

TRAVEL TIPS

Below are a few tips that should be considered when required to travel on official Government business. While these tips do not summarize all of the travel regulations, they address the most commonly asked questions by FEMA travelers. We hope they provide some insight into the world of Federal travel. Have a safe trip!

Federal Travel Regulations

Federal employees on official travel are limited in the types and amount of expenses that can be reimbursed from appropriated funds. The Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) provide adequate subsistence for authorized expenses incurred while on official Government business. Employees who travel are encouraged to learn all of the do's and don'ts associated with Government travel. Once you learn the rules, you will find it easier to accomplish the mission of the Agency within the prescribed policy and procedures, without major inconvenience while on travel. FEMA is a Federal Executive Agency and our travel policy is governed by the FTR issued by the General Services Administration (GSA), the FEMA Travel Policy Manual 6200.1, and the CFO Bulletins.

Purpose of Travel Allowance

The purpose of your travel allowance is to provide **adequate subsistence** to cover authorized travel expenses incurred while on official government business. Adequate subsistence means safe, clean lodging with a meals allowance. Some lodging establishments provide "little extras" travelers may desire. These conveniences are not essential and are not included in the definition of adequate subsistence.

A travel allowance is provided for official business travel expenses only. Personal leisure travel expenses are an employee's responsibility and are not provided for in this allowance. The FTR sets equitable expense limits that ensure a fair reimbursement to employees with limitations on the types of expenses that can be paid from appropriated funds.

Prudent Traveler Rule

An employee traveling on official business is expected to exercise the same

care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. Excess costs, circuitous routes, luxury accommodations, and delays or services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not reimbursable under the FTR. Employees are responsible for all excess costs and for additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.

Travel Authorization

A Travel Authorization (TA) is a document that specifies **who, what, when, and where** is authorized for each trip. The TA specifies who is to travel, what expenses are reimbursable, when the travel is to occur and where the traveler may go. Amendments are needed when the dollar amount, locations or dates change. If the dollar amount does not increase, a memorandum (or e:mail) signed by the authorizing official approving the change, i.e. date, locations or travelers, should be attached to the TA and filed with the travel voucher. If the dollar amount increases, a new TA is required.

GET A COPY OF YOUR TA!

FEMA has four types of travel authorizations:

- (a) Blanket or Limited Blanket Authorization - Permits an individual to travel for any official purpose, without further authorization for a specific period of time. Blanket and limited blanket authorizations are used on a very limited basis. In most instances, the TA is valid for up to 90 days and then must be renewed or terminated.
- (b) Trip-by-Trip Authorization - Permits an individual or individuals (group travel) to travel to one or more specific destinations and return within a specified amount of time.
- (c) Combined Travel Authorization (CTA) - Permits group travel to the same destination for travel charged to the Disaster Relief Fund appropriation account. CTAs are to be used for disaster activities only and may not be used for travel charged to any other appropriation account. Only FEMA employees can travel under a CTA.
- (d) Invitational Travel - Permits persons who are from other Federal Government agencies or are non-Federal Government employees to travel when they are serving in a capacity that is directly related to official FEMA business. Invitational travel must be authorized by a letter addressed to the specific traveler containing specific information on the purpose and duration of the trip, mode of transportation and allowable expenses.

A chart listing who is authorized to approve what types of travel is attached. Special reimbursements require special approvals.

USE OF TRAVEL MANAGEMENT CENTER

All FEMA employees are required by the FTR to use the Agency's official travel management system when making arrangements for authorized official business travel. **National Travel Services** is FEMA's Travel Management Center (TMC). National Travel Services must be used for all common carrier reservations. It is recommended that the TMC be used for lodging and rental car reservations. Do **NOT** use an independent agent. National Travel Services, FEMA's TMC, provides reservation services 24 hours daily 7 days per week (including holidays). There is a transaction fee charged when the ticket is issued. Reservations may be changed or cancelled prior to issuance of the ticket with no fee.

Travel Agent Reservations:

Toll-free phone number (1-800-294-8283);

Toll-free fax number (1-800-972-4042);

On-Line reservations (<http://www.nationaltravel.com/fema.html>).

Reservations can be made but tickets **will not be issued** without a TA number. Travelers who do not make reservations using the TMC must provide a justification, signed by their supervisor, explaining why they did not make their reservation through the TMC. This written explanation must be attached to the voucher.

TRANSPORTATION

Common Carrier Tickets

FEMA employees are mandatory users of the contract city-pair rates and routes. This means that the designated contract carrier for a specific route must be considered as priority service. There are only three justifications for non-contract use. The TMC must be provided with the reason for not using a non-city-pair contractor.

