions for a particular office before traveling.

Official residence is the home or abode from which the employee commutes daily to and from the official duty station. Travel between an employee's residence and the official duty station is not considered to be "official business of the Government" and employees may not be reimbursed for mileage expenses for travel between these locations. This also applies in cases where an employee works hours beyond the "normal" work day or when an employee's residence is designated as a duty station for "standby" purposes.

Travel headquarters is the designated place from which the employee begins official travel. Expenses may be reimbursed for travel beginning at this point. The travel headquarters is a fixed point and does not change, regardless of the employee's travel itinerary. For most employees, travel headquarters is the official duty station. Travel headquarters may be established at a residence for employees who routinely travel to various temporary duty stations from the residence to reduce transportation costs, per diem payments, and the employee's time away from duty. Travel headquarters should not be established at the residence for an employee who lives within a reasonable commuting distance from ODS (as determined by the employee's approving official), or if it will increase overall mileage and per diem payments during a given period.

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FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

The employee's supervisor/approving official is 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, a POV will be cost advantageous for local travel; however, public transportation should be utilized by employees in metropolitan areas where subway, bus, or other local transit systems are available. Taxicabs should not be used unless determined to be advantageous to the Government. Personal convenience is not justification for using 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.

Since the Government considers an employee's daily commute from a residence to the official duty station as personal business, not official Government business, mileage expenses for commuting cannot be paid. This also applies to situations where an employee may be called in to work for whatever reason on weekends or nonduty days. The intent of the Agency, however, is to make its employees whole in cases where they incur expenses in excess of normal commuting costs.

Therefore, if an employee travels to an alternate duty point that **is located within** the established limits of the official duty station, as defined by the approving official, reimbursement is limited to those transportation costs that exceed the normal commuting costs.

- For travel that begins and ends at the official duty station, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the official station or vice versa, employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred.

If the alternate duty point **is not located** within the vicinity of the official duty station:

- For travel that begins and ends at the official station, employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred.
- For travel that begins at the residence and ends at the official station or vice versa, employee is reimbursed for actual mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred.
- For travel that begins and ends at the residence, employee is reimbursed for actual mileage and parking fees/tolls incurred.

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FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

For travel to multiple sites that are located both within and outside the limits of the official duty station, the employee is reimbursed for actual mileage that exceeds the normal commuting mileage plus parking fees/tolls incurred. The theory behind this being that whenever an alternate site is visited that is located within the limits of the official duty station, deduction for normal commuting costs/mileage occurs.

Source: Forthcoming FI notice about local travel.

What is constructive travel?

“Constructive” and “reconstructive” travel are terms used in situations where employees deviate from a mode of transportation or travel itinerary that would normally be authorized as “advantageous to the Government” for personal or other reasons. Since employees must exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business, the employee is liable for excess costs resulting from circuitous routes, delays, luxury accommodations, or unnecessary services. When deviation of travel occurs, the employee normally would prepare 2 travel vouchers, 1 that shows what the employee actually did, and 1 that shows what the employee would have done had travel been by the route most advantageous to the Government. After the vouchers are completed, the employee then would be reimbursed for the lesser of the 2. Approval for deviations from normal modes of transportation or routes, as well as personal travel, must be approved and annotated in the remarks section of the travel voucher.

The example that was cited in this question would be considered travel that is advantageous to the Government rather than constructive travel.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 1, Section 1F.

What is the retention for travel authorizations and vouchers?

According to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) General Records Schedule, the retention period for travel authorizations and vouchers is 6 years 3 months.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 6, Section 2G

What is the policy on personal phone calls while in travel status?

Departmental Regulation 2300-3, Authorized Telephone Calls of a Personal Nature During Official Travel, established policy on this subject. Briefly, the regulation states that long-distance telephone calls are authorized as being in the interest of the Government when an employee, traveling for more than 1 night (i.e., 2 or more nights on Government business), makes a brief call to his or her residence, or to locations within the local duty station’s immediate commuting area to speak to members of the immediate family to discuss household matters with the spouse, minor children, or anyone sharing the same residence.

