

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

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# FSIS DIRECTIVE

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3900.1

10/25/21

## TEMPORARY DUTY TRAVEL

### CHAPTER I - BASIC PROVISIONS

#### I. PURPOSE

This directive applies to all temporary duty travel (TDY) performed by FSIS personnel. FSIS has rewritten this directive in its entirety and combined it with the other directives listed in the cancellation section.

#### II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Directive 3800.1, *Temporary Duty Travel Within CONUS*, 3/06/02

FSIS Directive 3800.12, *Travel Advances*, 11/21/07

FSIS Directive 3805.1, *Travel Authorizations*, 1/06/94

FSIS Directive 3810.1, *Responsibilities of Approving Officers for Review and Approval of Vouchers*, 6/15/82

FSIS Directive 3810.3, *Travel Vouchers*, 10/11/88

FSIS Directive 3840.1, *Temporary Duty Travel Outside CONUS*, 10/28/88

#### III. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

This reissuance combines, streamlines, updates, and removes extraneous information from multiple directives, listed above. Below is a list of substantial changes.

Chapter One, V. A. - Adds Office of Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) responsibilities;

Chapter One, V. E. - Adds Federal Agency Travel Administrator (FATA) responsibilities;

Chapter Two, III. D. - Removes the one higher level approval requirement for mixed travel;

Chapter Three, VI - Removes previous receipt requirement for all incidental expenses of a rental car;

Chapter Four, I. B. - Adds limit on parking at common carrier terminal per [41 CFR §301-10.308](#); and

Chapter Four, II. C. - Changes policy on rounding on tips from \$0.05 to whole dollar.

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**DISTRIBUTION: Electronic; All field employees**

**OPI: OPPD**

## IV. BACKGROUND

A. This directive serves as a supplement to established Federal and Department policies found in the following:

1. *Federal Travel Regulations (FTR)* [41 CFR §300](#) & [41 CFR §301](#);
2. [Department Regulation 2300-005](#), *Agriculture Travel Regulation (ATR)*; and
3. [Department Regulation 2300-001](#), *Government Travel Card Regulation*.

**NOTE:** Local travel is subject to [FSIS Directive 3800.2](#), *Reimbursement for Use of Privately Owned Vehicles*, and relocation travel is subject to [FSIS Directive 3820.1](#), *Relocation for Transferring Employees*.

## V. NON-DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

A. OCFO is responsible for managing the FSIS travel program, ensuring travel systems and logistical tools facilitate the accomplishment of the Agency mission, verifying that all relevant legal and regulatory travel requirements are followed, and ensuring properly filed travel voucher claims for the reimbursement of FSIS travelers are paid timely. OCFO is to:

1. Ensure that Government travel funds are allocated and used within legal limitations;
2. Ensure the Agency maintains effective internal controls through travel monitoring, investigation, auditing, reporting, and counseling, as needed;
3. Set and determine FSIS policy regarding travel reimbursement allowances that may be claimed;
4. Develop and communicate policy on repaying outstanding travel balances and managing internal control measures with district or program area offices to ensure proper payment;
5. Monitor for fraud, waste, and abuse of Government travel charge cards (GOVCCs), travel advances, and travel systems;
6. Maintain overall administrative management of the travel charge card program, establish Agency-wide credit limits, and serve as the liaison with the Contractor Bank;
7. Issue and interpret Agency policy and instructions regarding use of the card; and
8. Determine policy, communicate requirements, and disseminate travel rulings for FSIS for foreign and domestic travel.

B. The Office of Management, Labor and Employee Relations Division (LERD) determines the appropriate disciplinary action or adverse action for any issues referred to them by the employee's chain of command. Penalties could include written reprimands, suspensions, or removal from service.

## **VI. DISTRICT OFFICE AND PROGRAM AREA OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. Travel approving officials (travel approvers) are Agency officials who have primary control of the use of FSIS travel funds, are assigned the responsibility of authorizing travel and approving travel voucher payments and need to take care to ensure Government funds are paid appropriately to protect the public trust while reimbursing Government employees for expenses necessarily incurred because of public business.

B. When possible District Offices and Program Areas should use virtual means of communication in lieu of TDY.

C. Unless otherwise stated in FSIS policy, travel approvers are responsible for selecting appropriate travel methods and for determining when travel arrangements and reimbursements are applicable, justified, and in the Government interest. Travel Approvers are to:

1. Ensure employee travelers are aware of the travel regulations applicable to their trip (including per diem allowances), prior to the assignment of travel;
2. Authorize the advancement of travel funds when required for performing official travel. Advancement of funds will not be requested or approved under any other circumstances;
3. Maintain duty of care obligations by knowing the status and whereabouts of employee travelers while on authorized travel; and
4. Make a careful review of each voucher. Travel voucher claims are to be thorough, in accordance with authorized Government travel, and accurately document the claimant's travel activity. Voucher claims may not be approved until the Travel Approver has established their validity and ensures the justifications provided for audit failures is appropriate.