1. The contract carrier either does not have the seating space available or the schedule will not permit the traveler to arrive in a timely manner;
 2. Use of the contract carrier will result in extra per diem expenses; or
 3. A non-contract carrier offers a lower price for a refundable ticket.
- You will only be reimbursed for **coach class**. Purchase an e:ticket. If you join a frequent flyer club, you may be eligible for preferred seating

assignment and priority boarding. Use of frequent flyer miles is addressed later in this publication.

BUSINESS AND FIRST CLASS TRAVEL

Business class may be used if your continuous travel time is equal to or greater than 14 hours and it is pre-approved on your TA. If you take a rest stop and incur per diem, you may not travel business class. Frequent flyer miles can be used to upgrade any ticket. Per the FTR and FEMA policy, you may **not** be reimbursed for the use of first class travel except to accommodate a documented disability or medical need. All first class travel to be reimbursed must be approved by the Director.

FREQUENT FLYER BENEFITS AND BONUS PROGRAMS

Employees may retain promotional items earned on official travel, including frequent flyer miles, for **personal** use. Any promotional benefits or material received from a travel service provider in connection with official travel may be retained for personal use, if such items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public at **no additional cost to the**

GOVERNMENT

Frequent traveler benefits can be used for personal travel or to upgrade official travel at no additional cost to FEMA. It is the policy of the Government and FEMA that employees must travel by coach class accommodations. However, frequent flyer benefits may be used to upgrade coach class tickets to premium class, at no additional cost to the Government. Each traveler is responsible for establishing their own frequent travel promotional benefits account. Any associated costs are not a reimbursable expense.

RENTAL CARS

The Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC) negotiates with various rental car companies and enters into an agreement to provide rental car services for Federal employees traveling on official business. Compact size cars should be rented unless a larger size car is authorized, with justification, on the TA. A larger vehicle can be authorized if the employee requires it for physical reasons, the number of passengers and luggage cannot be accommodated by the compact size car or items are being transported, such as computers, that require a larger size car. In very rare instances, off-road vehicles may be authorized when required to complete

the Agency's mission. Extra government drivers can be added to the contract with no additional cost. Rental cars may be driven home, however, no reimbursement will be made for those days (such as weekends) when the traveler is not in travel status. The employee may be responsible for damages. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Included in the negotiated rates is coverage for Collision Damage Waiver Insurance (CDW). Federal employees are **not** to accept CDW coverage offered by the rental company when renting a vehicle. Employees taking this coverage for their own personal reasons cannot be reimbursed for this insurance. You can be reimbursed for insurance if you are traveling overseas and the rental car company requires insurance in order to rent you the car. Documentation of this shall be provided by the rental car company.

PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE

A traveler may use their POV if it is approved on the Travel Authorization. The current reimbursement rate is 37.5 cents per mile (any modification to this will be issued under a CFO Bulletin or by e-mail.) The total reimbursement for non-authorized use of your POV may NOT exceed common carrier travel costs to the same destination. This includes mileage as well as any en route per diem (lodging and M&IE) that may be incurred in connection with travel by the POV. FEMA cannot require you to use your POV, nor can FEMA require you to take passengers in your POV. Care should be taken in approving the use of POVs as there could be liability issues should accidents occur.

PER DIEM

Per diem is the allowance provided to the traveler for lodging and Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE). The per diem rates are established by GSA for continental United States; Department of Defense for non-foreign OCONUS; and Department of State for foreign locations. Lodging rates vary dependent upon the location. Taxes are not included in the lodging rates for the Continental United States and non-foreign areas (Hawaii, Alaska, and the U.S. Territories) and should be claimed as a separate expense for reimbursement by the traveler. Lodging taxes are included in the foreign per diem rates and cannot be claimed separately.

Lodging reservations should be made at establishments certified to comply with the Hotel Motel Fire Safety Act. Lodging is reimbursed at the actual not-to-exceed per diem rate. M&IE is flat-rated - no receipts are required. M&IE varies from \$30 to \$46 per day. M&IE is reduced on the first and last

days of travel to 3/4 (75%) of the allowance for the travel location (destination). Lodging will only be reimbursed for one location per night while in travel status. If unusual circumstances require the traveler to incur lodging at two establishments for one night, approval must be obtained from the Chief Financial Officer prior to reimbursement for dual lodging for one night.

CHANGES IN M&IE

M&IE rates cannot be increased but they can be decreased. When a meal is provided at Government expense or included in a registration fee, a traveler must take an appropriate reduction in the meals and incidental expense (M&IE) allowance. The amount of reduction is predicated on the M&IE locality rate where the temporary duty is being performed. For the breakdown of M&IE by meal, see GSA website:

<http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/offering.jsp?OID=22812>, or the attachment at the end of this document.

