

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Employees

FROM: Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 06-1
(Proper Use of Citibank Government Travel Charge Cards)

DATE: June 9, 2006

The use of Government credit cards, including Government travel charge cards, continues to be the subject of Administration, Congressional, and media scrutiny. Too often, the scrutiny has led to negative publicity about federal employees misusing charge cards. This memorandum is being issued to ensure NOAA employees have the knowledge to use government travel charge cards properly.

You are required to use the government contractor-issued travel charge card if you travel on official business more than five times a year. Using the government travel charge card is optional if you travel on official business less frequently. In NOAA, we use the Citibank Visa Card as our government-issued travel charge card.

The use of the Citibank travel charge card is limited to expenses incurred incident to officially-authorized government travel. These expenses include cash advances from automated teller machines, meals (where possible), lodging, rental automobiles, and gasoline and other automobile-related expenses. Although the preferred method to obtain common carrier transportation is through a centrally billed account managed by SATO, the Citibank travel charge card may be used, when necessary. Use of the card at or in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence is strictly prohibited unless its use is in connection with officially-ordered travel. Personal and family member use of the card and purchases made in retail stores are also strictly prohibited.

You are personally liable for all charges which have been incurred on your Citibank travel charge card, regardless of whether the charges exceed the amount reimbursable under travel regulations. To ensure you receive reimbursement in time to repay Citibank, you must prepare and submit your travel voucher to your servicing finance office within 5 days of completing a trip. Approving officials must promptly review and approve travel vouchers to ensure they are submitted within the required 5 days. In most cases, when vouchers are submitted to the servicing finance office in a timely manner, employees will be reimbursed for their expenses before payment is due to Citibank. Citibank will send a monthly billing statement if you have incurred expenses or made a payment. You must pay your Citibank bill in full when you receive it, but no later than 25 calendar days from the closing date on the statement even if you have not yet received reimbursement.

You must comply with Employee Responsibilities and Conduct, 15 CFR 0.735-16, which requires Department of Commerce (DOC) employees to pay each financial obligation in a proper and timely manner. If you are delinquent paying Citibank, or if you use your card for non-official purposes, your supervisor, in conjunction with Workforce Management, will determine appropriate disciplinary action. Specific penalties will depend on the seriousness of the infraction and any aggravating or mitigating circumstances. Penalties range from written reprimand or suspension to removal from your job. At the discretion of your supervisor or Citibank, your travel charge card can be revoked at any time. Cards which are canceled or revoked are generally not reinstated. In addition, upon written request from Citibank, NOAA will collect from your disposable pay any undisputed delinquent amounts that you owe to Citibank.

To apply for a Citibank travel charge card, contact your program coordinator as follows:

- All Line and Staff Offices, other than NMFS and NWS –Elissa Kelsey (301) 444-2107; fax (301) 413-3066
- NMFS – Marlena Bowman – (301) 713-1364 ext. 194; fax (301) 713-2258
- NWS – Janice Evans (301) 713-0420 ext. 104; fax (301) 608-0850

To apply for the Citibank travel charge card, you must:

1. Complete the Citibank travel card application. Complete Section IV, “Cardholder Information,” and sign Section V of the Citibank travel card application;
2. Complete and sign the Employee Acknowledgment Statement acknowledging you have received, read, and understand the policies and procedures related to use of the card. Your approving official or immediate supervisor must also sign the Employee Acknowledgment Statement; and
3. Complete GSA’s on-line travel charge card training course and submit a copy of the certificate with the travel card application package to your servicing program coordinator.

When you receive your travel charge card, you must exercise the same care and responsibility for the security of the card and account number as you would with a personal charge card. You must not allow a secretary, administrative or executive officer, or supervisor, to store the card. You must exercise caution and care when giving the account number to another employee to make travel arrangements on your behalf.

If you have questions about the proper use of the Citibank travel charge card, please contact your program coordinator listed above. You can access on-line training on the proper use of the card at <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/CITI.html>. You can obtain the Citibank travel card application, Employee Acknowledgment Statement, access to Citidirect, the Citibank Cardholder Agreement and DOC travel card regulations at the same Web site.

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