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FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

If the travel is between points within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, the maximum aggregated amount that may be approved for each travel period (i.e., consecutive days of official travel) cannot exceed an amount equal to \$5 multiplied times the number of lodging nights. The aggregated amount includes access charges and charges for calls not completed. Claims will be allowed for calls placed to the local duty station commuting area on the day of return from official travel only for notification of change in schedule.

If the travel points are **not** located within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, the maximum **aggregated** amount that may be approved for each travel period (i.e., consecutive days of official travel) cannot exceed an amount equal to \$7 multiplied times the number of lodging nights. The aggregated amount includes access charges and charges for calls not completed. Claims will be allowed for calls placed to the local duty station commuting area on the day of return from official travel only for notification of change in schedule.

Only telephone calls of a personal nature made to the traveler's residence or to immediate family within the local duty station's immediate commuting area are authorized, except when either:

- dependent minor children or dependent family members are moved to an alternate location away from the local duty station's immediate commuting area
- the traveler without immediate family at the official duty station makes a "safe arrival" call or call to check on the traveler's residence to a nonfamily member within the employee's immediate commuting area.

Should the traveler's return plans change, a call may be placed, when immediate family is unavailable, to someone within the local duty station commuting area who will notify the immediate family of the change.

Calls placed from family members to the traveler are not reimbursable; the traveler must make the call to be reimbursed. This regulation can be found on the USDA web site at www.usda.gov.

All telephone calls made to conduct official Agency business would be considered "official" and would be fully reimbursed.

Departmental Regulation 3300-1 does not permit using prepaid phone cards.

Questions about using the Government-issued calling cards for making "official" personal phone calls should be directed to the Management Services Division (MSD), who is responsible for distribution and policy of these calling cards. MSD did inform FMD that FSA allows for the calling card to be used for personal calls while on business travel. However, it may still not exceed the \$5 per day limit that is in place now. MSD will be adding this to their handbook and we will include it in The FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual.

Sources: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 7, Section 1.
USDA website at www.usda.gov.

FSA Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

When must the government travel charge card be used?

Employees are required to use the Government-issued travel charge card for all official travel unless they have a valid exemption from its use. USDA policy states that employees must use the travel charge card for all official expenses except for “out-of-pocket” expenses which include such things as parking, taxicabs, tips, gasoline for POV’s, and tips. The travel charge card may only be used for official travel expenses incurred while in travel status away from the official duty station. The employee is liable for all charges to the travel charge card and is responsible for paying the account, in full, by the due date. Nonpayment of the account can result in suspending or cancelling the travel charge card and misuse can lead to disciplinary action. The travel charge cards also have an ATM feature that provides an employee easy access to travel advances. This, as well as other information about the travel travel charge card can be found in the FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, Part 5.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 5, Section 2.

State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers

The following questions are answered in Exhibit 2.

| Question | Page |
|---|------|
| Where will travel questions or problems be addressed when State Offices need clarification? | 2 |
| Will group authorizations be allowed? | 3 |
| Who will be responsible for releasing authorizations and vouchers for County Office TDY travel in the OnLine Travel System ? | 3 |
| Who is responsible for County Office authorizations and County Office local authorizations? | 3 |
| What is the Agency policy about travel and placement of the administrative County Office in a shared-management operation? | 4 |
| Will non-Federal travel be paid once a month or on demand after October 1, 2002? | 4 |
| Will COC established mileage reimbursement per Notice FI-2485 be in effect once the OnLine Travel System is used to process non-Federal employees TDY travel documents? | 4 |
| How does FMD intend to update the FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual? | 4 |
| Explain the use and reimbursement of government furnished vehicles (GFV's) versus privately owned vehicles (POV's)? | 5 |
| What is the originating office number (OON) for County Offices? | 5 |

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State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers

Where will travel questions or problems be addressed when State Offices need clarification?