D. Travel Reviewers assist the primary travel approvers in the review of travel documentation to ensure accuracy, validity and support, and assist with travel policy compliance. Reviewers may provide general support or perform reviews for a specific function or role in the travel process. Travel Reviewers are to:

1. Ensure that travel voucher claims are accurate, supported, and properly entered into the Government electronic travel system, prior to approval by the travel approver; and
2. Ensure that voucher claims submitted for payment by travelers are presented to travel approvers timely.

E. FATA, as identified and assigned by program area office management, are responsible for ensuring the efficient, effective, and legal processing of travel documentation within their assigned area of responsibility. FATA are to:

1. Provide relevant guidance and requirements when performing Government-directed travel;
2. Assist Travel Approvers in the application of travel laws and regulations for proper travel reservations, authorization of expenses, and documentation of travel approval; and
3. Ensure that problems affecting timely and accurate document processing are identified, addressed, and resolved.

F. Travel preparers, acting on behalf of individual travelers, are responsible for carrying out the travel

logistical and documentation preparation duties, as directed by their program management, to assist travelers in meeting travel obligations.

G. Travelers are employees or invited guests performing travel on behalf of the Agency to accomplish official Government business away from their official duty station (ODS) and residence. Travelers are to comply with all regulations in the ATR and FTR, as well as document their travel arrangements and planning, including any special travel needs or situations, or deviations from authorized travel for which they will be personally liable. Travelers who are issued GOVCCs are to adhere to [Department Regulation 2300-001](#) and are responsible for reviewing and reconciling their card.

H. The district and program area offices are responsible for counseling travelers on rules and regulations governing GOVCC use and payment and referring to LERD cases of card misuse for determination.

## **CHAPTER II - TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION**

### **I. TDY AUTHORIZATIONS**

A. FSIS TDY authorization is on a trip by trip basis and permits an individual to take one specific trip that is identified as to date, purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs.

B. TDY Travel Terminology:

1. Duty location. A physical point, usually identified by the street address of a single location, where an employee performs official duties on a regular or temporary basis. A duty location could be the local FSIS office where work is performed or a plant where inspection work is done. Duty locations also include TDY points or relief assignment plants. Employees may have a single duty location or multiple duty locations.
2. Official Duty Station. The corporate limits of the city or town or other established area with definite boundaries in which an employee is stationed on a permanent basis.
  - a. If an employee is stationed in a city that is completely within the corporate limits of a larger city, the employee's ODS includes the corporate limits of the larger city.
  - b. If an employee is not stationed in an incorporated city or town, the ODS is determined in the following order of precedence:
    - i. The reservation, station, or established area in which the ODS is located.
    - ii. The area covered by a 25-mile radius around the duty point designated as the employee's Primary Duty Location.

**NOTE:** When this occurs, the employee's ODS will be shown on some personnel documents as the nearest location for which GSA has assigned a geographic location code, even though this may differ from the actual official station. However, the employee will be notified in writing of the Primary Duty Location and the ODS.

3. Primary duty location (PDL). The single duty location used for reference in determining the limits of an employee's ODS to which the employee is assigned to work regularly. The duty location listed on the SF-50 should be used to determine the PDL for travel purposes. Employees with multiple duty

locations will be assigned a designated headquarter plant at one of the employee's regular assignments or their residence as the primary duty location of record.

4. Residence. A place from which the employee regularly commutes to the PDL. The residence may not always be the legal residence, such as for tax or voting purposes.

C. TDY travel begins when an employee leaves their residence, PDL, or other duty location within the ODS, for a destination that is outside the ODS.

D. TDY travel ends when the traveler returns to their residence, or duty location within the ODS.

**NOTE:** Even if the trip is 12 hours or less, the travel is still TDY. FSIS may not authorize per diem for travel 12 hours or less, but the traveler may claim all other authorized travel expenses.

E. These definitions apply to travel reimbursements. Definitions in regard to travel overtime and travel comp time are included in [FSIS Directive 4550.1](#), *Travel Time Pay Entitlements Under Title 5 U.S. Code*.

## II. SPECIAL TDY AUTHORIZATIONS

A. A traveler is to obtain authorization on [Form AD-1101](#) to accept travel paid by a non-federal source before such travel begins. More information can be found at the [USDA Ethics website](#).

B. Travelers requiring special travel accommodations or travel expenses are to have their travel authorized in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and [Departmental Manual 4300-002](#), *Reasonable Accommodation Procedures*.

C. Deviations from authorized itinerary or mode of transportation are to be documented as part of travel authorization, and if the deviation will result in a difference in expected cost, a constructed cost comparison is to be created. See [41 CFR §301-74.4](#) for more information.

D. Only the FSIS Administrator can authorize premium-class service, premium class airline or train accommodation, such as business or first class. Travelers are to refer to [41 CFR §301-10.123](#) and [Departmental Regulation 2300-005](#) section 3(h) for more information. To receive a determination whether the request meets the required conditions, the traveler is to complete [FSIS form 3820-11](#), *Premium Class Travel Request* (level 2 e-authorization is needed to access this site) and submit the form for approval. All premium class accommodation requests must be approved by the FSIS Administrator, and FSIS form 3820-11 is to be included with the trip documentation.

