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TO: Executive/Administrative Officers
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JMD Senior Management Staff

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SUBJECT: Combined Personal and Official Travel

This Bulletin cancels and replaces Financial Management Policies and Procedures Bulletin 97-19, *Combined Official and Personal Travel*, April 15, 1997.

On occasion, Department employees choose to combine annual leave or personal travel with their official travel, and/or travel by a different mode from that authorized. The regulations require that all costs in excess of those incurred for authorized official travel, resulting from personal preference, be borne by the traveler, not the Government. An employee who, for his or her personal convenience, travels by a mode of transportation other than that authorized, or by an indirect route, or who interrupts travel by direct route, must show on his or her voucher the actual expenses incurred. The expenses incurred will be reimbursed, but limited to the amount that would have been incurred had there been no deviation from the authorized official travel. (See the Federal Travel Regulation at 41 C.F.R. §§301-2.2, 301-2.4, and 301-10.6.) The employee must include a statement on, or attached to, the voucher explaining what was done for personal reasons, and showing the costs

that would have been incurred had only authorized official travel been performed.

When an employee plans personal travel in connection with official travel, only the official travel may be authorized. Destinations other than those necessary to conduct official business, which are planned for personal reasons, must not appear on the authorization. Also, 41 C.F.R. §301-10.4 requires that travel must be authorized by the most expeditious means practicable and commensurate with the nature and purpose of the employee's duties. Indirect routing or travel by a mode which is not in the Government's interest must not be authorized, although the employee, for personal reasons, may engage in such travel.

USE OF PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLES

Common Carrier Authorized

If an employee chooses to travel by privately owned vehicle (POV) when travel by common carrier is authorized, the employee may be reimbursed mileage and other POV-related expenses such as parking, ferry fees, and tolls, plus per diem. However, the total amount reimbursed is limited to the constructive cost of travel by common carrier, that is, the cost of common carrier transportation, plus local travel to and from common carrier terminals, plus per diem that would have been incurred had common carrier been used. (See 41 C.F.R. §§301-10.304 and 301-10.309.)

Government Vehicle Authorized

If travel by Government vehicle is authorized, but POV is used because of personal preference, a reduced mileage rate applies in accordance with 41 C.F.R. §301-10.310. Since travel by Government vehicle was authorized, not common carrier, the reduced mileage rate is not further limited by the constructive cost of common carrier.

POV Authorized

If travel by POV is authorized, the mileage rate allowed in 41 C.F.R. §301-10.303 is reimbursed, along with other POV-related expenses and per diem, not limited by the constructive cost of travel by common carrier. In no case is the actual expense of operating a POV reimbursed, such as the cost of gasoline, oil, or repairs. A mileage rate is always paid for travel by automobile (the automobile rate also applies to privately owned trucks), airplane, or motorcycle. If travel is by boat, helicopter, bicycle, horseback, or any other mode, the actual expense of that travel must be determined and reimbursed, subject to limitations arising from personal preference.

USE OF RENTAL VEHICLES

When a vehicle is rented for official travel, only the expenses incurred for official use of the vehicle may be reimbursed. If personal use of the vehicle is made, the cost of that use may not be claimed.

(See 41 C.F.R. §301-10.453.) Use of the vehicle to travel from the hotel to and from the temporary duty point, and to and from restaurants is considered official use; however, if an employee takes a trip away from the temporary duty point on a weekend or other non-workday or at any other off duty time for personal reasons, that use is not official, and the expenses incurred may not be claimed. The employee must discuss such personal use of the vehicle with the renting agency, as the necessity for insurance and the rental rates that will be charged may be affected.

Personal Use of Rental Vehicles

If the employee arrives at the temporary duty point early, or remains there after duty is completed, and wishes to use a rental vehicle for that additional personal time, the employee must inform the rental agency that a portion of the time for which the vehicle is rented is for personal travel, not official business, since the agency may charge a different rate for those days of personal use, and there may be additional insurance required for that personal use of the vehicle. (The Government does not reimburse insurance except when vehicles are rented in foreign countries; however, if damage occurs while the employee is acting within the scope of his or her duties, the Government will pay the damages. Personal use of a rental vehicle is not within the scope of the employee's duties.)

