

**CHAPTER 2:****Before You Leave Home**

*Participants walking  
at Amundsen-Scott  
South Pole Station.*



*photo by Glenn Grant*

You will travel through at least one foreign country, and in the Antarctic, you will be living in a region that does not provide many of the modern conveniences to which you may be accustomed. Planning ahead is essential and will contribute greatly to your effectiveness and comfort. Please read the following information carefully. Your supervisor, science team leader or RPSC point-of-contact will answer any additional questions you may have.

**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS****Medical and Dental Examinations**

You must pass rigorous medical and dental examinations before going to the Antarctic.

Antarctica is an extreme, remote environment, and medical facilities on the continent are limited. U.S. Antarctic Program facilities are equipped and staffed to provide routine ambulatory care that would be expected in a U.S. clinic, and have the capability to stabilize and manage a range of emergency medical and dental conditions before transporting patients off the continent. However, medical evacuations take a lot of time and effort and place others at risk, even when the weather allows travel. Remote field camps and research vessels pose additional difficulties. Therefore, the physical qualification (PQ) process administered by RPSC seeks to screen out people with conditions that cannot effectively be managed on the Ice or aboard ship.

This PQ process applies to all grantees, RPSC employees, contractors, military personnel or guests of the NSF. Members of another nation's Antarctic program may be cleared through their country, but must provide RPSC their country's/program's clearance documentation, and carry a copy of their medical records with them if they are to be stationed near and supported by U.S. medical facilities. A resident of a nation that does not have an Antarctic field program will be required to pass the U.S. Antarctic Program screening program. The U.S. Antarctic Program also maintains reciprocity with the U.S. Arctic Program.

Deployment clearance begins when RPSC is notified that you are a candidate to deploy to Antarctica, either through the Support Information Package (SIP) for grantees, hiring paperwork for contract employees, or other documents. The medical department sends each candidate an e-mail with information how to access medical forms and instructions online. Upon request, they will mail a packet containing instructions, medical and dental examination forms, laboratory test package and/or instructions, release forms, a personal information form, and a copy of this guide. Medical and dental forms and instructions, along with the personal information forms, are available at [www.usap.gov/TravelAndDeployment/contenthandler.cfm?id=764](http://www.usap.gov/TravelAndDeployment/contenthandler.cfm?id=764).

**Please read all of the instructions.** The information in the packet will answer most of your questions about how to schedule needed exams and return the completed information back to RPSC in the envelopes provided. If you have further questions, or special circumstances, please contact your POC, manager, or call the medical department. Contact information for the medical department is included in your deployment packet.



**Grantees** may be reimbursed or charge authorized examination, immunization and test costs to their NSF grant. Work with your principal investigator (PI) for procedures.



**RPSC Employees:** If participants have their own insurance that covers some/all of the costs of the exam as “annual physicals,” they should submit expenses to their insurance first. RPSC will reimburse the participant for approved out-of-pocket expenses.

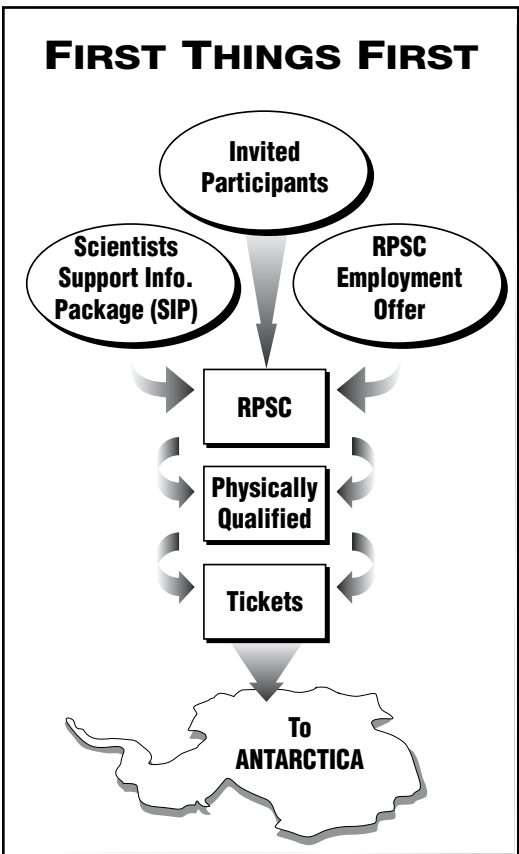
**NOTE:** Treatments to resolve dental conditions or other items required to meet U.S. Antarctic Program screening criteria may not be reimbursable. Please check with your health coverage or RPSC medical before scheduling exams or additional work that is not listed on your original checklist.

You or your doctor/dentist should mail the completed documentation to RPSC medical in the envelopes provided. If your providers have questions concerning the deployment exam, required

labs and/or tests, direct them to the Dear Doctor and Dear Dentist letters in the packet for detailed instructions. **Note that original dental X-rays are required.** The required laboratory samples (blood and urine) may be drawn during your doctor’s exam or at a separate specimen-drawing appointment. Remember to fast at least 10 hours before the samples are collected. If a laboratory sample box is included in your packet, use the enclosed sample containers and have your physician mail them to the contracted laboratory using the materials in the medical kit. If your medical packet includes a Lab Corp requisition, you can go directly to a Lab Corp facility to have the blood drawn. The contracted lab will bill RPSC directly for these tests. You will not pay (or be reimbursed) for anything beyond the specimen collection (venipuncture costs).