Travel questions and problems should be addressed to the appropriate office.
 The following list provides the correct contact for different types of issues:

| Issue | Contact |
|--|---|
| Computer logon instructions, user ID, password, connectivity, printing, etc. | Kansas City IT Security Help Desk at 816-926-6537. Note: Some State Offices want County Offices to contact the State Office and talk to the Security Computer Specialist. |
| Entering travel documents online or inquiring about online travel documents | NFC Information Center at 504-255-5230. |
| General payment, processing, reports or suspense issues | NFC Travel Inquiry Section at 504-255-4878. |
| Request for NFC procedures manuals, bulletins, etc. | NFC Directives & Analysis Section at 504-255-5322. |
| Accounting/travel payments, Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS Accounting System) | Rosanne Bales at 816-926-5603. |
| Budget issues/travel allotments | Budget Division at 202-720-7205. |
| Travel issues | Check the NFC Travel Manual, contact the State Office, and then call FMD, ATPS at 703-305-1408. |
| Travel issues - unable to obtain help from other sources | EDSO at 202-720-7890 or 202-720-0183. |

Source: FMD created during the HQ OnLine Travel Implementation in 1998, updated for CO OnLine Travel Implementation in 2002.

Continued on the next page

State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

Will group authorizations be allowed?

By “group”, it is assumed you are referring to multiple or “Type M” travel authorizations. “Type ML”, which are multiple - local travel authorizations will be allowed in the County Offices, meaning **for local travel only**, multiple employees may be put on 1 travel authorization for a period of October 1 through September 30, and “Type ML” only travel authorization are considered a plan of spending and the funding level will not be obligated up front. The travel voucher will be recorded as an obligation, accrual, and payment document when the payment is processed for reimbursement to the traveler.

BS whole year travel would be allowed in the County Offices, meaning blanket authorizations for the period October 1 through September 30 would be allowed.

No matter what kind of travel authorization is used in the County Offices, if and when there are budgetary continuing resolutions in affect, travel may only be authorized for the period of the continuing resolution.

Source: FMD and Budget Division.

Who will be responsible for releasing authorizations and vouchers for County Office TDY travel in the OnLine Travel System ?

The State Offices may delegate release authority in the OnLine Travel System for travel documents to the County Offices.

Source: FMD in coordination with EDSO.

Who is responsible for County Office authorizations and County Office local authorizations ?

The SED has the overall authority and responsibility for limiting travel. COC shall ensure compliance with Agency policy and procedures, shall authorize and direct County Office travel, and, may redelegate authority, in writing, to CED for authorizing and directing travel within the limitations COC prescribes.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 1, Section 3A.

Continued on the next page

State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

What is the Agency policy about travel and placement of the administrative County Office in a shared-management operation ?

Employees assigned to more than 1 County Office are reimbursed mileage as follows.

- No mileage is authorized between the employee's residence and the County Office headquarters.
- Mileage is authorized for the lesser of the distance between the residence and the Sub-County Office or the County Office headquarters and the Sub-County Office.
- In a single day, if an employee must travel to more than 1 County Office, mileage reimbursement is authorized between the County Offices.

Note: Necessity of the travel must be documented and authorized.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 2, Section 10F.

How will Federal and non-Federal travel be paid after October 1, 2002?

All Federal and non-Federal travel is paid on demand, and will continue to be paid on demand after October 1, 2002.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 6, Section 1A.

Will COC-established mileage reimbursement per Notice FI-2485 be in effect once the OnLine Travel System is used to process non-Federal employees TDY travel documents ?

Yes. COC is paid for travel every time a T&A is submitted for established mileage each pay period that a meeting is held.

Source: FMD.

How does FMD intend to update the FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual?

The FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual will be updated on an as-needed basis. Pending changes will be disseminated to employees through e-mail and followed up with FI notices when applicable. Per MSD, Directives policy, notices are issued to State Offices, and State Offices disseminate information to County Offices.

