

**For:** FSA Employees

**Revised Policy on Authorized Telephone Calls While on Official Travel**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Management



**1 Overview**

**A**

**Background**

The Department revised the policy for authorized telephone calls while on official travel effective December 1, 2002.

**B**

**Purpose**

This notice:

- notifies employees of the revised departmental policy
- provides instructions for claiming reimbursement of official personal telephone calls on the travel voucher.

**2 Revised Policy**

**A**

**Authorized Calls**

Authorized telephone calls include:

- official calls authorized by an approving official as a necessary expense to accomplish the mission/purpose of temporary duty travel **away** from the official duty station (ODS) and transfer of station travel
- brief, long-distance personal calls when an employee travels for more than 1 night; however, reimbursement may not exceed the daily, authorized reimbursement rate

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<p><b>Disposal Date</b></p> <p>January 1, 2004</p>	<p><b>Distribution</b></p> <p>All FSA Employees; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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2 Revised Policy (Continued)

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A

**Authorized Calls  
(Continued)**

- personal telephone calls placed to a location within the ODS commuting area on the day of return from official travel for notification of a change in schedule

**Note:** 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.
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B

**Reimbursable  
Rates When  
Using  
Commercial  
Systems**

Reimbursable rates for authorized personal telephone calls are:

- if travel is within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands, the maximum reimbursement rate is \$5 per day
- if travel is outside the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or the Virgin Islands, the maximum reimbursement rate is \$15 per day.

The maximum aggregated amount that may be approved for each travel period; that is, 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 AD-616 or as an other expense on FSA-164-3.

Reimbursement for personal calls is not an "automatic" entitlement. To receive reimbursement, the traveler must make the call and actually incur the expense.

Calls placed from family members to the traveler are not reimbursable; the traveler must make the call to be reimbursed.

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## 2 Revised Policy (Continued)

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### 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
- a Government-provided telephone system.

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

Based on the cost 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 using 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
- **only** be used 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 by regulation.

Departmental Regulation 3300-1 does not permit the use of pre-paid phone cards.

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## Notice FI-2572

### 3 Reimbursement for Telephone Calls

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#### A

#### Claims for Reimbursement

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

- “miscellaneous” (telephone calls) expense on AD-616
- “other expenses” on FSA-164-3
- code “B” telephone expense on SF-1164.

**Note:** This option is available to GS employees who do not claim reimbursement for telephone calls on AD-616.

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#### B

#### Approving Claims

Employees and approving officials are responsible for ensuring that the calls were made according to regulations governing communication expense while on official travel.

Employees **do not** have to provide documentation for their personal telephone calls 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 to the approving official with an explanation for the waiver.

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#### C

#### Contact

Direct questions about this notice, through the State Office, to FMD, Accounting and Travel Policy Section at 703-305-1408.

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