OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance and regulations regarding travel requirements for incident response.

POLICY

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

RESPONSIBILITIES

Home unit responsibilities:

- Provide authorization to travel in accordance with agency regulations and policy.

Regular government employees, casuals, and cooperators responsibilities:

- Obtain information regarding home unit travel policies, procedures and requirements before commencing travel.

- Follow established incident agency procedures.

Incident agency responsibilities:

- Provide agency requirements and guidelines regarding subsistence, lodging and transportation policies to the incident management team (IMT) and incident support units/personnel, e.g., buying team, expanded dispatch, administrative payment team (APT).

Incident Agency Requirements

All resources under the control of the incident or incident agency will follow incident agency requirements when 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:

- **Lodging** – Incident resources may be housed in motels/hotels. Incident personnel must follow their home unit policy for the use of agency issued charge card to obtain lodging. Employing agency travel policies apply. The incident agency should provide these facilities through a procurement method.

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 per diem rate, the employee should follow agency policy to request approval for “actual expenses”. Otherwise the meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) payment will be reduced to the maximum per diem amount allowed (lodging + M&IE). Current per diem rates can be found at www.gsa.gov.

- **Meals** – The incident agency may provide meals through the use of designated restaurants under a procurement method, at no cost to the individual. If the meal selected by the individual exceeds the incident’s established meal rate, the individual is responsible to pay the vendor directly for the difference. When meals are furnished by the incident agency, individuals’ may not seek per diem for meal reimbursement. Meals may only be claimed if incident personnel are unable to consume the furnished meal(s) because of medical requirements or religious beliefs which must be justified and approved on a travel authorization and voucher.

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

- **Cash Advances** – Most federal agencies are unable to provide cash advances in a timely manner for emergency incidents. Individuals’ should be prepared to meet their personal needs with personal cash or credit cards if they do not have a government issued travel card.
Federal government travel charge cards may provide for withdrawal of cash from Automated Teller Machines (ATM) for official government travel-related expenses. Reference agency policy for maximum ATM withdrawal allowance.

- **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 (reference agency travel regulations).

The U.S. Government Rental Car Agreement provides for damage and liability coverage when the terms and conditions of the agreement are followed, (e.g., 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 (Chapter 20). The agreement can be found at [http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/rental.cfm](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/rental.cfm).

- **Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV)** – Individuals’ may be requested to use their 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.

If an employee chooses to utilize POV rather than government provided transportation, prior approval must be obtained from the home unit supervisor.

Damage to a POV is not covered under the Military and Civilian Employees Claims Act. Individuals claim damage through their private insurer.
• **Incidental Expenditure Rate** – The incidental expenditure rate for all emergency assignments, where meals and lodging are provided, is the approved General Service Administration (GSA) rate ([http://www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)) (reference agency specific directives or policy for exceptions).

• **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’. Travel arrangements made outside of incident agency dispatch procedures may not be reimbursed without proper approvals and authorization. Commercial and/or contract transportation methods may be used.

  GSA 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 (DoD) contracts for passenger transportation, vehicle 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.

  Casuals who are not reassigned and deviate from the normal travel route home will only be reimbursed for the number of miles back to the point of hire. Casuals are not entitled to transportation provided by the government from the point the travel deviation occurs. The travel deviation must be documented and attached to the casual’s original time record (OF-288) for use by the payment unit. This documentation shall also be made a part of the incident record.
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.

Individuals’ returning from an incident after the close of business may be furnished government transportation to their residence if there is no alternative means of transportation.

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.

- **GSA Travel Exceptions** – In certain instances, GSA will invoke exceptions to the FTR, 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.

- **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 Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers (Exhibit 1).

**Foreign Travel**

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

- **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.
• **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.

• **VISA** – Obtain a VISA if required, for entry into the foreign country.

• **Immunization Record** – Additional immunizations may be required.

• **Government Travel Charge Card** – Ensure monthly limits are adequate and the account is available for use. Contact the bank’s customer service number on the back of the charge card to check the status and credit limit. Contact the home unit agency program coordinator prior to start of travel if limit increases are needed.

• **Cash or Traveler's Checks** – Estimate needed amount based on projected length of assignment.

• **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. Individuals’ are personally responsible for any fines; no reimbursement is authorized.

• **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.

• **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.

• **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.

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• **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.

• **Personal Traveler’s Insurance** – Personal travelers 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 551.2 12(b) discusses the foreign exemption criteria.
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