



Travel Newsletter

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Launch of GovTrip Travel Authorization and Vouchering Pilot

Interior employees are currently using the GovTrip system for online, self-service reservation bookings. The U.S. Geological Survey launched a pilot implementation of the new, full-spectrum travel service on February 25, 2008. USGS travelers will be able to create an authorization, reservation, and voucher in one system, plus receive payments via Electronic Funds Transfer all utilizing electronic document routing. Future enhancements will include integration with the SmartPay® 2 charge card program.

Training will be provided to DOI employees so that they may utilize the system efficiently and quickly. These training opportunities should significantly reduce challenges that were experienced during the expedited implementation of GovTrip using the Stand Alone Booking Engine.

Full conversion to GovTrip is planned throughout the Department by November 30, 2008. The lessons learned during the USGS pilot will provide an opportunity to address and resolve problems

prior to release to the remaining bureaus within Interior. As implementation progresses, employees are encouraged to take advantage of training opportunities as they become available.

If you have any questions or if you would like additional information on GovTrip, please contact Jacqueline Lynch at Jacqueline.Lynch@ios.doi.gov or your bureau lead for E-Gov Travel: http://www.doi.gov/pfm/etravel/egov_contacts.html.

Privately Owned Vehicle Mileage Rate Increase

GSA has amended the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) by increasing the mileage reimbursement rate for use of a privately owned vehicle (POV) when used for official travel. This new rate reflects current costs of operating a POV as determined in cost studies conducted by GSA. The government regulation increases the mileage allowance for the cost of operating a POA for official travel from \$0.485 to \$0.505 per mile effective for travel on or after

March 19, 2008.

GSA is responsible for reviewing the privately owned vehicle mileage reimbursement mileage rate on a yearly basis. However, by law, GSA may not exceed the standard mileage reimbursement rate for a privately owned automobile (POA) established by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In contrast, last September GSA passed a regulation that allows the relocation mileage rate to equal the IRS published

rate for moving allowances (currently .19 a mile, as of Jan. 1, 2008)

In the future, the PCS mileage rate will be adjusted as necessary for increases and decreases per the IRS Guidelines; without the stringent legal review required when amending the FTR for other mileage rates. Given that the reimbursed rate will equal the IRS authorized rate, there will no longer be a taxable impact on relocation mileage payments.



GSA Seeks to Require Federal Travelers to Use Contract Hotels

By Robert Brodsky
rbrdsky@govexec.com March 14, 2008

The General Services Administration has proposed legislation that would require federal employees who travel out of town on business to stay in hotels that are under contract with the government. The measure is part of broader legislation known as the [General Services Enhancement Act](#), which also would streamline the management and disposal of government property and automatically align the federal mileage reimbursement rate with that set by the Internal Revenue Service. The proposal, which cleared the administration's approval process this week, was transmitted to Congress on Thursday along with a [detailed analysis](#) of the bill. As of Friday, the measure did not have a congressional sponsor.

In 2004, GSA launched [FedRooms](#), a program in which the government uses its buying power to leverage low rates

with national hotel chains. The private sector, particularly the airline industry, uses similar programs. But because of a decades-old law that prohibits federal workers or military service members from being forced "to occupy quarters on a rental basis," GSA has been unable to require workers to use the FedRooms program. Currently, government travelers are allowed to stay at any hotel within the federal per diem rate GSA sets for local areas.

Kevin Messner of GSA, says the change would not result in a noticeable decrease in the quality of hotels available to federal travelers, and would likely save the government a significant amount of money.

"We are not encouraging the federal traveler to stay at the top-of-the-line, five-star [hotels] and we don't want them to stay in cockroach-infested hotels on the side of the highway," he said. "We want them to stay in nice,

decent hotels where the federal government and the taxpayer are getting a good rate." Other provisions in the bill would:

- Expand GSA's ability to lease property in the case of an emergency from 180 days to five years. The amendment also would allow the GSA administrator to trigger the emergency leasing authority, rather than waiting on a disaster declaration by the president.
- Authorize the GSA administrator to settle civilian and travel relocation claims that now must be forwarded to Congress for review.
- Allow agencies to pay the transportation expenses of up to three members of the immediate family of federal employees who have been seriously injured or killed while on duty.

New Checked Baggage Policy for United & US Airways

United Airlines Announces New Checked Bag Policy
 CHICAGO – Feb. 4, 2008 –

As part of its continuing effort to offer customers choice, flexibility, and low fares, United is announcing a new, simplified checked bag policy for customers who purchase nonrefundable domestic econ-

omy tickets. United's new checked bag policy is available at united.com/baggage.

For customers who have at least Premier status in Mileage Plus or Silver status with Star Alliance, there are no changes to the number of bags they can check for free. (Government Travelers who are using a

United City-Pair YCA fare will not be subject to this additional \$25.00 fee.)

Customers who purchase non-refundable domestic economy tickets and do not have status in Mileage Plus or Star Alliance may check one bag for free and a second bag for a \$25 service fee. *Continued on page 3*



Prices that are often **below per diem** and **lower than corporate rates**



GSA Raises Lodging Per Diem in Six States

GSA has raised per diem rates in various locations in six different states, effective March 17, 2008. Per Diem rates for all locations are posted at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

After an analysis of the per diem rates established for FY 2008, the per diem rate is being changed in the following locations:

State of Alabama

Mobile County

State of California

Humboldt County

Monterey County

State of Illinois

Bond County

Calhoun County

Clinton County

Jersey County

Macoupin County

Madison County

Monroe County

St. Clair County

State of Missouri

St. Louis City

St. Louis County

St. Charles County

Crawford County

Franklin County

Jefferson County

Lincoln County

Warren County

Washington County

State of New York

The borough of Queens

State of Texas

Jefferson County

Federal Register:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/>



The complete set of per diem rates for fiscal 2008, broken down by location and season, is available [here](#).