APPROVAL OF ACTUAL LODGING EXPENSE

The Director, Assistant Directors, Administrators, Regional Directors, and Office Directors are delegated the authority to approve and authorize actual lodging expenses for FEMA employees within their own office/region when specific conditions exist. The criteria to be used for approving actual subsistence expenses are discussed in FEMA Travel Manual, chapter 19.

The Director, Assistant Directors, Administrators, Regional Directors, and Office Directors can approve an increase up to 150 percent of the prescribed lodging rate. The Chief Financial Officer (FAMD) is delegated the authority to approve an increase in the prescribed lodging rate between 151% and 300%. No increase above 300% is permitted by law. All requests should include a list of 5 contacted hotels and their rates.

LODGING TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

Some states, cities and local municipalities offer tax exemption status for lodging to Federal employees while traveling on official Government business. This tax exemption applies only to applicable taxes for lodging. There are a minimal number of states, cities and local municipalities offering this exemption. The list of those locations offering tax exemption can be found at GSA website:

<http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem>. Tax exemption certificates may be obtained from this web site. Under no circumstances should a FEMA employee insist on tax exemption or present an

unauthorized tax exemption certificate to a lodging establishment in any state that does not authorize tax exemptions.

NO SHOW PENALTY

Federal employees are personally responsible for their own travel arrangements. If travelers guarantee late arrival at their hotel and fail to cancel their reservation within the hotels prescribed period of time, you may be billed a no show penalty. This penalty is generally the cost of one night's lodging but can be more. FEMA has no authority to reimburse a traveler for no show penalties incurred for personal reasons. Be sure to cancel all reservations if your trip is canceled. If you made all of your travel arrangements through FEMA's TMC, they will be responsible for canceling all reservations made by them, if you notify them promptly. Traveler's incurring no show penalty charges, due to last minute changes to their travel itinerary that are beyond their control, should request reimbursement through a memorandum to the Chief Financial Officer. This memorandum should state the specific facts, beyond the control of the traveler, which resulted in a no show penalty.

Other Reimbursable and Non-Reimbursable Expenses

ATM Program (Automated Teller Machine)

No cash advances are issued by FEMA. To obtain a travel advance, use an ATM and your contractor-issued Government travel charge card. Both the 1.25% user fee charged by Citibank and any fee charged for use of the ATM machine are reimbursable with a receipt. ATM withdrawals are limited to an amount authorized in accordance with your Travel Authorization, not to exceed \$350 per week.

Personal Phone Calls

Employees are entitled to be reimbursed for personal phone calls not to exceed \$5 per day or a maximum of \$15 for any one week (defined as 5 to 7 days.) Personal phone call limits while on OCONUS travel are \$7.50 per day or \$22.50 for any one-week trip. Receipts for personal phone calls are not required. Personal phone calls are restricted to calling home or to a third party caring for personal property or children while on temporary duty travel.

Official Business Calls

Phone calls made in conjunction with official Government business are reimbursable expenses. The travel voucher must be annotated with the name of the party or office called. Failure to include this information will result in a disallowance of the expense claimed.

Laundry and Dry Cleaning

Laundry and dry cleaning bills up to \$15 per week may be claimed if the traveler is on TDY at least 4 days in the continental United States or nonforeign (Alaska, Hawaii, U.S. Territories) areas. Only the actual expense incurred at the TDY site may be claimed. Laundry and dry cleaning may not be claimed for travel in foreign locations.

Taxis

Taxi fees are reimbursable expenses. Taxi fares in excess of \$25 require a receipt.

Nonreimbursable Travel Expenses

Certain travel expenses are considered to be non-reimbursable. Most of these expenses are included in the incidental expense portion of your per diem allowance. The M&IE allowance includes \$3.00 per day to cover fees and tips to waiters, porters, bellboys, hotel maids, dining room stewards, etc (tips for personal baggage are covered in M&IE). Other purchases such as computer disks, cables, pencils, paper, etc, are not to be purchased with travel funds and may not be claimed on travel vouchers.

Vouchering

Travel vouchers must be submitted within 5 working days upon completion of the temporary duty assignment. Employees on extended travel, such as at disaster locations, are required to submit a voucher every two weeks from the date of reporting to the TDY site. Travel vouchers are generally processed within 4 working days of receipt in the Office of Financial Management. FEMA employees will be reimbursed via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for travel expenses.

Vouchers for non-disaster travel should be sent to the Office of Financial Management at Headquarters, or the appropriate financial section within the Regional (field) office. Disaster funded travel should be sent to the Disaster

Finance Division at Mt. Weather, Building 708.