Source: FMD.

Continued on the next page

State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

Explain using and reimbursing GFV's versus POV.

Approving officials should authorize using POV for official travel when deemed advantageous to the Government. When using POV is approved, the employee is reimbursed mileage at the rate of 36.5 cents per mile. There are exceptions to this rule that can occur when GFV's are available at an office.

If GFV is assigned to a particular employee because of the fact that the employee travels extensively, then that employee is considered to be committed to that GFV and ordinarily would not be authorized to use POV. If the employee was approved to use POV, then his/her mileage rate would be reduced to 10.5 cents per mile for using POV.

If an office has GFV that is not assigned to any 1 particular employee, then that vehicle is available for use by another employee and its use would be considered advantageous to the Government. If an employee chose not to use GFV, and was approved to use his/her POV, then the mileage for use of that POV would be reduced to 28.5 cents per mile.

Refer to the FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, Part 2.

Source: FSA/FAS Travel Policy and Procedures Manual, September 2001, Part 2, Section 7 through 9.

What is OON for County Offices?

OON's for County Office TDY travel processing should remain the same as those assigned for relocation processing, as shown below.

OON's: "XCCECE00XX"

XC = Department code for County Offices.

CE = Agency code for County Offices.

CE = Servicing Agency code.

00 = Place holders that must be included as part of OON.

XX = Numeric State code.

If additional OON's are needed by the County Office, OON's must be requested of NFC. NFC will assign the County Office OON's.

Continued on the next page

State and County Office Travel Questions and Answers (Continued)

The following table contains a listing of State-by-State OON's to be used for County Office travel.

| State Office OON's | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| State | OON | State | OON | State | OON |
| Alabama | XCCECE0001 | Louisiana | XCCECE0022 | Ohio | XCCECE0039 |
| Alaska | XCCECE0002 | Maine | XCCECE0023 | Oklahoma | XCCECE0040 |
| Arizona | XCCECE0004 | Maryland | XCCECE0024 | Oregon | XCCECE0041 |
| Arkansas | XCCECE0005 | Massachusetts | XCCECE0025 | Pennsylvania | XCCECE0042 |
| California | XCCECE0006 | Michigan | XCCECE0026 | Puerto Rico | XCCECE0043 |
| Colorado | XCCECE0008 | Minnesota | XCCECE0027 | Rhode Island | XCCECE0044 |
| Connecticut | XCCECE0009 | Mississippi | XCCECE0028 | South Carolina | XCCECE0045 |
| Delaware | XCCECE0010 | Missouri | XCCECE0029 | South Dakota | XCCECE0046 |
| Florida | XCCECE0012 | Montana | XCCECE0030 | Tennessee | XCCECE0047 |
| Georgia | XCCECE0013 | Nebraska | XCCECE0031 | Texas | XCCECE0048 |
| Hawaii | XCCECE0015 | Nevada | XCCECE0032 | Utah | XCCECE0049 |
| Idaho | XCCECE0016 | New Hampshire | XCCECE0033 | Vermont | XCCECE0050 |
| Illinois | XCCECE0017 | New Jersey | XCCECE0034 | Virginia | XCCECE0051 |
| Indiana | XCCECE0018 | New Mexico | XCCECE0035 | Washington | XCCECE0053 |
| Iowa | XCCECE0019 | New York | XCCECE0036 | West Virginia | XCCECE0054 |
| Kansas | XCCECE0020 | North Carolina | XCCECE0037 | Wisconsin | XCCECE0055 |
| Kentucky | XCCECE0021 | North Dakota | XCCECE0038 | Wyoming | XCCECE0056 |

Source: Originally NFC notified each County Office of their OON through letter. List of OON's was distributed in the FMD package at the Rhode Island AO Conference, New Orleans training and in FY 2000 when County Office NFC relocation processing began. **State Offices know the OON of the County Offices for their individual State.**