E. Travelers requiring two coach seats or coach-class seating upgrade fares described under [41 CFR §301-10.124](#) must have a reasonable accommodation and the approval of their District Manager or equivalent.

F. A traveler making a request under [41 CFR §301-10.125](#) (the 14-hour rule) is to show that he or she will report for significant work within ten hours of landing. Significant work is defined as a meeting with non-USDA staff where USDA cannot control the schedule OR work lasting more than four hours.

G. In instances of emergency travel (see Chapter VI, Section II) where the traveler meets an exemption under [41 CFR §301-50.4](#) the traveler is to complete USDA Travel Authorization Form, [AD-202](#). If the traveler cannot complete the [AD-202](#) (e.g., insufficient time, national security interest) then Travel Approvers may document authorization through other written means, such as e-mail or memo. In situations where the traveler's life is not endangered, or such use would not compromise a national security interest, travel reimbursements will be processed through the electronic travel systems (ETS).

## CHAPTER III - METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION

### I. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The travel approver (or their designee) selects the mode of transportation in accordance with [41 CFR §301-70.101](#). This may be delegated to other officials, such as immediate supervisors, who are in a better position to determine current mission requirements.

### II. COMMON CARRIER SERVICE

A. Travelers with access to more than one airport or common carrier service near their residence or PDL are to consider all available airport flights and modes of transportation, unless a constructed cost comparison, including time, transportation and ticket costs, shows travel from one airport is more advantageous to the Government than others.

B. The traveler is responsible for canceling reserved travel accommodations as soon as it is known that he or she will not use the accommodations. The traveler's negligence to take such action makes the traveler liable for any losses suffered by the Government.

C. Refunds, credits, or other forms of repayment are handled as follows:

1. For a GOVCC, the traveler is responsible for obtaining the proper refund or credit to their GOVCC when the card is used to purchase tickets. The traveler is not entitled to file a claim on the voucher for a ticket purchased for official business when the ticket is refunded. For non-Refundable or restricted fares, the traveler may file a claim, but any credits for future use may not be used personally; and
2. When tickets are purchased through the Government's centrally billed account (CBA), refunds and credits are returned to the Agency account.

### II. USE OF GOVERNMENT OWNED VEHICLE (GOV)

FSIS may authorize use of a GOV in accordance with [FSIS Directive 2450.1](#), *Assignment and Use of Motor Vehicles for Official FSIS Business*. Travelers may not claim mileage, fuel, or maintenance on their travel claim.

### III. PERSONALLY OWNED VEHICLE (POV)

A. Travel Approvers may authorize travelers to be reimbursed for use of their privately-owned automobiles, motorcycles, or airplanes on official business at the applicable Government approved reimbursement rate (published at [www.gsa.gov/mileage](http://www.gsa.gov/mileage)). Such use is authorized or approved:

1. When a POV is more advantageous than a GOV. The use of a POV instead of a GOV is considered advantageous to the Government when:
  - a. A high-mileage driver committed to using a GOV uses a POV until a GOV becomes available;
  - b. A traveler, other than a high-mileage driver, needs a vehicle on a trip-by-trip basis and the time and cost involved in obtaining and returning a GOV are not warranted;

- c. A traveler, other than a high-mileage driver, needs a vehicle on a daily basis for official travel;
- d. An assigned GOV to which the traveler normally has access is not available; and
- e. No GOV is available.

- 2. As an exercise of the traveler's personal preference to use a private vehicle instead of a Government-furnished vehicle or common carrier service;

B. There is no requirement that a traveler hold the POV title to be reimbursed for mileage.

#### **IV. SPECIAL CONVEYANCE**

A. The use of a special conveyance (see [41 CFR §301-10.400](#)) will be authorized and reimbursed only when common carrier, GOV, and POV are not available or when the use is not advantageous to the Government.

B. When two or more individuals traveling on official business share a special conveyance or other rented vehicle, each traveler's name and employing agency is to be reported on each traveler's voucher. Only one traveler may claim the cost of the rented vehicle.

C. For short term automobile rental (less than 30 days), the Department of Defense has negotiated special rates for Government travelers on official business under the *U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement* managed by the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO). When available, only vendors on this agreement may be used for CONUS travel. When appropriate to meet mission requirements, FSIS will authorize and reimburse expenses for Electronic Toll Collection Systems provided by rental car vendors.

D. FSIS may authorize the use of commercially rented vehicles (e.g., boat, aircraft, long term, or other vehicle rental) for long term or specific mission requirements, only when specifically approved, justified, and no other possible mode of transportation can be used.

### **CHAPTER IV - TRANSPORTATION AND MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE ALLOWANCES**

#### **I. TRANSPORTATION IN AND AROUND THE TEMPORARY DUTY LOCATION (TDL)**

A. Reimbursement of expenses will be limited to the most cost advantageous method of transportation available. Travelers are to consider the use of public transportation as well as courtesy transportation service furnished by their hotel/motel.

B. Travelers may be reimbursed for tips paid to drivers up to 20 percent of the fare, rounded up to the nearest whole dollar. Tips to a courtesy transportation service furnished by hotels/motels are reimbursed up to \$5 a trip.

#### **II. POV EXPENSES**

A. Travelers on TDY travel may claim actual expenses, including mileage and tolls, incurred for POV travel from departure at a residence, PDL, or other duty location within the ODS to the TDLs, any necessary travel between TDLs, and return to either a residence or ODS by the shortest public route available.

B. FSIS will only authorize partial reimbursement of POV mileage, at the lowest rate authorized by [41 CFR §301-10.310](#), when a GOV is available for the traveler to use.

C. Reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred in and around an employee's ODS can be found in [FSIS Directive 3800.2](#).

### **III. BAGGAGE EXPENSES**

A. FSIS will pay baggage fees in accordance with [41 CFR §301-12.2](#). The travel approver determines when baggage is necessary for official travel.

B. The travel approver is to consider the requirement for use of least costly means of shipment.

1. When the weight of property needed by the traveler exceeds the carrier's baggage allowance, the excess baggage is to be shipped by the least costly means available that will meet the traveler's needs. Parcel post, freight, and express service is to be evaluated on probable cost and time required to retrieve the shipment at the destination when determining which option is most advantageous to the Government; and
2. Make freight and express shipments using Government accounts whenever practicable. If a Government account is not available, travelers may be directly reimbursed. Support the claim with a detailed receipt showing all charges, the number of packages, the content and weight of each package, and the points between which the property was transported.

### **IV. COMMUNICATION SERVICES**

A. Personal telecommunication expenses are authorized under [Department Regulation 2300-005](#) section (n)(1). FSIS limits this reimbursement to telephone calls only. Travelers are to submit documentation to show the expense was out of pocket. If documentation is not available, travelers are to identify the service and vendor (e.g., a call from the hotel room purchased from the hotel). Calls on unlimited cell phone plans are not reimbursable.

B. FSIS will authorize the cost of internet access (such as Wi-Fi access in an airport or hotel) according to mission needs and travelers are not to use the access for personal use.

### **V. LAUNDRY, CLEANING, AND PRESSING OF CLOTHES**

Travelers may claim reimbursement for actual out of pocket laundry expenses if they meet the requirements under [41 CFR §301-11.31](#).

## **CHAPTER V - PER DIEM**

### **I. GENERAL GUIDELINES**

See [41 CFR §301-11](#) for information regarding per diem.

### **II. LIMITATIONS ON PER DIEM**

The per diem allowance may not be paid:

- A. Within an employee's ODS.



- B. Within a 25-mile radius of either the employee's PDL or place of residence from which the employee commutes daily when the travel is within one calendar day.
- C. Within a 35-mile radius of the employee's PDL or place of residence when the travel is for more than one calendar day.

### III. ACTUAL EXPENSE SUBSISTENCE

- A. Reimbursement of actual per diem allowance may be allowed for the actual amounts that are incurred while on official travel at locations during special events when demand on lodging or food may rise (sporting events, conventions, natural or manmade disasters), or to locations where only high-rate lodging is available. Actual expense per diem allowances require the approval of the FSIS Administrator, and Travelers are to request the authorization using [FSIS Form 3820-6](#), *Requests for Actual Per Diem Allowances*, (level 2 e-authorization is needed to access this site).
- B. Situations where affordable lodging accommodations are not available or cannot be obtained within a reasonable commuting distance of the traveler's TDY point are eligible for actual expenses. Travelers must include a cost benefit analysis including transportation costs and choose whichever lodging is most beneficial to the government (e.g. the least expensive option). The request for actual per diem allowance is to be accompanied by a list of hotels that were contacted and the quoted hotel rates. OCFO will reject the request if this is not provided.
- C. The traveler is required to include a justification on [FSIS Form 3820-6](#) and satisfactorily explain the circumstances requiring a non-standard or locality rate. OCFO will reject the request if this is not provided.
- D. The traveler is required to provide evidence that no lodging is available through the ETS, at or near the TDY location, that would be cost advantageous to the Government if used. OCFO will reject the request if this is not provided.
- E. The traveler is to address both the lodging and meals and incidental expense (M&IE) portions of per diem.
- F. Travelers are to submit the Request for Actual Per Diem Allowances in advance of the trip, or for emergency travel situations with justification. Travelers who incur Actual Expense Subsistence costs without proper authorization may be personally liable for the excess of the per diem that was authorized.
- G. Requests for post approval of Actual Expense Subsistence are limited to those cases where the extra costs incurred were unforeseen. Post-approval requests are to be accompanied by a justification explaining why the actual per diem allowance could not be approved in advance and evidence that no other lodging was available at or near the TDY location.
- H. When travel is authorized or approved on an actual per diem allowances basis, a traveler is to itemize on the travel voucher each expense for each authorization granted. If Actual Expense lodging was authorized, daily charges are to be itemized for actual amounts incurred. If Actual Expense M&IE was authorized, each individual meal (i.e., breakfast, lunch, and dinner) is to be itemized separately.
- I. FSIS only authorizes the travelers' Actual Expense Subsistence for those days when the higher rate is required; travelers may be authorized reimbursement on both a standard locality and an actual expense basis for the same trip. However, only one rate may apply to each day. The applicable rate or reimbursement method shall be on a calendar day basis and shall be based on the TDY location at the end of the day.