Receipts Required

The following original receipts must be attached to either an SF 1012 when claiming reimbursement for temporary duty or an SF 1164 when claiming reimbursement for local travel expenses:

1. Common carrier receipt (airplane, bus, rail, etc.) (TMC itinerary invoice)
2. Zero-balance lodging receipt
3. Rental car receipt
4. TMC transaction fee receipt (itinerary invoice)
5. ATM fee and ATM machine user fee receipt
6. Gasoline receipt (for rental cars and fleet vehicles)
7. Parking receipt, and
8. **All other expenses over \$25**

To claim reimbursement when a receipt for other than lodging and common carrier is lost, the traveler must include a statement specifying the amount and type of expense incurred. The explanation should state "I certify that I incurred _____ expense on [date] in the amount of \$ _____", followed by the traveler's signature, and can be attached as a separate sheet. Excessive use of claims without receipts is grounds for review and possible denial of travel reimbursement claims. If the employee stays at a lodging establishment without pre-printed receipts, the Tax Identification Number (TIN) or the Social Security Number of the owner must be included on the proof of payment statement.

Other Important Travel Information

Authorized Return Home

Employees on travel for longer durations (such as Disaster Assistance Employees) may be authorized to return home at Government expense after 30 to 45 days. Generally, employees must return home for a period of not less than 5 to 7 days. A return home is not an automatic process and must be authorized and approved by the appropriate officials at the temporary duty site, such as a Federal Coordinating Officer as the Disaster Field Office.

Return Home For Medical Treatment

Employees deployed/assigned to work at a temporary duty site, such as a

Disaster Field Office, should be aware that if an employee must return home for medical treatment, yearly physical exam, check up, eye exam, etc., the return home expense shall be borne by the employee. FEMA may not reimburse travel expenses for personal purposes. This does not apply to job related injuries or illnesses.

Citibank Visa Travel Charge Card Program

All FEMA travelers are required to use the contractor-issued Government travel charge card to purchase common carrier tickets, lodging, rental cars, and travel advances. The travel charge card is for official authorized Government travel only and employees are prohibited from making any personal purchases using the contractor-issued Government travel charge card. All cardholders are responsible for payment of their travel charge card bills in full by the due date. Non-timely payment is considered to be misconduct and may result in disciplinary action up to removal. The contractor-issued Government purchase charge card shall not be used to pay for travel-related expenses.

Third Party Travel

Third party travel is travel paid by someone other than FEMA. This travel must be approved by both the General Counsel (Ethics Officer) and the Director.

Internet Sites With Travel Information

The following information can be obtained on the Internet:

Per Diem Rates: <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/travel.shtml>

Tax Exempt Forms: <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/StTaxexemp.shtml>.

International Travel: <http://travel.state.gov>
(press releases and travel advisories)

U. S. Customs Information:
<http://www.customs.gov/travel/travel.htm>

National Travel Service: www.nationaltravel.com/fema.html
(on-line reservation service)

Additional Information

If you need information on disaster related travel vouchers sent to the

Disaster Finance Division, call the toll free line: 1-800-310-3169. For information on vouchers submitted to headquarters, call Alicia Ross on 202-646-3853. For additional information on travel policy, contact Carolyn Nawrocki (202-646-2698) or Tange Drake (202-646-2983) in the Office of Financial Management, Financial Policy Division.

Meals and Incidentals Expenses (M&IE)
Breakdown by Meal

AUTHORIZATION FOR TRAVEL

Your authorization must be signed by For...

The Director, Assistant Directors, Administrators,
Regional Directors, Office Dirs. - may be
redelegated

1. Trip-by-trip
2. Use of a foreign flag carrier
3. Use of extra-fare train service
4. Use of a commercial rental automobile
5. Use of a Government aircraft (with General Counsel concurrence)
6. Increase rate of per diem for subsistence expenses up to 150%
7. Travel expenses related to emergency travel (not CTA)
8. Travel expenses related to attendance at a conference

The Director, Assistant Directors, Administrators,
Regional Directors, Office Dirs. - may **not** be
redelegated

1. Blanket/limited Blanket Travel
2. Use of cash to pay for common carrier transportation

The Director, Regional Director - may **not** be
redelegated

1. Combined Travel Authorization
2. Use of premium-class service on common carrier transportation
3. Travel by vessel
4. Subsistence expenses for a temporary duty assignment lasting more than 1 year

Director, Regional Directors (within their Region),

- may **not** be redelegated

1. Invitational Travel

Chief Financial Officer 1. Use of reduced fares for group or charter arrangements

2. Increase rate of per diem for subsistence expenses from 151%-300%

3. Dual lodging

Director may **not** be redelegated 1. Transportation expenses related to threatened law

enforcement/investigative employees

2. Travel expenses related to travel to a foreign area

3. Acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses