

CHAPTER 10 – PERSONNEL

Section 17 – TRAVEL

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17.03 – Policy. Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and/or agency-specific travel regulations will be utilized for all travel policies and processes.

17.04 – Responsibilities.

1. Home Unit is responsible for providing authorization to travel in accordance with agency regulations and policy.
2. Regular Government Employees and Casuals are responsible for:
 - A. Obtaining information regarding home unit travel policies, procedures and requirements before commencing travel.
 - B. Following established incident agency procedures.
3. Incident Agency is responsible for providing agency requirements and guidelines regarding subsistence, lodging and transportation policies to the Incident Management Team and incident support units/personnel, e.g., Buying Team, Expanded Dispatch, Payment Team.

17.1 – Incident/Incident Agency Requirements.

All resources under the control of the incident or incident agency will follow incident agency requirements concerning staying at incident base or other location. Individuals are not automatically entitled to stay in a hotel/motel, eat meals at restaurants, or claim per diem. Individuals who deviate from incident agency requirements will not be reimbursed for unauthorized expenses. Most incidents utilize a base camp to provide for resource needs through the use of a caterer, local restaurants, other food providers and issuance of a sleeping bag.

If the incident agency is unable to provide meals and lodging through an incident base camp, the following will occur:

1. Lodging. Incident resources may be housed in motels/hotels. The incident agency or incident management team should provide these facilities through a procurement method, at no cost to the individual.

When the incident agency does not provide lodging, regular government employees should follow their home unit policy for the use of a government issued charge card to obtain lodging. Employing agency per diem rates must be adhered to.

If the incident agency provides meals and lodging to incident resources, they may establish rates that differ from standard federal or state rates. For federal employees, if the cost of federal-government paid lodging exceeds the maximum rate, the meals and miscellaneous expenses (M&IE) claimed will be reduced to the maximum amount allowed for lodging, unless previously approved per agency policy.

2. Meals. The incident agency may provide meals through the use of designated restaurants under a procurement method, at no cost to the individual. Meal cost (excluding alcohol), plus gratuity should not exceed the allowed meal rate amount. If the meal selected by the individual exceeds the established meal rate, the individual is responsible to pay the vendor directly for the difference.

When the incident agency does not provide meals, individuals should follow their home unit policy for the use of a government issued charge card to obtain meals. Employing agency per diem rates must be adhered to.

3. Cash Advances. Most federal agencies have abolished the imprest fund and are unable to provide cash advances to emergency incident personnel. Individuals (regular government employees and casuals) should be prepared to meet their personal needs with personal cash or credit cards.

Federal government travel charge cards may provide for withdrawal of cash from automated Teller Machines (ATM) for official government travel-related expenses. Refer to agency policy for maximum ATM withdrawal allowance.

4. Rental Cars. Use of rental cars while assigned to an incident must be authorized by the incident agency or incident, and documented on a resource order.

The incident agency should provide rental cars to authorized incident personnel through an agency procurement method, e.g., Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA), purchase order, contract, or Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement (EERA).

Individuals authorized to rent a car outside of incident agency procurement methods should use government-contracted rental car agencies. Additional insurance coverage is not necessary and is not a reimbursable expense. (See Section 17.2 for foreign travel requirements.)

The U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement provides for damage and liability coverage when the terms and conditions of the agreement are followed, (i.e. operating the vehicle on paved, graded, state or professionally maintained roads.) If the incident assignment requires operation of the vehicle outside these parameters, the rental vehicle should be obtained through other procurement methods (ref. Chapter 20, Section 24.3-3.)

5. Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV). Individuals may be requested to use their privately-owned vehicle (POV) for official business when such use is advantageous

to the government. The individual is reimbursed for use through a mileage rate. The mileage rate reimburses the individual for fuel, wear and tear, and insurance costs. Damage to a POV is not covered under the Military and Civilian Employees Claims Act. Individuals claim damage through their private insurer. Prior approval must be in writing for a federal government employee or federal casual to seek reimbursement for the use of a POV.

6. Incidental Expenditure Rate. The incidental expenditure rate for all emergency assignments, where meals and lodging are provided, is \$3.00 per day, for federal regular government employees. See agency specific directives or policy for exceptions.

7. Transportation Arrangements. Individuals assigned to emergency incidents will follow sending agency dispatch procedures for travel to the incident. Incident agency dispatch procedures will be followed for return travel from the incident. Dispatch offices will make travel arrangements and provide airline tickets or travel information to individuals. Commercial and/or contract transportation methods may be used.

GSA Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) preclude federal agencies from procuring contract fare tickets, rentals, lodging, or travel advances for contractors and their employees. Government travel authorizations shall not be issued to contractors and their employees. Federal agencies may reimburse contractors for travel costs per contract provisions. The federal government may charter aircraft to provide transportation and may provide subsistence to the contractor/contractor employees while at the incident (e.g., meals, lodging), as long as these acquisitions are done through "normal" procurement methods (e.g. purchase order, contract, BPA) and not through established GSA or Department of Defense contracts for passenger transportation, car rentals, and lodging facilities.

Individuals who wish to deviate from the established travel route (including layovers and deviations from estimated return travel time) must coordinate and obtain authorization from the incident agency and home unit prior to commencing travel. Dispatch offices will provide transportation arrangements to the original departure points. Individuals are responsible for changing arrangements and paying any cost differences. If the method for transportation is a government charter or other non-commercial transportation and the individual wishes to deviate, the government will not pay for commercial transportation. See Section 12.3 for administratively controllable return travel procedures.

Individuals released from an emergency incident, due to family emergency, may be provided transportation to other than the original departure point if there is no additional cost to the government. Travel costs from this new location to the original departure point, if an additional cost to the government, is at the individuals' expense.

8. GSA Travel Exceptions. In certain instances, GSA will invoke exceptions to the Federal Travel Regulations, for a period of time, to ensure travelers are able to conduct official government travel in a safe manner. These exceptions (e.g. modes of transportation, non-direct route) could result from international events, times of war, disease outbreaks, travel advisories, etc.

9. Travel Vouchers. Emergency incident resources in travel status follow home unit travel regulations to claim reimbursement of travel expenses.

Reimbursement of travel expenses to casuals is made in accordance with the Pay Plan for Emergency Workers, Section 13.6 Exhibit 1.

17.2 – Foreign Travel

The following checklist can be used to prepare for an emergency incident assignment to a foreign country.

1. Travel Authorization. Contact the agency travel coordinator to ensure the proper travel authorization and other required paperwork is established. Obtain foreign travel per diem rates, insurance information, and other pertinent agency policies and guidelines.
2. Valid Passport. This should be an official government passport and not a personal one. Federal agencies may implement stricter requirements for all foreign travel regardless of foreign country regulations.
3. VISA. Obtain a VISA if required, for entry into the foreign country.
4. Immunization Record. Additional immunizations may be required.
5. Government Travel Charge Card. Ensure monthly limits are adequate. Contact your unit's agency program coordinator prior to start of travel.
6. Cash or Traveler's Checks. Estimate needed amount based on projected length of assignment.
7. Country-Specific Entrance Laws/Regulations. Canada considers certain violations as felonies and may require an individual to pay a fine in order to enter the country, (e.g., Arrested for Driving Under the Influence). The individual should notify the immediate supervisor and dispatch of potential problems. (Tickets or being arrested for any violation should be reviewed with a Canadian Representative if necessary.) Individuals are personally responsible for any fines; no reimbursement is authorized.
8. Country-Specific Information. Obtain information concerning the countries vegetation, insects, climate, and housing/diet. This information can be provided by

the requesting agency. Dispatch can provide a name, telephone number, website address, or other information. Obtaining this information prior to leaving will better prepare an individual for a foreign assignment.

9. Personal Items. At a minimum, the same personal items necessary for an emergency incident assignment within the United States should be packed. In addition, other items may be required depending upon the country and other conditions. Include adequate quantities of prescription medications.

10. Contact Names/Numbers. Update emergency telephone numbers and contacts with immediate supervisor. Upon arrival, contact should be made with home unit dispatch and immediate supervisor with the pertinent details of location and contact telephone number.

11. Car Rental Insurance. Individuals traveling outside the United States will be reimbursed for the cost of rental car insurance. Such insurance is necessary because of the rental and leasing agency requirements mandated by foreign statutes and/or because legal procedures could cause legal difficulty for an individual involved in an accident.

12. Personal Traveler's Insurance. Personal traveler's insurance is not reimbursable.

All employees engaged in work in a foreign country need to consult with their agency personnel specialist for Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exemption criteria. FLSA does not apply to positions, permanent or temporary (including details), outside of the United States. Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations 551.209(b) discusses the foreign exemption criteria.