

Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Questions and Answers for Emergency and Special Evacuation Allowances
(Updated September 1, 2008)

Background

In the event of an emergency, including dangerous weather, ICE may implement its procedures for emergency and special evacuation allowances. To ensure that impacted ICE employees understand the agency's policy for special evacuation and emergency allowances, ICE management provides some typical questions and answers for affected employees and their dependents. The primary points-of-contact for travel related questions are:

1. HQ Office of Financial Management, dedicated temporary emergency phone line of 802-288-7793 or the general emergency phone number for OCFO/OFM matters of 802-288-7796.
2. OFM website at <http://ofm.ice.dhs.gov/exec/index.asp>
3. Customer service line at the Dallas Finance Center at 214-915-6277

Q1. What is an Evacuation Order and what does it do?

- A1. An Evacuation Order is a document issued by the Assistant Secretary of ICE. This order authorizes employees and dependents certain transportation expenses and per diem while in transit to a safe haven location and a subsistence allowance including: lodging, per diem and certain miscellaneous expenses while at the safe haven location. The Evacuation Order also allows for advance payments or evacuation payments, as appropriate and necessary, for affected employees. These benefits cannot be authorized without a formal, written Evacuation Order.

Q2. What is the effective period of the Evacuation Order for areas impacted by Hurricane Gustav?

- A2. The evacuation order for Hurricane Gustav is effective Sunday, August 31, 2008, for a period not to exceed 180 days. The specific termination date for the employees, which may occur in less than 180 days, will be determined by ICE management on a location by location basis.

Q3. What if I incurred allowable expenses prior to the official Evacuation Order? How do I get reimbursed?

- A3. Valid, allowable expenses incurred prior to the effective date of the Evacuation Order may be approved retroactively by the respective ICE program director, or his/her designee.

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Q4. My dependents are covered as well as me for reimbursement of cost for transit to a safe haven and the substance allowances while at the safe haven. Who is considered a dependent?

A4. The official definition of a dependent is a relative of an employee who resides with the employee and is dependent upon the employee for support.

Q5. What costs are covered by the evacuation special allowances?

A5. Evacuation special allowances are available to employees and their dependent family members, if any, who are evacuated from their residences. Employees and their dependents are authorized round-trip transportation expenses to a safe haven location and per diem while in transit. Once at the safe haven location and for the first 30 days, employees and their dependents are authorized a subsistence allowance to include lodging and per diem at rates established by the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) for that location. The per diem rate for dependents under the age of 12 will be one-half the rate payable to the employee. Beginning with day 31, the per diem rate is reduced to 60 percent of the per diem rate with dependents under the age of 12 at one-half the rate payable to the employee. Miscellaneous expenses are limited to those expenses allowable under normal travel situations (e.g., hotel taxes and fees, atm fees, actual phone call expenses (not to exceed \$5 per day), and laundry/dry cleaning expenses when away from the residence for more than 4 days, etc. For questions on allowable reimbursable expenses, you may contact the OFM points of contract listed at the beginning of this document.

Q6. How can I pay for the costs I incur to get to the safe haven location and while I am at the safe haven location?

A6. Use your government issued travel card to pay for the costs incurred by you and your dependent family members for travel and authorized expenses. All travel cards for employees in the affected area have credit limits, which can be increased or decreased as needed, as can the weekly ATM withdrawal limit. Please contact your ICE program POC for assistance or the OFM points of contacts listed at the beginning of this document.

Q7. I accepted a permanent change of station assignment, and I am enroute to my new duty station that is located in an area being evacuated. What do I do?

A7. Do not continue on to the affected duty station. Remain at a safe location and contact your management from the safe location to get further instructions.

Q8. How will the authorization be created for me and my family?

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A8. The ICE program office for the affected employee(s) will generate a travel authorization for displaced employees and their families. The initial authorization will cover the period August 31, 2008, through September 30, 2008, and will be extended or reduced based on when the employee and dependents can return to their residence.

Q9. I evacuated my residence. How do I get the evacuation special allowance reimbursement?

A9. If you have access to Travel Manager, create a voucher and transmit it. If Travel Manager is unavailable, a manual voucher is required. Provide the voucher to your designated approving official or as instructed by ICE program office. Contact the ICE Office of Financial Management for questions and assistance at the numbers provided at the beginning of this document. You should prepare a voucher as often as every two weeks, but no later than every 30 days. The voucher should include transportation and per diem costs incurred while enroute to the safe haven. It should also contain lodging, subsistence, and miscellaneous costs incurred while at the safe haven. Miscellaneous expenses are limited to allowance expenses, such as hotel taxes and fees, atm fees, actual phone calls (not to exceed \$5 per day), and laundry/dry cleaning if away from your residence for more than 4 days. Do NOT submit requests for reimbursement unless you or your dependent actually incurs the costs.

Q10. How can I change my EFT information for my travel reimbursement?

A10. Request the change through the form available on the OFM website http://ofm.ice.dhs.gov/exec/form_vm_employee.asp (which includes instructions) or by contacting the emergency OFM Travel POC at 802-288-7793 or the Dallas Finance Center customer service line at 214-915-6277. Identify the change is related to the evacuation.

Q11. I used to have my travel reimbursement mailed to my house. Who do I contact to change the address where the checks should be mailed?

A11. See the answer for Q10. Identify the changes related to the evacuation.

Q12. How can I obtain a Government Travel Card (GTC) or a new PIN number for my existing GTC?

A12. For a new card, contact your Program point-of-contact who will work with the ICE Office of Finance to expedite the issuance of a new government travel card. Otherwise, complete the GTC application form at http://www.citigroup.com/transactionsservices/homepage/cash/cc/gov/reference/files/apdxb_forms/travelcard.pdf. Afterwards, submit the completed and signed GTC application form to your Program POC or Travel Card Program Manager via fax at (214)915-6292 or scan/email to Martha.Wright@dhs.gov. Also, please

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contact the emergency OFM Travel POC at 802-288-7793 or the Dallas Finance Center customer service line at 214-915-6277 for additional questions or assistance.

For a new Travel Card PIN number, contact Citibank directly at its customer service number (1-800-790-7206) and request expedited action/delivery and identify an alternative mailing address as required. Assistance is also available from ICE OFM at the above numbers.

Q13. My family and I arrived at a safe haven location but now I'm going TDY. Do the evacuation special allowances change?

A13. A travel authorization for your TDY will be created through your ICE program office, and you will no longer be eligible for evacuation special allowances until your TDY ends. The same 180 day or less limit to evacuation applies. Your family will continue to be eligible for evacuation special allowances while at the safe haven location.

Q14. I had to evacuate my residence but I am still reporting to my permanent duty station for work. Am I eligible for reimbursement of any commuting expenses?

A14. Routine commuting expense may not be reimbursed. However, emergency subsistence allowances may be granted to employees who have been ordered to remain in the evacuation zone for official duties, on a case-by-case basis. This authority rests with the ICE Program director or his/her designee.

Q15. I evacuated my residence but when I returned there is no electricity or water. Am I eligible for any evacuation special allowances?

A15. Yes. If your residence is not habitable, meaning there is no running water, electricity or other utility service, you are eligible for subsistence allowances.

Q16. I rented an apartment at the safe haven and the period of the lease extends beyond the period of the Evacuation Order. How do I get reimbursed?

A16. As stated in the Evacuation Order, which will be posted on the ICE Website at <http://ofm.ice.dhs.gov/exec/>, evacuees should not sign long-term leases as lodging reimbursement will be limited to the evacuation period only. Reimbursement will be limited to the period of the Evacuation Order and the costs for the apartment will only be covered for that period up to the amount allowable for lodging per day.

Q17. I stayed with relatives who took care of my family and me during the period while the evacuation order was in effect. How can I get reimbursed for the costs I help defray for them housing us?

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- A17. You cannot be reimbursed lodging expenses while staying with friends or relatives instead of a commercial lodging establishment regardless of whether any lodging payment is made to the friend or relative. However, you are authorized the Meals & Incidental Expenses (M&IE) portion of the per diem allowance.
- Q18. I could not find a hotel or lodging at the safe haven site at the allowable rate for reimbursement by the government. How can I get authorized for actual expenses? Also, I need more than one room for my family. How do I get authorization for more than one room?**
- A18. You should contact your ICE program POC, who issued the travel authorization, and request actual expenses for lodging. Payments for actual expenses, however, are not automatically approved and will be approved on a case-by-case basis. The same is true for reimbursement for more than one room per family. Typical circumstances would only allow for authorization for one room.
- Q19. My regular pay was not deposited to my bank account. Who do I contact to get fixed? And can I use my Travel Card for clothes and other non-allowable expenses?**
- A19. If you did not get paid, you should contact your ICE program POC who will work with the ICE Office of Finance to resolve the matter, and get a manual payment issued through National Finance Center or other means as soon as possible. However, you cannot use your Travel Card for non-allowable expenses although you can request an advance payment (as discussed below at question Q20).
- Q20. I need immediate financial assistance to cover expenses related to Hurricane Gustav and cannot wait for my next pay check. Is there any assistance available?**
- A20. You may request an Advance Payment of your future salary. Each ICE program director or his/her designee is authorized to approve advance payments when such payment is required to help the employee defray immediate expenses incidental to the evacuation. Contact your Program point-of-contact but be reminded that these funds must be repaid to the government and the amount that is issued will be less 30% to cover required legal deductions (e.g., Social Security, etc.).