#### IV. REDUCTIONS IN MAXIMUM PER DIEM RATES

A. FSIS will authorize a reduced per diem rate (Lodging, M&IE or both) under appropriate circumstances, when the Government can determine in advance that lodging and/or meals can be obtained by the traveler more advantageously for the Government.

B. When such factors are known in advance, the per diem rate is authorized at a reduced rate. This can include trainings, meetings, and conventions. Officials arranging or sponsoring such a meeting or convention are responsible for establishing the appropriate per diem rate (within the maximum established by Government Services Administration), and notifying participants attending the meeting of the per diem rate. If travelers fail to account for known factors in advance on the authorization, their voucher claims will be reduced at the time of claim submission; any excess over the known factor reduction is the personal liability of the traveler.

C. When lodging is provided through Government means, including contracted housing, conference event lodging, or Government and military housing, travelers are to be reimbursed only for lodging expenses actually incurred, up to the authorized rate.

D. Where per diem allowances are reimbursed directly to the traveler by a cooperating State through arrangements made by FSIS, the Agency will not pay per diem.

E. During the first 29 days of travel, the traveler is authorized the full per diem rate. For any travel in which lodging at a single location will be 30 days or more, travelers are expected to find long-term, or extended stay accommodations suitable for lodging and meal preparation. Per diem rate (lodging and M&IE) will be authorized at a reduced rate of only 55 percent of the standard/locality.

#### V. INTERRUPTIONS OF PER DIEM ENTITLEMENT

A. Reimbursement for per diem is not allowed if leave is taken for one-half or more of the prescribed working hours for the day.

**EXCEPTION:** Travelers who interrupt a travel assignment because of an incapacitating illness or injury are entitled to per diem for those days.

B. No per diem is allowed on non-workdays when:

1. The traveler is in a leave status at the end of the normally scheduled workday before the non-workdays (i.e., Friday) and at the beginning of the workday following the non-workdays (i.e., Monday); and
2. The period of leave on either of those days is one-half or more of the prescribed working hours for the days.

C. FSIS authorizes returning to the ODS in accordance with [41 CFR §301-11.22](#) and [41 CFR §301-11.23](#). FSIS may grant a traveler who is on an extended TDY assignment one round trip to their home or official station for non-workdays during a TDY assignment.:

1. Before approving such travel, the appropriate administrative official is to complete a cost analysis that demonstrates the cost effectiveness of such travel in terms of the overall costs of recruiting and retaining travelers and the impact of such travel on performance because of morale factors.

D. Travelers may voluntarily return to their residence or ODS as provided for in [41 CFR §301-11.24](#).

## **CHAPTER VI - SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

### **I. TRAVEL DURING NONDUTY HOURS**

A. Supervisors are to schedule travel during normal duty hours to the maximum extent practicable. Supervisors are to follow [FSIS Directive 4551.1](#), *Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act* and [FSIS Directive 4550.1](#) as appropriate to determine when travel during nonduty hours is compensable.

B. Supervisors are to ensure that employees take the most effective and efficient route to minimize travel time during nonduty hours.

### **II. EMERGENCY TRAVEL OF EMPLOYEES**

A. Travel approvers may authorize a continuation of per diem at point of interruption for up to 14 calendar days because of illness or injury. This authority may not be re-delegated.

B. The authority to approve the following allowances has been delegated to the Deputy Administrator.

1. Subsistence to travelers remaining at point of interruption beyond the initial 14 calendar days because of illness or injury;
2. Transportation and subsistence payments due to personal emergency situations; or
3. Transportation expenses to alternate locations or to the ODS due to illness, injury, or personal emergency.

**NOTE:** For Incapacitating Illness or Injury see [41 CFR §301-30](#) and for a Personal Emergency Situation see [41 CFR §301-70.507](#).

## **CHAPTER VII - SOURCES OF FUNDS**

A. Use of the GOVCC is mandatory unless exempted under [41 CFR §301-51.2](#) and [41 CFR §301-51.3](#). Additional information regarding GOVCC usage is in Chapter VIII of this directive.

B. Travelers unable to use the Government provided alternatives must account for travel expenses through personal credit card or cash. Ultimately, whether they receive a GOVCC or not, all travelers on official business are responsible for funding their travel expenses.

C. FSIS will use the Agency's CBA for common carrier expenses for travelers who are not eligible for a GOVCC or have had their GOVCC cancelled due to delinquency or misuse. FSIS cannot use the CBA for hotels or rental cars.