New Checked Baggage Policy for United & US Airways (con't)

For all customers, the cost to check a third or fourth bag, depending on their status, will be \$100 per bag. Previous charges ranged from \$85-\$125 per bag. The cost to check items that require special handling because they are large, overweight or fragile will now be either \$100 or \$200, depending on the item.

US Airways Amends

Checked Baggage Policy

TEMPE, Ariz., Feb. 26, 2008: US Airways today announced it will implement a \$25 service fee for a second checked bag. The fee applies to travel that occurs on or after May 5, 2008. The new checked bag policy will apply to all flights within the U.S., to/from Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

Customers may continue to check one bag free of charge. In addition, the airline will waive the fee for its most frequent customers including:

- All Dividend Miles Preferred members (Silver, Gold, Platinum and Chairman's Preferred)
- Confirmed First Class and Envoy passengers at time of check in
- Star Alliance Silver and Gold status members

The following customers will also be exempt from paying the \$25 fee for a second checked bag:

- Active military personnel (in uniform with ID)
- Unaccompanied minors
- Those checking assistive devices

The fee only applies to tickets purchased on or after Feb. 26, 2008 for travel on or after May 5, 2008. Customers may pay this service fee at an airport kiosk with a credit card or at the check-in counter with a credit card, check or cash.

Customers who already purchased tickets for travel after May 5 are exempt from the new service fee on their current itinerary. Additional information is available at usairways.com/baggage

Federal Travel Regulation:

§301-12.2 What baggage expenses may my agency pay?

Your agency may reimburse expenses related to baggage as follows:

- (a) Transportation charges for authorized excess;
- (b) Necessary charges for transferring baggage;
- (c) Necessary charges for storage of baggage when such charges are the result of official business;
- (d) Charges for checking baggage; and
- (e) Charges or tips at transportation terminals for handling Government property carried by the traveler.



Travel Contacts and Web Sites

Newsletter/E-Gov Travel/Travel Policy:

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TMC/E-Gov Comments and Feedback Form:

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/tmc/feedback.html>

DOI E-Gov Travel System and Online Booking Engine:

<http://www.govtrip.com>

DOI Travel Policy:

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/travel.html>

This newsletter is available on the Internet at:

http://www.doi.gov/pfm/trav&relo/travel_newsletter/index.html

As a reminder, Government Travelers are expected to accomplish travel in the most prudent and cost-effective manner possible. A recent GAO Audit GAO-07-1268 on Premium Class Travel estimated that 67 percent of premium class travel is not properly authorized, justified or both. As a reminder from that same report: "With the serious fiscal challenges facing the federal government, agencies must maximize their ability to manage and safeguard valuable taxpayers' dollars. Recognizing the high cost of premium class travel, GSA and federal agencies have issued a series of policies providing that such travel should be taken as a last resort." The Department of the Interior has worked diligently towards demonstrating that we are prudent travelers when performing official travel and structures travel policy in support of that goal.

More information on DOI policy concerning premium class travel can be found in the Financial Administrative Memorandums 2007-019 and 2008-003 on First Class and Business Class Travel.

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fams/fam2007-19.html>

<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fams/fam2008-03.html>

Data Sources for DOI Travel Newsletter:

Much of the travel industry information contained in this newsletter was obtained from public domain sources such as newspapers and the Internet, and was current at the time of publication. Travel industry information is provided solely for the use and information of DOI employees.



Traveler "TIP BITS"

Appeals Court Overturns Passenger Rights Law

NEW YORK (AP) -- A federal appeals court Tuesday struck down a state law requiring airlines to give food, water, clean toilets and fresh air to passengers stuck in delayed planes, saying the measure was well-intentioned but stepped on

federal authority. The court said that while the goals of the law were



"laudable" and the circumstances prompting its adoption "deplorable," only the federal government has the authority to pass such regulations.

Corporate Housing Options

The federal government continues to spend a significant amount of money for corporate housing services each year; so, GSA has decided to add this service to their successful Schedules program. GSA's goal is to maximize the government's buying power by bringing consistent rates, terms, and conditions across government organizations and make procurement of this service easier for Federal agencies.

For more information go to <http://www.gsa.gov/corporatehousing> or call (877) 836-4859.



Are Cell Phones the Future of Flight Check-in?

In the next few years, printed boarding passes may not be required at the airport. A bar code, scanned from a traveler's cell phone, could be the way of the future.

Last month, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced that major airlines had agreed upon a global standard for such a bar code, which could be text messaged to a traveler's cell phone or PDA. An alternate option would be that the passenger could receive the bar code by email and print it.

Establishing the global standard for the bar codes is the

first step, followed by the creation of standardized processes and guidelines for global implementation. The deadline for implementing 100 percent bar-coded boarding passes is 2010.

If successfully deployed, this option could help the airline industry greatly reduce the need for paper boarding passes

and save more than \$500 million USD annually.

Source: CWT Traveler/Fedrooms Newsletter

Coincidentally, according to Avis and budgettravel.com, cell phones, wallets, and eyeglasses are the three things most often left behind in rental cars.

