



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: **ACTION:** Travel Officials Responsibilities

Date: OCT 29 2001

From: Manager, Financial Management Division, ACT-30

Reply to
Attn. of:

To: William J. Hughes Technical Center Staffs, Divisions, and
Straightlined Organizations including AOS, ATQ, and ACO

Managing your budget requires the need for controlling and knowing your costs. The cost of travel is a significant portion of the budget that cannot be overlooked. The following information is to provide guidance and awareness to the Travel Approving Official in understanding their responsibilities and emphasize the important role they play in the travel process.

All Travel Approving Officials should be aware of the importance to perform a thorough review of all travel documents before they electronically approve them. It is the Travel Approving Official's responsibility to ensure that proper authorizations have been approved for each trip and ensure the validity, accuracy, or prudence of each expense. Once the Travel Approving Official electronically approves a document, the authorization is obligated and/or the voucher is automatically paid to the traveler. The electronic signature process places the burden of the review solely on the Travel Approving Official. Accounting personnel do not see these documents. Accounting personnel perform periodic electronic signature post audits, however, only a small percentage of documents are audited.

Travel Approving Officials must ensure care is exercised to authorize only modes of travel and other entitlements considered necessary and prudent for each travel situation. They also need to ensure that travelers are exercising the same care when incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling at his/her personal expense. Travel Approving Officials should question or disapprove any claimed expenses which were not authorized before the trip or which may be perceived as excessive or fraudulent. Additional documentation should be requested to support any claim for unusual expenses. This documentation should be available for review prior to approval.

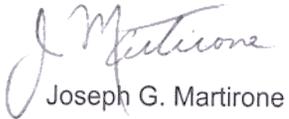
To facilitate your review process, we have provided an attachment that includes some frequently observed inappropriate and/or questionable types of authorizations and expenses. Various compliance agencies and the media often cite examples of abusive and wasteful travel practices noted within the attachment. Travel officials should consider the merit of each of these entitlements prior to authorizing and/or approving each travel document.

Please review and discuss these issues with your managers that approve travel documents in your organization to ensure all required policies and procedures are followed when approving these types of authorizations and expenses. Your review should improve your confidence that adequate controls are in place to:

- a. Preclude instances of fraud, waste, and abuse; and,
- b. avoid the appearance of excessive, wasteful, or abusive travel practices.

Administrative staff should be included in that discussion as they are your first point of contact for travel information and advice.

If you have any questions or require assistance when discussing this information with your Travel Approving Officials, please contact Glenn Hansen, Travel Lead Accountant, ACT-32, at extension 56532.



Joseph G. Martirone

Attachment

Frequently Observed Questionable Travel Practices

Travel Approving Officials need to use the Federal Aviation Administration Travel Policies (FAATP) as guidance for all travel. You can access the FAATP from the Financial Management Division web page.

1. Authorized Mode of Transportation - Approving officials are responsible for authorizing a mode of transportation most advantageous to the Government. Failure to specifically authorize a mode of transportation for **each** trip, or lack of a clear understanding between the approving official and traveler, can result in additional transportation costs and lost productive time.

2. Use of Rental Cars - For travel **within a single day** driving distance of the employees duty station, travel officials should first attempt to obtain a Government vehicle for the traveler before authorizing a rental. If an employee is willing to use their personal vehicle, use of a POV is almost always considered advantageous to the Government for single day trips. If the length of the TDY assignment is for more than 1 day (yet still within 1 day driving distance), travel officials should refrain from authorizing **both** common carrier transportation (rail or air) to and from the TDY site in addition to a rental vehicle while at the TDY site. In that situation, travel officials should consider the merit of having the traveler drive to the TDY site and use the same vehicle for the entire stay.

Example: A travel official should question the merit of authorizing both rail (or air transportation) to Baltimore or Washington, DC and a rental car for use while there. Approval of a rental car for the entire trip would most times be more effective. If rail (or air) must be used, consider the availability of taxis or public transportation for local transportation in and around the TDY site.

3. Approval of Actual Expense - This is perhaps one of the most frequently misused authorized expenses. Actual subsistence expense reimbursement will not be authorized or approved when the actual and necessary subsistence expenses exceed or are expected to exceed the applicable maximum per diem allowance by only a small amount. Although no specific guidance is available as to what constitutes a small amount, Travel Approving Officials should consider the salary of the employee, the amount of difference per day, and the number of nights lodging is required. A good faith attempt to obtain lodging within the regular lodging rates should also be performed prior to authorization. Officials who routinely authorize Actual Expense in situations where the actual lodging rate exceeds the allowed amount by only a few dollars per night for less than a 5 night stay may expect difficulty in trying to defend that practice to an auditing agency, especially if no unusual circumstances exist.