Obtaining a Weekly Rate

If the rental agency charges a weekly rate that differs from the daily rate times the number of days of official travel, and due to personal travel time the employee qualifies for and is charged the weekly rate, he or she may be reimbursed the amount actually paid to the car rental agency, up to the cost that would have been incurred for the official travel only.

Restrictions on Personal Use

Some components do not allow personal use of vehicles rented for official travel. The traveler must ascertain whether such use by him or her is permitted. If it is not, the traveler must either return the vehicle and re-rent it for personal use, or rent a different vehicle for personal travel.

USE OF CONTRACT AIRFARES

Employees who deviate from the authorized itinerary or official necessity travel are not entitled to use contract airfares. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-10.110.) When travel is to a destination solely for personal reasons, and no official duty is performed at that destination, a contract airfare may not be used for travel to or from that location. However, when annual leave is taken at the temporary duty location before or after duty is performed, or for any other reason travel to or from that location occurs on a different day than is necessary for the conduct of official business, contract airfares may be used, because there has been no deviation of routing.

Personal Travel

If an employee travels on his or her own time to a different location from the temporary duty point, and returns to the temporary duty location, that trip away from that location must not be by contract airfare, and there is no necessity to show that travel on the voucher. Per diem and other travel expenses may not be claimed for personal travel to a location visited for personal reasons. The notation “personal business” on the voucher on days for which no travel expenses are claimed is sufficient.

Indirect or Interrupted Travel

Contract airfares may be used up to the point of deviation from the officially authorized travel. For example, suppose an employee is authorized to travel from Washington, DC, to Denver, CO, and return, and that the contract flight requires a connection in Dallas. If the employee chooses to stop in Dallas on the return leg for two days of personal business, then he or she may use contract airfares from Washington to Denver and from Denver to Dallas, but not from Dallas to Washington. A non-contract fare must be used from Dallas to Washington. In this example, the employee has not deviated from the authorized itinerary in traveling from Washington to Denver and from Denver to Dallas, but in stopping for more than four hours in Dallas, (the airline rule for through fares is that a connection must be made within four hours), the employee is no longer entitled to the through fare from Denver to Washington, and must pay two fares for the return, one from Denver to Dallas and one from Dallas to Washington. The last fare, from Dallas to Washington, was made necessary by the stopover in Dallas for personal reasons, not for official business, and therefore must be at a non-contract fare. The employee will be reimbursed the return trip airfare, up to the contract airfare from Denver to Washington.

In the previous example, if the employee desired to return from Denver via Memphis he or she would not be entitled to the contract fare from Denver to Memphis or from Memphis to Washington. In this case the employee is deviating from the authorized itinerary in traveling from Denver to Memphis rather than to Washington or to a connection point on a flight to Washington. Likewise, the travel from Memphis to Washington does not qualify for contract airfare because the employee had no official duties in Memphis and was there solely for personal reasons. The employee will be reimbursed the airfare for the two legs of the return trip, but limited to the contract airfare from Denver to Washington.

In some cases of travel to or from a foreign country, the temporary duty location can only be reached by taking several different airlines, and there is no through fare. In this instance, if the employee desires to stop for a period of time at an intermediate point for personal reasons, a contract airfare may still be used to or from that location because a through fare at a contract rate was not lost. However, if there is a through fare to the destination, whether or not it is a contract airfare, then a stopover will reduce the employee’s entitlement to an amount less than the fare paid, since the stopover resulted in the loss of a through fare. (A stopover authorized as a “rest period” when the scheduled flight time is more than 14 hours does not reduce the employee’s entitlement to the full

airfare paid. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-11.20.))

On occasion, employees must travel to locations where there is no contract airfare. In that instance, if for personal reasons the employee does not take the most direct, usually traveled route, the limit on reimbursement is based on the lowest coach fare available for the most direct, usually traveled route for the trip.

Reservations for Combined Personal and Official Travel

To properly arrange for a combination of personal and official travel, the employee should request that a ticket be issued for the official travel only, and then immediately, or at a later time, exchange that ticket for a ticket that combines the personal travel segments at non-contract fares. If the cost of the new ticket exceeds the cost of the original ticket, the excess may not be charged to the employee's Government travel charge card. The additional cost must be charged to a personal credit card. The new ticket will show the round trip contract fare of the original ticket, which is the maximum amount the traveler will be reimbursed, as well as the total amount for the reissued ticket. If the cost of the reissued ticket is the same amount or less than the original ticket, the employee will be reimbursed the cost of the reissued ticket. When vouchering for airfare for a trip consisting of both official and personal travel, the employee must claim the actual airfare paid, up to the round trip cost of the authorized official travel. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-10.8.)

Use of "Super-Saver" or other "Penalty" Airfares

If a contract airfare is replaced with a noncontract airfare for personal reasons, and the noncontract fare carries penalties for changes or refunds, the Government will not reimburse the traveler those penalties if changes occur. Reimbursement is not allowed even if the changes are beyond the employee's control, because there are no penalties associated with contract airfares, and the use of a noncontract fare in this instance was for the traveler's convenience, not because of official necessity. However, if a penalty airfare is authorized as advantageous to the Government and there is no personal travel, penalties incurred as the result of changes in official travel may be reimbursed.

Determination of which airport to use

When a city is served by more than one airport, the airports may have different contract fares to the same destinations. Also, one airport may have a contract fare to a particular destination, while the other does not. Generally, the airport with a contract fare, or the lowest cost contract fare should be used, but the overall trip cost must be considered, including ground transportation, scheduling, and any other factors that may affect cost or expedience. The decision of which airport to use must be made by the authorizing official, if there is a difference of opinion over which airport should be used.

When for personal reasons travel is not by contract airfare, the constructive cost comparison generally must be made using the lowest contract airfare available.

PER DIEM

Per diem may not be paid for a day during which an employee takes annual leave for more than half the day. Per diem includes the lodging expense incurred and the meals and incidental expense allowance. When the travel assignment spans a weekend, the employee is entitled to per diem for the weekend. However, if the employee is in an annual leave status immediately before and after the weekend, then per diem may not be paid for the weekend. The same rule applies to holidays or other non-workdays.

Per Diem when “Super-Savers” or other reduced-cost fares are obtained

The travel regulations permit use of non-contract airfares when the use of a lower fare offered to the general public would result in a lower overall cost considering the combined cost of transportation, lodging, meals and related expenses. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-10.107(c).) If a lower fare is available, but it requires the employee to spend a week at the destination, or to spend a Saturday night at the destination, or has any other requirement that results in the traveler incurring additional expenses, the employee may be reimbursed those additional expenses, including per diem for non-workdays, if the total cost of the trip is reduced by doing so. However, if the employee extends time at the temporary duty location to qualify for a lower fare, but must stay additional workdays, then annual leave must be taken during those days, and per diem and other travel expenses incurred on the day(s) leave is taken may not be reimbursed.

Voluntary return trips home

If an employee **voluntarily** returns home for a weekend or other non-workday(s) during a travel assignment, the employee may be reimbursed the travel expenses incurred for that return, but limited to the expense that would have been incurred had he or she remained at the temporary duty location. Contract airfare may be used, as long as there is no deviation of routing. If an employee is **authorized** to return home at any time during a travel assignment, all expenses are paid without the limitation that applies to voluntary return trips home. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-11.24.) An employee who returns home during a travel assignment must check out of his or her hotel before leaving, and check back in on returning, because lodging may not be paid for nights the employee does not spend at the temporary duty station. Contract airfare may be used for authorized returns home, as long as there is no deviation of routing for personal reasons.

The provision allowing expenses to be paid for voluntary return trips home does not extend to personal trips taken on weekends or other interruptions of temporary duty travel to locations other than the employee’s permanent duty station. No expense incurred for such trips may be reimbursed.

USE OF THE GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CHARGE CARD

Official Use

All official travel expenses are required to be charged on the Government-contractor-issued travel charge card, except in those instances where the card is not accepted. Personal expenses charged to the card are prohibited. (See 41 C.F.R. §§301-51.1 and 301-51.2, and Policies and Procedures Bulletin 97-02, October 22, 1996.) Personal expenses not associated with official travel and not reimbursed by the Government, and ATM withdrawals not authorized for official travel, are not allowable, even if the employee is on official travel at the time. (See 41 C.F.R. §301-51.5.)

All official travel expenses, even if not fully reimbursed, must be charged on the card. For example, if an employee on official travel obtains lodging that costs in excess of the lodging limit, or a meal for which the cost exceeds the meals allowance, he or she must use the travel charge card to pay for the lodging or the meal even though the full cost of the expense will not be reimbursed. Also, if an employee's spouse or other family member shares his or her hotel room, it should be paid for with the travel card, but reimbursement is limited to the single room rate. If additional rooms are rented for family members, those additional rooms must not be paid for with the travel card.

If the employee takes annual leave during an official trip and travels to a different location for personal reasons, (or engages in personal travel on a weekend during the travel assignment), transportation, lodging and meals during that period should not be charged using the travel charge card, and those expenses will not be reimbursed.

Personal Use

The travel charge card may not be used to charge personal items purchased in hotel gift shops or from other retail stores merely because the employee is in travel status. However, when an unreimbursed item may not be separated from the hotel room charge, such as a movie viewed in the room, payment using the travel charge card is permitted.

When a hotel room is kept for a longer period than is necessary for official travel for personal reasons, or a vehicle is rented for a longer period than required for the official travel, the employee must inform the hotel or car rental agency that a portion of the travel for which services are required is personal, not official. The hotel or rental agency may charge a different rate for services during the period of personal travel, at its discretion. Any tax exemption, if applicable, does not apply to the personal portion of the travel. The hotel or car rental agency may also require use of another credit card for the portion of the expense incurred for personal reasons. Splitting the expense between the official travel card and a personal credit card is not required by the Department. However, travelers must not misrepresent their travel status to hotels or car rental agencies when combining personal and official travel.

The travel charge card may not be used to pay for airfare for personal travel. Because Government airfares are contractual, the Government card may be used only for Government fares, and may not be used for noncontract fares except when necessary for official travel. If a single trip involves official and personal travel, the charges for the official legs of the trip must be charged to the travel charge card, and the personal travel legs, to the extent that their cost exceeds the cost of the officially authorized transportation, must be charged to a personal card, or paid by cash or personal check.

CANCELED OR INTERRUPTED PERSONAL TRAVEL

Occasionally an employee who is on vacation away from his or her residence is needed for official duty at the permanent duty station or at a temporary duty location. In this event, official travel may be authorized from the vacation point to the duty station where the employee is needed. At the conclusion of official duties, the employee may be authorized official travel back to the vacation point, or, if the vacation is over, back to the permanent duty station. No reimbursement of "lost" vacation expenses is made, since the employee is returned at Government expense to the location where he or she would have been had there been no duty during the vacation. Per diem, local travel, and other allowable miscellaneous expenses will be paid for the time the employee is in an official travel status.

If an employee has not yet departed on vacation, but has already purchased a non-refundable ticket, or made a non-refundable deposit when the necessity for duty makes use of the ticket or deposit impossible, the employee may be reimbursed the actual losses incurred. In most cases, a non-refundable ticket can be used for travel at a later date, (within one year), but there is usually a \$75.00 penalty for changing the ticket. If the employee can use the ticket for another trip, the Government may reimburse the \$75.00 change fee (but not additional ticket cost due to the employee's election to take a more costly trip than the originally planned trip). If the employee cannot use the ticket and seeks full reimbursement, the unused ticket must be attached to the employee's claim. In either case, the employee must submit a Form SF-1164, with either the original ticket attached, or a receipt showing the change fee, and a memorandum explaining the circumstances that resulted in the loss of use of the personal ticket, and inability to use it for other travel. If a non-refundable deposit is claimed, a receipt and explanation of that expense must be included. Payment must be approved by the Component's Executive or Administrative Officer.

If there are any questions concerning this bulletin, please call Mark Rodeffer on (202) 616-5250.