D. Travelers exempt from the mandatory use of GOVCCs and who have not been issued a GOVCC, may request an advance of funds as part of the authorization process at least six working days before the planned trip departure. The Government is not obligated to grant the request.

E. Travel advances are considered loans from the Government to travelers performing official business

travel. Travelers are to refund unused travel advances promptly.

1. FSIS enforces strict procedures for collecting outstanding travel advance balances;
2. FSIS begins collection on all outstanding travel advances 45 days from the date of the advance payment;
3. Deviations from this policy may result in disciplinary or adverse actions; and
4. Authorizing officials approve travel advances to eligible travelers for official travel. Advances are issued in the form of electronic funds transfer monies to the traveler's designated financial institution.

F. If a traveler has not repaid the travel advance balance in full, FSIS's collection action policy is as follows. Travel advances are considered outstanding if:

1. A travel advance balance remains after a claim for reimbursement for the travel has been submitted;
2. The trip was cancelled, and the travel advance has not been repaid;
3. 45 days or more have passed since the date the advance was issued without repayment;
4. Payroll deductions to recover outstanding travel advances cannot be suspended. There are no provisions to suspend deductions due to hardship circumstances;

G. Outstanding travel advances will be deducted from a traveler's paycheck if an advance is not:

1. Repaid; or
2. Applied to a travel voucher.

H. The National Finance Center (NFC) may deduct the entire balance of the traveler's salary to collect an outstanding travel advance balance. If the initial salary deductions are not sufficient to liquidate the outstanding balance, deductions will continue in successive pay periods until the full amount of the outstanding travel advance balance is liquidated.

I. The order of precedence when gross pay is not sufficient to permit all deductions will be made in accordance with the e-Payroll standardization initiative managed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), as described in OPM memorandum "[Order Of Precedence When Gross Pay Is Not Sufficient To Permit All Deductions](#)," PPM-2008-01, dated July 30, 2008.

J. In cases where non-employees have an outstanding travel advance, FSIS OCFO will contact the traveler and request a check repayment to reimburse the balance of the amount owed. If the traveler does not respond within 30 days, FSIS will work with the NFC to register the debt through the Treasury Offset Program and collect on the bill in accordance with [26 U.S.C. §6402\(d\)](#) and [31 U.S.C. §3720A](#).

## **CHAPTER VIII - GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CREDIT CARDS**

### **I. MANDATORY USE OF GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CREDIT CARD**

A. All travelers in FSIS are required to use a GOVCC for all travel expenses unless:

1. The travel expenses meet the requirements listed under [41 CFR §301-51.2](#);
2. The travelers are new Agency employees who fit the requirements for mandatory issuance but are to travel before receiving their card;
3. The traveler has a card application pending; or
4. The employee is in an intermittent or seasonal status.

**NOTE:** See [41 CFR §301-51.1](#), [Department Regulation 2300-001](#), *Government Travel Card Regulation*, and the cardholder agreement for more information.

## **II. RECEIVING A TRAVEL CARD**

A. Travelers may request an application or information packet from their District Offices (DO), program area office, or from OCFO. They are to:

1. Take and pass the mandatory training for a travel card; and
2. Complete all applications, and sign the acknowledgement and acceptance statement; and
3. Submit the training certificate of completion, complete application, and acknowledgement and acceptance statement to the DO or program area office.

B. The DO or program area office is to review the completed application, the signed acknowledgement and acceptance statement, and the training certificate of completion and then send the packet to OCFO for processing.

C. Transferred travelers from within the USDA will not receive a new card, their current card will remain active. However, transferees should notify OCFO to transfer their account into Agency records.

D. A transferred traveler from a Federal organization outside USDA cannot transfer their credit card and are to follow the application procedures for a new card.

## **III. CREDIT LIMIT INCREASES**

A. A traveler's DO or program area office can send a written request to OCFO and include a justification for a credit increase. The new limit is subject to review and may be reduced if an increased spending level is not deemed appropriate.

B. For an increase on a single trip, a traveler's DO or program area office is to send a written request to OCFO with a justification for the credit increase, and the duration the card needs to be increased. The credit limit will be reduced to the original level upon completion of the need.

C. The Agency does not increase an employee's credit limit to accommodate a traveler who fails to pay an outstanding balance in full and on time.

D. GOVCC maximum credit limits are determined by the Department.

#### **IV. AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINE (ATM) USAGE**

Travelers may use their GOVCC to withdraw cash from an ATM no earlier than 3 days before official travel begins and official travel ends. Cash withdrawals are to comply with [Departmental Regulation 2300-001](#).

#### **V. PAYING THE BILL**

Cardholders are to pay all undisputed charges listed in the monthly statement on or before the due date. Cardholders are responsible for paying the outstanding balance in full even if they have not received reimbursement from the Agency for their travel expenses or if they have not received a statement from the bank. Partial payments resulting in delinquency are considered misuse. Cardholders are not relieved of their obligation to pay the GOVCC bill even in those instances when the Agency has not reimbursed them within 30-days after receipt of a timely submitted voucher.

#### **VI. AGENCY REVIEW OF GOVCC ACTIVITY**

A. OCFO has access to account information that identifies each charge, ATM withdrawal, and payment history, and will systemically review GOVCC accounts for misuse. If OCFO discovers questionable transactions or potential violations of policy, they will notify the traveler and the DO or program area office for additional information.

B. Travelers are to respond to the notice from OCFO within 15 days of receipt.

C. LERD may take appropriate disciplinary or adverse action if the traveler's explanation is inadequate to support a questionable charge or outstanding debt. A traveler's GOVCC may also be suspended or revoked.

D. If an employee's card is cancelled, the employee may be allowed to apply for another credit card one year after cancellation. Approval depends on the facts and circumstances of the cancellation.

#### **VII. DELINQUENCY**

A. Travelers with GOVCCs that have an unpaid and undisputed account balance 60 days or older:

1. Are eligible for suspension by the contract bank and subject to additional sanctions as determined by the Cardholder Agreement and SmartPay3 Master Contract;
2. Will receive a delinquency notice from OCFO; and
3. Can be referred for disciplinary or adverse action by the LERD.

B. OCFO is to provide these monthly written notices to all delinquent travelers within 5 working days of the GOVCC's statement date and will provide copies to the DO and program area office.

C. OCFO, as a courtesy, may provide a warning to travelers with GOVCCs that have an unpaid and undisputed account balance of 45 days.

#### **VIII. SEPARATIONS AND TRANSFERS**

A. Before leaving USDA, travelers are to notify OCFO to close their account, and provide the card to their supervisor for destruction.

B. Before transferring within USDA, travelers are to keep the card and contact their new Agency's travel office to transfer the card's account to the new organization.

## **IX. LOST OR STOLEN CARDS**

Travelers are responsible for contacting the Contractor Bank immediately to report the card lost or stolen, identifying any charges incurred during the time the card is missing, and formally filing any disputes. Failure to report the loss and any unauthorized charges will result in being financially liable for the expenses.

## **X. SALARY OFFSETS**

A. The [Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998](#) authorizes the Agency to offset a traveler's salary for the collection of delinquent balances. Upon written request from the contractor bank, the Agency may collect from a traveler's disposable pay any undisputed amounts owed to the GOVCC contractor.

B. The Agency is to notify travelers of the intention to collect the debt. The written notice is to include the type of claim, amount, starting date of deductions, and any rights afforded. Before collection begins, travelers have an opportunity to review the claim, make copies, request a review of the decision to pursue collection, and enter into a written agreement with the contractor bank to repay the delinquent amount. If travelers wish to exercise any of these rights or have questions including disputing the offset as erroneous, they should contact the contractor bank. If a traveler believes the delinquent balance is a result of not being reimbursed for official travel related expenses, they should submit appropriate claims to OCFO.

C. Administrative offset from disposable pay may not exceed 15 percent of the traveler's disposable pay unless the employee authorizes a higher amount.

## **CHAPTER IX - VOUCHER CLAIMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT**

### **I. POLICY**

A. Travelers are to submit voucher claims in accordance with [41 CFR §301-52](#). Travel Approvers are to assign resources as needed to ensure reviewers and approvers process travel claims as timely as possible but no more than 5 calendar days after receipt.

B. Travelers are to attach the following forms to the voucher claim, if necessary:

1. If international travel was authorized, include a signed copy of [FSIS form 3820-10](#), *Foreign Travel Authorization Request* and justification if a foreign air carrier was used;
2. If premium (first or business) class accommodations were authorized, a signed copy of [FSIS form 3820-11](#);
3. If actual subsistence was authorized, a signed copy of [FSIS Form 3820-6](#); and
4. If funding from a non-Federal source was authorized, whether in-kind or reimbursement, a signed copy of form [AD-1101](#), *Acceptance of Payment for Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source*.

## **II. DENIALS AND APPEALS**

- A. FSIS will process uncontested claims in accordance with the FTR.
- B. If a claim expense is denied, the travel approver is to notify the traveler in writing with the reason for the denial. The traveler is to be given adequate time to respond to the notification and is to be offered the opportunity to revise and further justify the claim.
- C. If the revised claim is insufficient for payment, the travel approver is to provide to the traveler a written explanation of the decision and instruction for how to file an appeal with their Travel approver's supervisor.
- D. Travelers may contest a denial by submitting a request for travel policy review to the approver's supervisor and providing all information required in [41 CFR §301-52.11](#).
- E. The travel approver's supervisor is to respond to both the traveler and the travel approver on a final adjudication of the matter after full review.

## **CHAPTER X - INVITATIONAL TRAVEL**

This chapter discusses the travel of non-government employees.