Candidates are responsible for scheduling their examinations early to ensure that complete information is provided to RPSC **no less than 8 weeks** prior to their planned departure for Antarctica. You should start the process as early as possible in case additional testing is required for your clearance. Ensure that all contacts at RPSC and elsewhere know how to contact you at all times (phone and/or e-mail) in case additional information is required. Airline tickets will not be issued until you are PQ’d. Tickets are normally sent two weeks before your departure date. The best rule is to submit your information as early as possible to allow time for problems or re-testing.

Medical and dental examinations must be current to within six months of your deployment. While a PQ is considered valid for 12 months afterward, the physician reviewer may require additional information or review to maintain PQ status. This is particularly true for personnel cleared for summer deployment who are staying for the Antarctic winter season.



All medical information, laboratory results, X-rays, dental exams, releases, and personal information forms are the property of the U.S. Antarctic Program and will not be returned to candidates. Make copies of information you desire to keep. Medical records generated from these documents will be sent to the clinic staff at the appropriate U.S. Antarctic Program facility to be referenced. For privacy, the only other people authorized access to these records are the medical personnel at RPSC or NSF headquarters who have valid need to use them for quality control purposes. You may request copies of your medical records that are maintained by the U.S. Antarctic Program, but reproduction charges may apply.

**Waivers.** Candidates who do not meet U.S. Antarctic Program criteria and are determined “Not Physically Qualified” (NPQ) may request a waiver, which the NSF will review. Ask RPSC medical for instructions on submitting a waiver request. Be aware that additional testing or treatment needed for a waiver may not be reimbursable. Also note that the waiver process can take up to eight weeks, and your position may be offered to an alternate if you cannot make your deployment date while awaiting the results. Submit your information early and completely to allow time for any problems that might arise.

### Immunizations

All participants must have had a tetanus vaccination current within the last 10 years and an annual seasonal influenza vaccine (available in late September) prior to deployment. Other vaccinations may also be required. A pneumovax for participants who are age 64 or older, or who have special medical conditions, is highly recommended.

If you are planning travel after your deployment, in tropical South America, for example, you may need other immunizations. Consult your physician or the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at 800-232-4636 or at [www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx) for current recommendations on the areas you plan to travel.

If vaccinations or medicines (malaria chemoprophylaxis, for example) are required prior to your travel, you must purchase them before leaving home and take them to the clinic upon arrival on station. The vaccination will be administered to you at the end of the season.

No immunizations are required for return to the United States. Under international health regulations, other countries may require international certificates of vaccination against yellow fever.

More information on health considerations is covered in Chapter 6.

### Privacy Act Compliance

All medical information gathered from you by the NSF or its contractor is maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579). The law provides that you may have access to your own records, that you may make copies of them, and that you may provide RPSC information to correct or dispute records you feel are inaccurate.

NSF’s authority to collect medical, dental, and psychological information derives from its authority to prescribe rules governing its operations as set forth in section 1870(a) of title 42 of the U.S. Code. If you do not provide the information requested, you may be disqualified from the U.S. Antarctic Program.

### Extreme Cold Weather (ECW) Clothing and Emergency Contacts

As part of your planning package, you will receive a **Personal Information Form** that solicits information necessary for advance preparation of your Extreme Cold Weather (ECW) clothing, which will be issued to you on loan when you pass through Punta Arenas, Chile, or Christchurch, New Zealand. It also asks for your next of kin or other contacts for use in the event of an emergency. Copies of this form are kept on file by RPSC. For more on ECW clothing, see Chapter 5.

### Travel Arrangements

RPSC Deployment Specialists Group (DSG) begins work on your ticketing and itineraries early in the qualifying process. You may be consulted in advance to establish your deployment date, but your itinerary and tickets will not be released and delivered to you until you have PQ’d.

The DSG does not issue tickets with originating travel from outside the United States unless specifically approved in advance by the NSF. Such participants provide their own ticketing from their country of origin to their PI's institution in the United States.

You will travel through New Zealand, Chile, or other countries en route to Antarctica, using airline tickets provided by the U.S. Antarctic Program.

International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974 (better known as the Fly America Act) requires the use of U.S. carriers (coach class) whenever available when RPSC is the ticket buyer. The DSG supervisor reserves, purchases, and issues your tickets for direct air travel from your home airport to New Zealand or Chile. This information is taken directly from travel information submitted by you, your supervisor or your PI. Any deviation from the direct route must be authorized in advance by the NSF program manager or RPSC management. To get the best fare, airline tickets take at least three weeks to process. Any personal travel is your responsibility.

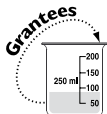
Travel through Argentina is coordinated on an individual basis through the RPSC Logistics Supervisor, Peninsula Area.

When the tickets are delivered to you, make sure the date and time of travel are what you expected. Make sure the name printed on your tickets corresponds to the one in your passport (i.e., no nicknames). If your tickets have discrepancies, contact RPSC DSG (1-800-688-8606, prompt 2). Also, if you received permission for excess baggage, ensure that the excess baggage coupons are included in your ticketing package.

Every effort is made to obtain flight dates as requested, but this is not always possible. Whenever possible, RPSC schedules travel to avoid Sunday and holiday arrivals. Remember that during the southbound trans-Pacific flight you cross the International Date Line, losing a day. For example, if you leave the United States on Tuesday, October 8, you arrive in New Zealand Thursday morning, October 10.

Your **Airport of Departure (AOD)** is the location you designate as your residence on either the SIP or your employment agreement, and is the city to which you will be returned. You will not be able to change your AOD once your tickets have been issued. The only exception would be proof of a change of residence that occurred during your deployment and approved prior to re-deployment by RPSC management.

## Expenses



**Grantees:** Your PI or team leader can give you information on what expenses are covered by your grant and any special training or meetings that may be required.



**RPSC Employees:** You will be required to attend a deployment orientation once per year. This orientation will be held in the United States or Christchurch, N.Z. The orientation is intended to familiarize you with the U.S. Antarctic Program as well as RPSC policies.

Please bring the following to the orientation if you have not already provided them:

- ▶ Your financial institution's routing number for direct deposit.
- ▶ A voided check for direct deposit.
- ▶ Your beneficiary's name, address and social security number, so that you may enroll or make applicable updates online for savings bonds/401k.
- ▶ Name, address and phone numbers for the person designated to handle your financial issues, receipts, etc.
- ▶ Official passport to establish identity, even if a copy was already submitted.

Your hiring manager will notify you what pre-deployment expenses will be reimbursed. Take all receipts with you to Antarctica, as you will be completing the reimbursement forms there. Once you have achieved active 'employee' status you must fill out an online expense report called WebTE. Contact the finance POC at the Antarctic station where you are working for more information on how to access the Web site.

## PASSPORTS, VISAS AND PERMITS

### Passports

You must have a valid passport before leaving the United States. Obtaining a passport is your responsibility, and typically takes at least six weeks. To apply for a passport, you must present two photos and a certified copy of your birth certificate to a Department of State Passport Office. Notarized birth certificates are no longer accepted. Updated information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

If you are a federal employee, your agency must obtain an official passport by contacting the Department of State. **Bearer of official passports require visas in some countries that may not require visas of regular passport bearers.** Note, particularly, that the technicalities of entering Argentina put bearers of official passports at a disadvantage when embarking upon or debarking from U.S. antarctic vessels in Argentina.

If you already have a passport, make sure that it is not scheduled to **expire** during your overseas stay. This is especially important for wintering personnel. Your passport should be valid at least **six months** beyond the intended stay.

It is a good idea to keep a photocopy of your passport (including pages containing visas) in a separate place in the event that your passport is lost. Assistance with the replacement of passports lost in New Zealand/Antarctica can be done via the Christchurch Travel Office. **Never** risk mailing your passport from Antarctica.

**RPSC Employees** will be reimbursed up to \$150 for actual costs incurred related to passport issuance. Please see the deployment packet for details.



### Visas

In addition to a passport, many countries require a visa. The requirements of the three countries through which most U.S. Antarctic Program travelers pass are explained below. Any **necessary visa should be obtained before leaving the United States** by contacting the embassies of the countries to be visited. Failure to do so may complicate or delay your travel. The U.S. Antarctic Program does not pay for or provide assistance in obtaining visas. If your New Zealand or Chilean visa application requires an itinerary and letter of participation in the USAP, please contact the DSG at 1-800-688-8606, prompt #2, or via e-mail at [deployment@usap.gov](mailto:deployment@usap.gov), and the required documentation will be provided.

**New Zealand.** A visitor's permit is required for all holders of U.S. passports and will be issued at the airport upon arrival in New Zealand. The total time spent in both New Zealand and Antarctica is recorded by New Zealand Immigration as time spent in New Zealand. If your visitor's permit expires while you are in Antarctica, you have 14 calendar days after your return to New Zealand to apply to Immigration for an extension. If you leave New Zealand before the expiration of 14 calendar days, you will not need to extend your visitor's permit.

**RPSC will provide all RPSC-ticketed participants with an official letter requesting a 12-month visitor's permit. This letter will be located within your ticket jacket. When entering New Zealand, you must provide this letter with your passport to the Customs agent. Failure to do so will provide you with a standard three-month permit.**

**Chile.** If you will be traveling on a tourist (private citizen) U.S. passport, you do not need a visa to enter Chile. Tourist cards are issued by the airlines in Chile. They must be surrendered to Customs upon departing the country. Bearers of U.S. government passports do need a visa, available from the Chilean Embassy, 1732 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-785-1746). Send a letter stating the purpose of your visit; enclose your passport and a return envelope. For more information, go to [www.chile-usa.org](http://www.chile-usa.org).

**Argentina.** If you will be traveling on a tourist (private citizen) U.S. passport, you do not need a visa to enter Argentina. Bearers of U.S. government passports do need a visa, available from the Argentine Embassy, 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009 (202-238-6460). Send a letter stating the purpose of your visit; enclose your passport and a return envelope. For more information, visit [www.embassyofargentina.us/en/home/news.htm](http://www.embassyofargentina.us/en/home/news.htm).





**Australia.** Many U.S. Antarctic Program participants travel through Australia for business or pleasure, and this requires a visa for U.S. (tourist) passport holders if a layover exceeding a basic connection occurs. Usually this can be accomplished electronically at a ticket counter, but you may be required to submit an application and send your passport to the Embassy of Australia, 1601 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-797-3000). For more information, visit [www.usa.embassy.gov.au](http://www.usa.embassy.gov.au).

**Visas for noncitizens.** Foreign nationals residing in the United States are responsible for obtaining the appropriate visas from their country before leaving for Antarctica. Contact the embassy of the country through which you will pass to learn requirements.

If you are not a citizen of the United States, you will need a two-entry visa (one for initial entry and one for return from Antarctica) for New Zealand or for South American countries through which you will pass. **It is your responsibility to check with an official of your country well before the planned departure; the U.S. Antarctic Program will not act on your behalf.**

Resident aliens in the United States should determine any other regulations that govern absence from the United States by checking with the U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service. Lack of compliance with regulations can cause loss of accrued residence time benefits that are applicable toward citizenship and/or re-entry. It can take several months, and even require a visit to the consulate, for non-U.S. citizens to get these visas.

**U.S. visas for foreign nationals.** If you are a foreign national not residing in the United States, and will be traveling to the United States after you have been to Antarctica, please review this important visa information. All foreign nationals must be able to prove that they have compelling ties in their home country (e.g., family, job, property) to which they must return upon completion of the studies, exchange program, or business in the United States.

Applicants for visas should apply at the American embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence. Review the Department of State Visa Services Internet Information at <http://travel.state.gov> for exchange visitor visa and student visa information and requirements.

Contact the Embassy Consular Section in the traveler's country to determine any additional visa procedures, timeframe required to set up an appointment for interview, and to schedule an appointment for an interview. An interview is required for most visa applicants. The waiting time for an interview appointment for most applicants is a few weeks or less, but for some embassy consular sections it can be considerably longer. Some applicants will need additional screening, and will be notified when they apply. Contact the Embassy Consular Section via the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov>. For a few countries, foreign travelers will need to contact the consular section by telephone. For both initial and continuing exchange visitors or students, after receiving program sponsor approval and documentation, applicants should apply for his/her visa as soon as possible, to the U.S. Embassy Consular Section in his/her country of residence.

## Permits and Approvals

NSF grantees may need to obtain permits for transporting samples, for entering protected areas, shipping samples and radioisotopes, etc. These permits can take at least 65 days to get and cannot be obtained from Antarctica. Your SIP contains the actual applications and describes what is required and where to file the applications.

**NOTE:** NSF is required to have copies of all active permits on file. The process of obtaining permits and copying the NSF office is described in detail in Chapter 4.

**Diving qualifications.** Some science projects in Antarctica require scuba or surface-supplied diving. There are a number of unique risks associated with polar diving, including extreme cold, ice in many forms, potentially dangerous marine life, low light and visibility, contaminated water, and others. On account of these risks, Antarctic diving demands special training, experience and an on-site orientation for divers; proper equipment; and a thorough and realistic dive plan.

All diving under NSF auspices in Antarctica requires prior approval from the NSF. To obtain approval, a dive plan must be submitted that is consistent with the *NSF/OPP Standards for the Conduct of Scientific Diving*, available from your POC. The PI's home institution diving safety officer or equivalent must provide comments on and approval of any request to dive in Antarctica. Final authorization will be made by the NSF/OPP diving safety officer. Prior to approval, he may indicate the necessity for additional training or may require changes to the original dive plan. Dive plan forms and individual diver information sheets are available in the Dive section of POLAR ICE.

A variety of diving equipment, including scuba tanks and backpacks, weight belts, buoyancy compensators, and compressors, among other items, is available at McMurdo and Palmer stations and aboard USAP research vessels. PI's must specifically request the use of any NSF/OPP equipment in their SIP during the preseason planning stage. Recreational diving is not permitted.

**Grantees:** The *Antarctic Scientific Diving Manual* (NSF 99-22) contains information on certification, dive sites, environment, operations, emergencies, reference tables, etc. Guidelines for research diving can be found in the *NSF/OPP Standards for the Conduct of Scientific Diving*. Contact your POC for copies of these documents.

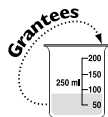
**Firearms.** The use of firearms is prohibited without advance permission from the NSF/OPP. Request permission by letter, stating:

- ▶ Purpose of the firearm
- ▶ Make and caliber of the firearm
- ▶ Type and amount of ammunition

Upon completion of your fieldwork, you must report the disposition of firearms and excess ammunition to the NSF/OPP. This information will be reported to the other Antarctic Treaty nations, as required by the Antarctic Treaty.

**New Zealand agriculture.** Like most nations today, New Zealand has restrictions on what may and may not enter the country. Goods are restricted if they are known to carry pests or diseases that could endanger native plants and animals. Travelers are required to declare all restricted goods when they enter New Zealand. Some examples of restricted goods are dairy products; fish, fruit and vegetables (fresh/dried/frozen/cooked); genetically modified organisms (GMOs); herbs and spices; noodles and rice; nuts; bamboo, cane and basket ware; cut/dried flowers and leaves; seeds; wooden artifacts; camping equipment; feathers, bones, horns and tusks; furs and skins; soil and water; unprocessed wool and animal hair. All restricted items will be examined on arrival, and if found to comply with current requirements, will be permitted to enter. People who knowingly bring restricted items into New Zealand and do not declare them will be prosecuted and will be subject to severe penalties.

Some goods prohibited from entry into New Zealand include honey; eggs and egg products; meat and meat products; unpopped popcorn; plants (live/dried); straw; shells and coral; ivory; turtle and tortoise shells.



## CUSTOMS

Your baggage will be inspected by Customs officers and may be screened by dogs that are specially trained to detect controlled substances and agricultural products including fruits, plants and food. In addition, thorough searches of luggage and individual clothing items, as well as body searches, are routinely conducted by the Customs authorities at the time of entry. Importation and possession of controlled drugs without prescriptions, marijuana, weapons (especially firearms and switchblade knives), pornography, and certain animal/agricultural products are strictly prohibited when entering New Zealand. Violators will be instantly fined \$200NZ or more. For current information regarding New Zealand Customs, visit [www.maf.govt.nz/biosecurity](http://www.maf.govt.nz/biosecurity). Transportation of the above-mentioned items aboard U.S. military ships and airplanes is also prohibited by federal law.

Travelers are able to carry **personal effects** in their normal luggage. Personal effects are articles a traveler may reasonably require for personal use during the journey such as cloth-

ing, footwear, watches, brushes and toiletries. Personal effects can also include jewelry (but not unmounted semi-precious or precious stones). Personal effects also are duty-free items purchased either prior to your departure or upon your arrival; are for your own private use or intended as gifts; are not imported for commercial purposes or for use in your business and/or profession; and are not imported for other persons at their request.

There are limits on quantities of tobacco and alcohol that can be brought into many countries. Please refer to these web sites for current customs regulations:

New Zealand: [www.customs.govt.nz](http://www.customs.govt.nz)

Chile: [www.aduana.cl](http://www.aduana.cl)



In addition to the personal effects concession, each passenger is entitled to the Visitor Concessionary Entry of other items that a visitor normally carries. This includes items such as a laptop computer, cameras, binoculars and an iPod. These goods must be for personal use, and the goods will be taken with the passenger when he/she leaves the country.

**RPSC Employees:** RPSC will not provide personal property insurance.

**Grantees:** Grantees should have insurance for project equipment as determined by the PI. The costs of insurance should be included in the budget request.

**NOTE:** The purchase of duty-free items in New Zealand prior to boarding a military airplane is prohibited. Duty-free articles are usually delivered to passengers upon check-in for commercial international flights; however, due to security measures associated with boarding a military airplane bound for Antarctica, it is not possible for representatives from a duty-free shop to deliver goods to you.

## Customs and Your Equipment

If you will be taking or shipping technical equipment to Antarctica through another country, prepare in advance to avoid two possible costs, paying import duty or posting bond to a foreign country (even though your equipment is only passing through) and paying duty when you bring the equipment back into the United States.

Technical equipment includes any valuable items of foreign make (other than the personal effects concession mentioned above), such as scientific equipment or numerous computers or professional cameras, which you plan to take with you to Antarctica. If these items are not registered with U.S. Customs or you do not have proof of previous payments for such items, you may have to pay import duties on them upon your return to the United States. You cannot be reimbursed for such costs. Customs regulations also require that prescription drugs be hand-carried and not placed in checked baggage. Carry a copy of each prescription provided by your personal physician. See Chapter 3 for further information on prescription medications.

Scientific or technological equipment (including personal computers, spare parts or other equipment carried for RPSC) that you carry as part of your personal luggage is likely to be charged a customs duty and/or tax, or impounded if such a duty or tax is not paid. If you do not have a receipt or the item was a gift, Customs will determine the value. NSF contractor representatives will not cover charges for customs duties or taxes. All scientific or technological equipment should be shipped from the United States and Antarctica as cargo (all cargo is designated NSF and hence is exempt from duty and taxes).

Customs registration must be made in person, and you must possess the articles and serial numbers to be registered. Registration can be made at any international airport in the United States that originates overseas flights (e.g., Los Angeles, Miami). Also, Coastal Customs Registration Centers are located in the World Trade Center, Los Angeles.

It is suggested that you prepare a list of items (with serial numbers and/or appropriate documentation) prior to your arrival at the registration center. This information can then be easily transcribed to the customs registration forms available only at the centers.

There are several methods of protecting against payment of unwarranted duty:

**Registry with U.S. Customs.** To ease re-entry and before leaving the United States, you can

Valuable equipment such as laptops and cameras must have a serial number and should be registered in advance with U.S. Customs.





*Weather instruments and Global positioning systems are placed on the ice near Pine Island Glacier.*

*photo by Cliff Leight*

register equipment such as cameras with U.S. Customs by completing U.S. Customs Form 4457. Contact Customs at any U.S. international airport.

**Letter from your institution.** When carrying science equipment as accompanied baggage, list it on your institution's stationery and include a statement that the material will be used for research at a U.S. government antarctic station. Keep the list with the material to ease clearance through Customs in Argentina and Chile. This letter is not enough when going through New Zealand.

**Temporary importation of your equipment into New Zealand.** A customs law is in effect for nonmilitary U.S. Antarctic Program participants entering New Zealand. Grantees, contractors and other visitors carrying high-tech and scientific equipment (not including laptop computers) as part of their luggage must carry a New Zealand Customs form stating (1) that the goods will not be left, sold or disposed of in New Zealand without the written permission of New Zealand Customs, (2) that the goods listed will be finally exported from New Zealand within 12 months of their first landing, and (3) a list of the equipment and its value. Appropriate forms must be obtained from the RPSC travel supervisor in Denver before you depart for New Zealand and must be returned to the RPSC travel supervisor upon return to your home institution.

**NOTE:** Technical event participants fall into a special category. Contact the RPSC Deployment Specialists Group.

**Carnet de Passage.** Visitors from the media and other organizations who are guests of the U.S. Antarctic Program rather than science participants are not issued NSF letters for their professional equipment. To avoid paying the customs duty, anyone carrying professional equipment including cameras and other recording devices must have a carnet. NSF representatives will not help you get a carnet and will not pay customs duty for you.

If you have a carnet, you do not also need to register items with U.S. Customs. Obtain the Carnet de Passage for Temporary Admission before you leave for Antarctica. In the United States, the U.S. Treasury has appointed the U.S. Council for International Business to issue carnets. Issuing offices are located in California, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Texas. For addresses, contact:

US Council for International Business  
1212 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10036

[www.uscib.org](http://www.uscib.org)  
tel. 212-354-4480  
fax 212-575-0327

## PERSONAL MATTERS

Before you leave for Antarctica, take care of your personal affairs. Designate someone you trust as your **stateside representative**. It can be difficult to handle financial or other personal affairs from Antarctica. Because mail delivery to Antarctica is not always reliable or timely, you **should NOT forward your mail** or change your address to Antarctica. You will be able to communicate with your stateside representative by telephone and e-mail.

### Personal Finances

Take enough money with you to meet all eventualities. Most foreign banks will not cash personal checks or cashier checks drawn on your home bank. NSF representatives in New Zealand will not advance funds nor will they vouch for a personal check.

**NOTE:** Make sure that your ATM and credit cards do not expire while you are away from home.

International credit cards (e.g., MasterCard, Visa) are generally accepted in New Zealand and South American countries. Countries sometimes offer better exchange rates for travelers checks than they do cash.

You will probably need at least \$500 for a round trip between the United States and Antarctica. This amount will vary with personal spending habits, length of stay and travel delays. Allow additional funds for the purchase of personal items (soap, razor blades, souvenirs, etc.) in Antarctica. There are two ATM machines at McMurdo Station but none at the other facilities.

**Banking in New Zealand.** Banks in New Zealand will exchange U.S. cash and travelers checks into New Zealand currency. You can also withdraw funds from banks using your Visa and Mastercard credit cards, if you have previously established a Personal Identification Number (PIN) with your bank. ATMs marked with 'Plus' or 'Cirrus' accept credit cards (with a PIN number) as well as ATM and debit cards and are located in both the Auckland and Christchurch airports as well as in the main square of Christchurch.

If you need additional money in New Zealand after you get to Antarctica, there are two ways to transfer money :

1. Have your U.S. bank send by certified air mail a bank draft drawn on the Bank of New Zealand to:

c/o NSF Contractor Representative, N.Z.  
 HOLD IN CHRISTCHURCH FOR [name; project # or RPSC]  
 c/o Private Bag 4747  
 Christchurch Airport  
 Christchurch 8140  
 New Zealand

2. Arrange for your U.S. bank to send funds by telegraphic transfer (this can take 72 hours) in your name to:

Bank of New Zealand  
 Christchurch Airport Branch  
 Christchurch International Airport  
 New Zealand  
 Hold for [participant's full name]  
 BNZ Christchurch Branch's code is SWIFT-BK NZ NZ 22.

The transaction should be marked, "Hold funds against identification for [your full name] who will call on return from Antarctica." These arrangements are more easily made with larger U.S. banks that have international connections. If you deal with a small bank, we suggest you discuss the subject of transferring funds with them before you depart for Antarctica.

**Banking in Chile.** In Santiago, Chile, money exchange is available only in the international terminal (not the domestic terminal). Please be aware that there will probably not be time to exchange money upon your arrival and before your departure, but U.S. currency can be used for taxes and fees (see Chapter 5 for more information). Banks in Punta Arenas, Chile, are closed half of Saturday and all of Sunday, so plan accordingly. ATMs marked with 'Plus' or 'Cirrus' accept credit cards (with a PIN number) as well as ATM and debit cards.

**Joint bank accounts and debt payments.** If you will need to draw funds from a bank account while you are in Antarctica, you may wish to have the account established jointly with another person to permit the other person to withdraw the funds as required. The joint tenant of the account can legally withdraw any and all funds whenever he/she wants.

Arrange for the regular payment of insurance premiums and any other term debts that you may have while in Antarctica.

Mail service from McMurdo and South Pole stations is **not** available during the austral winter, and is erratic in the summer season. You are advised not to rely on the mail service to pay bills from Antarctica (see Postal Services in Chapter 6). McMurdo's winter period is February to October, and South Pole's is February to November.

**Absentee ballot.** If you wish to vote in any local, state or federal elections by absentee ballot, you must arrange to receive an absentee ballot from your voting authorities. Keep in mind the uncertainties of mail in and out of Antarctica. Wintering personnel usually have to forego

participation in elections held during periods of station isolation. Voting by radio or by teletype is not permitted by state election officials. Be sure to check absentee voting requirements of your home precinct before you leave for Antarctica. This is your responsibility.

**Annual leave.** Employees of some organizations may be subject to loss of accrued annual leave while in Antarctica. Consult your personnel officer regarding use of leave before departure. Some federal employees may not carry-over excess leave time while in Antarctica.

**National Guard or Reserve.** If you are a member of the National Guard or Reserve, see your commanding officer to make arrangements for your absence.

### Income Tax

Make sure that you will not incur penalties through failure to file tax returns or to pay your taxes. For federal income tax returns, due April 15, you may request an extension for filing from the district director of the Internal Revenue Service. However, interest is charged on the unpaid balance of your tax beginning April 15.

You can file your income taxes online or give someone power of attorney to act as your agent in filing your income tax returns (federal, state and local). IRS district directors have forms for this purpose, or you may have a lawyer draw up the document. Remember that if your agent fails to file the return, you are still the one who has to pay the delinquent tax penalty.

The IRS does not consider Antarctica extraterritorial, so U.S. tax law applies. For further information, you can contact the IRS. District directors are in each state at the same address where you normally file tax returns. For more information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

**RPSC Employees:** State and federal income taxes are withheld from all RPSC employee paychecks.



### Power of Attorney

You may wish to establish a general or a special power of attorney before leaving home. A general power of attorney permits your agent to act for you in ordinary business and commercial transactions: to endorse and write checks, to sign documents and bills of sale on your behalf, and so forth. A special power of attorney restricts the agent's authority to functions specifically described. For example, you might empower your agent only to sell a particular piece of property for not less than a stated price.

Some institutions, such as savings banks, may refuse to accept a power of attorney; they require you to make special arrangements with them before others may withdraw your funds. Individuals may be reluctant to deal with your agent under a general power of attorney if the authority for a particular transaction is not specifically set forth, or if your agent's authority is otherwise in doubt. Consult a lawyer before drafting a power of attorney. A power of attorney automatically expires at the time of your death and defers to information contained in your will.

### Wills

A will ensures distribution of your estate as you desire and not arbitrarily, as state laws require if there is no will. You are urged to consider having one prepared before you depart for Antarctica.

### Notary Services

No universally recognized notary services are available in Antarctica. Therefore, you cannot count on being able to execute or revoke legal documents requiring notarization. Make every effort to settle outstanding legal matters before you leave for Antarctica.

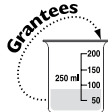
### Insurance

**Notification of Injuries and Evacuations.** If you are injured while working in Antarctica or if you are taken to New Zealand or South America for a medical consultation or evacuation, the U.S. Antarctic Program management will not notify your family of the injury if you are physically capable of contacting your family members on your own. In the event you are physically unable

to notify your family members, U.S. Antarctic Program management will contact your emergency contact (not necessarily at your request).

In the event of a major accident that will make news headlines (e.g., plane or helicopter crash), U.S. Antarctic Program management will advise the emergency contact of those participants involved.

**Personal property and cargo insurance.** A loss of personal property in Antarctica through fire, theft, or any other means should be protected by individual personal property insurance. It is your responsibility to obtain this coverage. The U.S. government normally does not assume liability for damage to or loss of personal property unless there is clear evidence of negligence by government personnel acting in the scope of their employment. Although every effort is made to care for cargo (personal or scientific), the U.S. Antarctic Program is not responsible for any damage that may occur.



**Grantees:** Make sure you have adequate insurance for your stay in Antarctica. An NSF grant for work in Antarctica does not provide insurance coverage. Check with your employer or a financial consultant to find out what insurance you have and to decide what you should have. Consider the following areas:

*Health insurance.* Civilian personnel receive free medical care in Antarctica, but, if necessary and possible, you will be evacuated from the continent and perhaps hospitalized at a foreign or US hospital. There, you will be **responsible for costs** of hospitalization, medical care, laboratory fees, and any other charges. Before leaving the United States, examine your health coverage and buy insurance if you need it. Grantees are asked to read Appendix D on page 89 regarding medical insurance.

*Worker's Compensation.* If you will be working for a PI as a volunteer, remember that worker's compensation coverage may not be provided.

*Life insurance.* Grantees and their team members are urged to have adequate life insurance. Federal employees' Civil Service policies remain in effect during antarctic duty. Examine your insurance coverage before departure to ensure you are adequately covered. The NSF does not provide life insurance for its grantees in Antarctica. In making arrangements for insurance, keep in mind that antarctic flights are generally considered non-scheduled military airplane operations. Check with your institution to see whether its group policies for employees provide coverage or exceptions for travel and work in remote regions.

*Travel insurance.* Some insurance companies offer air travel insurance for scheduled commercial and Air Mobility Command flights. This insurance is available at most commercial airports and Air Mobility Command terminals. It generally does not cover you during flights from New Zealand or other countries to Antarctica or during flights in Antarctica.

Grantees should have insurance for project equipment as determined by the PI. The costs of insurance should be included in the budget request.



**RPSC Employees:** Employees will be eligible to enroll in various insurance options including medical, prescription drug, vision care, dental, life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, long-term disability and short-term disability. The following coverage levels are available: employee, employee and spouse/same sex domestic partner, employee and children, employee and family. The cost of the coverage for contract employees and their dependents is shared between the employee and RPSC. Benefits are reviewed annually and may change after the publication of this book.

If you are required by the station medical doctor to leave Antarctica for medical treatment, you are responsible for your medical bills unless the injury or illness is deemed work-related.

*Worker's Compensation.* Any RPSC employee who is injured while in Antarctica may be covered under worker's compensation. Within three days of the accident (regardless of the seriousness), a Medical Injury Report Form must be completed by your supervisor or medical staff and turned in to the designated person at the station or vessel. If you feel you will need treatment after redeployment from Antarctica, you will need to contact Human Resources on station or in Denver prior

## Credit Cards

- ▶ Visa and Mastercard can be used at the McMurdo and Palmer stores, but not at the South Pole.
- ▶ Minimum credit card purchase is \$10.

## ATM

- ▶ Only available at McMurdo Station.
- ▶ No fee charged by Wells Fargo ATM, but your bank may charge a fee.
- ▶ Money is distributed in \$20 bills.

to leaving Antarctica or a vessel to establish a claim. If the injury can't be treated on station or on the vessel (determined by the doctor), you may be sent off the continent/vessel to be evaluated by another doctor in Christchurch or Punta Arenas. Keep in mind that worker's compensation covers only injuries. Bodily malfunctions (e.g., appendicitis, kidney stones) are not covered by worker's compensation. Your insurance policy through RPSC or insurance through an outside carrier may cover these types of ailments.

**NOTE:** It is highly recommended that each employee carry some kind of medical insurance that will provide coverage while traveling out of the country after deployment. If you elected to enroll in the RPSC medical insurance, the COBRA program will be available upon completion of your contract. If benefits were not elected, COBRA will not be an option. Plan ahead.

## Cash, Meals and Lodging in Antarctica

**ATM machines** are available at McMurdo Station, but not at the other facilities. There is a finance representative at all U.S. Antarctic Program stations who will cash the following: U.S. money orders, travelers checks, certified checks, and cashier checks. Participants working on the research vessels should be aware that there is no finance representative aboard the ships, and that they should plan ahead to ensure they have an adequate supply of cash.

**Grantees:** At McMurdo Station, the RPSC finance representative located in Building 155, will cash grantee's personal checks (from U.S. banks) for up to \$500 per month, in addition to the various kinds of checks mentioned above.

At the South Pole, grantees can cash checks for up to \$500 per month. Use of credit cards is not available at Pole.

Palmer Station's check-cashing procedure is the same as that at the South Pole Station, though grantees also have the option of using credit cards there.

**It is important to note that check-cashing transactions, including those written for purchases at the store, cannot exceed \$500 per month USAP-wide.**

**RPSC Employees** may not cash personal checks at stations or on research ships.

At McMurdo, RPSC employees should rely on either the ATM machines or the finance representative to cash U.S. money orders, travelers checks, certified checks and cashier checks.

At Palmer and South Pole stations there is no ATM available. RPSC employees may obtain cash via a remote cash disbursement (RCD). Employees select the amount to be deducted from their pay after they reach Antarctica. These RCD funds are distributed at routine intervals while on station.

**NOTE:** Wintering personnel should arrange in advance to have enough cash at the end of the winter for use on the way home (see 'Personal Finances' in this chapter for ways to pre-position cash in New Zealand).

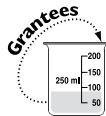
**NOTE:** Subcontracted Technical Event personnel may not cash personal checks. They should plan ahead and bring a supply of travelers checks or cash.

**Meals and lodging.** At U.S. Antarctic Program stations, aboard the research ships *Laurence M. Gould* and *Nathaniel B. Palmer*, aboard a Coast Guard icebreaker, or in the field, you do not pay out of pocket for meals or lodging. If you are traveling with foreign expeditions, be prepared to pay meal charges aboard their ships.

## RPSC Compensation and Benefits

RPSC payroll checks are **not** sent to Antarctica. All employees are required to have a U.S. bank account for the electronic direct deposit of payroll funds. RPSC employees should refer to the Terms of Agreement received in their Offer Letter Packet for detailed information about **travel funds, hours, your performance-based completion bonus, marine compensation, etc.**

In Antarctica, particularly at the inland stations and camps, there are essential employment conditions. The typical work week is 54 hours Monday through Saturday. **At times, everyone will be expected to work a longer-than-usual workweek, assist others in the performance**







*photo by Robyn Wasserman*

*All participants are expected to work as long and hard as necessary to support science, maintain the stations and to see to the well-being of all personnel.*

**of their duties, and/or assume community-related job responsibilities.** Everyone will do his or her share of the menial tasks, such as floor scrubbing, washroom cleanup, dishwashing, snow shoveling, etc. Due to the challenges that work in Antarctica presents, no guarantee can be made regarding the duties, location or duration of work. This is not an attempt to paint an overly bleak picture that will discourage all but the stout-hearted. Rather, it is an effort to present work and wages realistically. **The objective is to support science, maintain the station, and see to the well-being of all station personnel. All are expected to work as long and hard as necessary in attaining this objective.** At the same time, experience shows that good management and a cooperative spirit will result in ample time for social activities and the pursuit of personal hobbies and projects. ■