4. Leave While in a Travel Status and Mingling of Personal with Business Travel - It is the Travel Approving Officials responsibility to ensure any costs related to personal travel are not claimed, that a cost comparison is completed and submitted when needed, and also that internal controls are in place to ensure that any leave taken while in a TDY status is appropriately coordinated with the employee's supervisor for official time and attendance purposes. Travelers need to be reminded that purchasing tickets at Government fares are strictly for Government business only. This may require a degree of coordination as the Travel Authorizing Official, Travel Approving Official, and supervisor can be three different people in some larger organizations.

5. Meals Provided During Conferences - Travel Approving Officials should be aware of meals provided to employees at conferences and other events where the costs of the meal has been included in a Government paid registration fee. The travelers' claim for meals and incidental expense (M&IE) should be reduced accordingly for each meal provided. Travelers are now required to submit a copy of conference or meeting itineraries with their voucher.

6. Official Telephone Calls - Approving officials should be confident that all claimed business calls were necessary and performed to actually communicate/coordinate official business.

7. Internet and cc:Mail Access Charges - Many employees are now logging onto the Internet or accessing cc:Mail via a modem while on TDY. Costs associated with such access can be quite high and is often claimed as a business call on the travel voucher. Approving officials should ensure that access, while on TDY, is **both**

necessary and, for business use, before approving the claim. Think about setting policies within your organization for approving off-site access on a case-by-case basis.

8. Shuttle (ACY-DC and DC-ACY) – The roundtrip shuttle service that the Technical Center provides to Washington, DC is a non-reimbursable item on all travel vouchers. Travel officials need to ensure that all their travelers do not voucher for reimbursement for this cost.

9. Employee Travel and Alternate Work (AWS) Schedules - Supervisors should consider the impact of travel on employee work schedules and organization productivity. Supervisors may temporarily change an employee's alternate work schedule to a basic 8-hour day schedule when required to do so for such purposes as official travel, training, or operational requirements. If an employee on a 9 or 10-hour workday schedule will be traveling to a week long conference, meeting, or training event which will take place within an 8-hour day schedule, the supervisor should consider the merits of changing the employee to 8-hour day work schedule for the pay period wherein the travel is performed. The length of assignment and days, which the employee is in a travel mode, should all be considered when making a determination to temporarily change an employees work schedule. Fairness to employees who are on an 8-hour day schedule and traveling to the same event with AWS employees should also be weighed.

10. Central Account – New hires and/or infrequent travelers that do not have a travel credit card can have their transportation tickets paid for on the central account. Travel officials need to ensure that their travelers do not voucher for the ticket cost.

11. Counseling Employees prior to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Moves - A counseling session between the Travel Approving Official and the employee is **required prior** to each PCS move. During the session, transferring employees should be advised of the specific personal property transportation expenses which require special authorization or are specifically exempted from reimbursement by the Government, i.e., house boats, cars, airplanes, etc. This session is also used to provide the employee an opportunity to address any special concerns and to ensure a mutual understanding of which specific entitlements are approved. Officials who approve PCS authorizations should be aware of which entitlements are discretionary versus mandatory and approve only those necessary.

12. Temporary Quarters Subsistence - Approval of temporary quarters subsistence and extensions is discretionary. Approving officials are entitled to, and should, request certain financial information from the transferring employee in order to make an informed determination if a temporary quarters allowance or an extension is warranted. A primary consideration should be whether the employee is carrying a mortgage or other expenses related to their former residence, and if they have made a good faith attempt to sell the residence. Proof of high expenses at the former residence, alone, is insufficient to warrant temporary quarters subsistence. Remember, PCS entitlements are intended to "assist" an employee with the transfer and not to increase their financial security as a result of the transfer. The following are examples of information to consider **prior** to approving initial temporary quarters, and **prior** to requesting extensions.

a. It is not considered prudent to authorize temporary quarters for a transferring employee who had been able to terminate a lease (at no cost) at their former duty station unless temporary quarters costs at the new duty station are excessively higher than the employee's former monthly rental rate at the old duty station.

b. Likewise, a manager should consider the merits of temporary quarters subsistence and/or extensions if the transferring employee has sold their home at the former duty station and relieved him or herself of the burden of a former monthly mortgage payment. Other factors, which should be jointly considered, are the degree of loss or gain which the employee experienced from the sale of their former residence, and any unusually high home purchase expenses anticipated for purchase of a new residence, which are not under the control of the employee.