

For: FAS and RMA Employees

Food and Recognition

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

A Background

Since the issuance of Comptroller General (CG) Decision B-235163.11, February 13, 1986, agencies have used their operating appropriations to pay for refreshments and meals in conjunction with agency employee award ceremonies citing the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act, 5 U.S.C. 4503.

Recently, alternatives to cash awards were being explored. The question arose as to the appropriateness of using food as an award in itself. In 1997, CG consulted with OPM on this question and issued CG Decision B-271511, March 4, 1997. This decision allows for food to be used as informal recognition awards as both:

- meals, like lunches, dinners, banquets, and picnics
- vouchers, like a gift certificate to a restaurant.

Note: FAS and RMA are **not** authorizing food to be used as an informal recognition award.

B Purpose

This notice:

- provides guidance on the use of refreshments and meals in conjunction with an employee award ceremony
- prohibits the use of food as an informal recognition award.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2006	All FAS and RMA employees

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1 Overview (Continued)

C Labor Management Obligations

This notice will become effective upon issuance. The effective date for bargaining unit employees will be deferred in response to a request to negotiate over its impact and implementation. Requests must be submitted in writing, with proposals, no later than COB 15 workdays from receipt of this notice.

D Contacts

If there are questions about this notice, contact HRD, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch at 202-418-8975, 202-418-8973, or TTY 202-418-9116.

2 Government Employees Incentive Awards Act

A Refreshments and Meals in Conjunction With Employee Award Ceremonies

Under the Incentive Awards Act, agencies are authorized to “incur necessary expenses for the honorary recognition of employees”. This has been interpreted by CG to mean that agencies are permitted to use operating appropriations to pay for refreshments and meals in connection with employee award ceremonies, but **only** if it is determined that a reception with food would enhance the recognition value of the award.

FAS and RMA allow offices to provide refreshments in connection with employee award ceremonies under the following conditions.

- Refreshments served must not constitute meals; they must be of nominal value and incidental to the recognition event, simply enhancing the overall program. As a guideline, the overall expenditure on refreshments should not come to more than \$10 per person expected to attend the event. FAS and RMA policy specifically excludes the use of meals in conjunction with a recognition event.
- All expenses incurred in connection with the event must come from the office’s awards budget.

FAS and RMA encourages local awards ceremonies down to the lowest practical level. In the National (Headquarter) Office, this would be the Staff/Division level, and in the field it would be the RMA Regional Service/Compliance Office, or FAS post.

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2 Government Employees Incentive Awards Act (Continued)

A Refreshments and Meals in Conjunction With Employee Award Ceremonies (Continued)

Sound judgment should always be used when considering expenses to be incurred in connection with events. The following must be stressed:

- use sound judgment when considering refreshment expenditures
- never jeopardize the credibility and integrity of the government employees incentive awards program
- always be mindful of the perceptions you may create
- do **not** overspend
- award ceremonies are **not** to be “created” as an excuse to purchase refreshments.

Note: There must be a legitimate awards ceremony in place before consideration can be given to the purchase of refreshments.

B Using Meals as a Non-Monetary Award

FAS and RMA have decided **not** to allow offices to use food (meals or vouchers) as informal recognition awards.

The following are concerns:

- problems with ensuring that awards are reported to NFC
- using government purchase cards to purchase food (meals or vouchers).

Note: Meals or vouchers may **not** be used as an informal recognition award at this time.