### **I. LIMITATIONS**

- A. Program area offices are responsible for identifying the Government interest in sponsoring non-Government travelers and authorizing invitational travel. Program area offices are not required to extend an invitation to travel to those who meet the reimbursement conditions of this directive; but if authorized, invitational travel is subject to the same travel laws as normal Government travel, including authorization, use of travel systems, and timing requirements.
- B. Invited non-Government personnel who participate in meetings and conferences as an advisor or by making presentations are providing a direct service and may receive direct reimbursement of their travel and transportation expenses based on a determination made by the Program area office. Invitational travel reimbursements are limited to the same constraints as Government employees. Invitational travelers will not be issued GOVCCs and are exempt from the mandatory use requirement.

### **II. REIMBURSEMENT CONDITIONS FOR INVITATIONAL TRAVEL**

- A. The sponsoring program area office is to have identified sufficient funds for reimbursement of travel expenses before the traveler is invited to travel on behalf of the Government.
- B. The traveler may not be an employee of the U.S. Government, or performing contracted work on behalf of the Government, at the time of authorization. U.S Government travelers will be reimbursed by their home Agency; program area offices are responsible for separately pursuing a funding agreement or Interagency Agreement where necessary.
- C. Participation of the traveler needs to be necessary to advance the mission of the Agency, as defined in this directive.
- D. Travelers can be invited to speak or serve as a panel member at an Agency public meeting.
- E. Travelers can be invited to conduct official business on behalf of the Government. Official business includes training, orientation, consultation, and testimony.



F. Payment of travel expenses are to be primarily in the interest of the Government and when the travel expenses are not covered by another entity. Travel may not be authorized where the traveler or their employer would otherwise normally cover the travel costs, or where the traveler's interest is the significant factor. This authority may not be used merely to defray the cost of travel of a new employee to the first duty station.

### **III. PROGRAM AREA OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. Program area offices are to work with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Financial Management Division (OCFO/FMD), to prepare accounting records to allow the travel to be paid through electronic funds transfer within the Agency financial accounting system.

B. Program area offices are responsible for assisting with travel compliance, including approved accommodation locations, legal and financial limitations, creation, and assurance that travel vouchers are completed on time, the CBA is made whole, and that claimed travel expenses are supported with adequate support documentation.

### **CHAPTER XI - FOREIGN TRAVEL**

This chapter applies to travel in areas which are outside the Continental United States (CONUS) and nonforeign areas, and which are not under the sovereignty of the United States. See definitions of CONUS, foreign area, and non-foreign area in [41 CFR §300-3.1](#) for more information.

#### **I. APPROVAL PROCESS**

A. Foreign travelers are to submit [FSIS form 3820-10](#) signed by their Assistant Administrator or equivalent with supporting documentation (e.g., meeting invite letter, meeting agenda, and emails), complete a travel authorization in Concur, and submit a copy of their security training certificate, as described in V. below, to OCFO at least 7 business days in advance of their intended departure date.

B. OCFO is to review the documents and prepare a travel packet to be sent to the Administrator for approval.

C. Approval for food safety equivalency audits that are two weeks or under, may be delegated.

D. Once the travel packet for the trip is approved, OCFO is to notify the traveler by email.

#### **II. POLICIES**

Rest periods may be authorized in accordance with [41 CFR §301-11.20](#) and [Department Regulation 2300-005](#) §5(s). Rest periods start when the foreign traveler arrives at the foreign location and end when the employee starts work.

#### **III. OFFICIAL PASSPORT**

A. Official Passports are required for international travel while on official business.

B. Travelers are to submit a request for an official Government passport to the Department of State (DOS). For Washington, D.C. area employees, it takes DOS approximately 30 business days to issue a new Government passport after the request is received. Employees located outside of the Washington,

DC area are to plan for additional logistical time, and be ready to accommodate 45 business days processing. Since Visa stamps can only be placed on an issued passport, any Visa processing time would be added on to this timeframe. Employees are to contact OCFO for specific instructions on how to request an official passport.

C. The Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) keeps all non-expired passports in their safe. Foreign travelers are to return their passport to FAS within 5 days of a return trip.

D. Foreign travelers can keep expired passports or send them to DOS to be destroyed.

#### **IV. ELECTRONIC COUNTRY CLEARANCE**

A. Foreign travelers are to submit an electronic Country Clearance (eCC) at (<https://myservices.servicenowservices.com/home>) to DOS. The DOS embassy located at the foreign destination is to approve their Government visit, to ensure that Government interests and efforts are coordinated and secure.

B. The eCC system monitors and approves the visit. The eCC system will submit a travel request to the local destination, notify the foreign traveler of the embassy approval, and inform them of any specific training or briefing requirements DOS makes contingent on the destination.

#### **V. TRAINING REQUIREMENT FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL**

A. Foreign travelers are required by DOS to complete a security training course before the travel occurs. Specific training required will depend on the amount of travel conducted by the employee. Foreign travelers are to contact OCFO via ([FSCGeneral@usda.gov](mailto:FSCGeneral@usda.gov)) for more information on what training is required.

B. The DOS will not grant country clearance without completion of this training. Foreign travelers are to submit to OCFO a copy of the course certification. It is the responsibility of the foreign traveler to maintain a copy of the certificate.

Refer question regarding this directive through supervisory channels.



Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy and Program Development