

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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Part 265 Travel

Chapter 6 Temporary Duty Travel – Lodging, Meals and Incidental Expenses

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6.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides guidance for reimbursing employees for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses for official travel.

6.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter covers lodging, meals, and incidental expense allowances for employees conducting temporary duty (TDY) travel. The policy for permanent change of station (PCS) allowances is in Part 266 of the Service Manual. Information on local travel is in the memorandum that the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations issued on 02/23/2009.

6.3 What is the policy?

A. We reimburse travelers for reasonable costs associated with the lodging, meals, and incidental expenses required for official travel. The total reimbursement for a single day of lodging, meals, and incidental expenses is known as per diem reimbursement.

B. We generally cover the actual cost of a traveler's lodging, up to a maximum daily allowable rate, and provide a daily allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). This method of reimbursement is called "Lodgings-Plus" (see section 6.6).

C. We reimburse travelers for only those expenses necessary to perform official duty.

6.4 When may travelers receive per diem reimbursement? Travelers may receive per diem reimbursement when they meet both of the following criteria:

A. The traveler is in TDY status for more than 12 hours, and

B. The TDY location is more than 50 miles from both the traveler's permanent duty station and residence.

6.5 Are there exceptions to the requirement that the employee travel 50 miles from his or her permanent duty station and residence in order to qualify for per diem reimbursement?

A. In the following situations, a traveler may receive per diem reimbursement for travel to a TDY location 30-50 miles from his or her duty station and residence:

(1) A traveler attends a meeting, conference, or training and would benefit from remaining onsite with colleagues. The traveler must:

(a) Obtain prior written approval from the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations, and

(b) Include a copy of the approval with the receipt packet.

(2) A traveler experiences inclement weather and believes that his or her personal safety or health would be jeopardized by returning from the TDY location. The traveler must:

(a) Obtain written approval from the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations. Travelers must request approval as soon as they become aware of the inclement weather. If a traveler is unable to obtain approval before traveling (e.g., the weather occurs without warning), he or she may seek approval after the trip.

(b) Amend the travel authorization to reflect the change, if the employee traveled on dates not included on the original authorization. See Chapter 4 of the *Temporary Duty Handbook: A Guide to the TDY Process* for information on amending a travel authorization.

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(c) Include a copy of the approval with the receipt packet.

(3) The Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations grants a TDY location an extended (e.g., 5-year) exception to the 50 mile requirement. The traveler must:

(a) Make note of the exception in the travel authorization, and

(b) Include a copy of the memo that the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations issued with the receipt packet.

B. Travelers may receive reimbursement for travel to a TDY location fewer than 30 miles from their duty station or residence only in circumstances where the additional travel time negatively affects the traveler or the ability to carry out the mission. The traveler must:

(1) Obtain prior written approval from the Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations and the Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management, and Budget (PMB), and

(2) Include a copy of the approval with the receipt packet.

6.6 What is the Lodgings-Plus method of reimbursement?

A. The Lodgings-Plus method is the standard method that we use to provide per diem reimbursement to travelers. The General Services Administration (GSA) establishes maximum per diem reimbursement rates for locations within the continental United States (CONUS), and works with the State Department and the Department of Defense (DoD) Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee to establish maximum per diem reimbursement rates for domestic locations outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) (e.g., Alaska, Hawaii). The State Department Office of Allowances sets foreign per diem rates on a monthly basis.

B. We reimburse travelers for the actual amount they pay for lodging and provide an M&IE allowance, not to exceed the applicable maximum GSA per diem rate for the given location.

6.7 What are the restrictions on lodging and M&IE? The following restrictions apply to each type of per diem expense covered by the Service:

A. Lodging

(1) The traveler should use the electronic travel system or contact the travel management center to book lodging at hotels.

(2) When the traveler is conducting TDY travel to a location within CONUS, only the room charge is reimbursable as a lodging expense. Travelers must separate out any other charges (e.g., lodging taxes) and document these charges as additional expenses. This process does not apply to travel to domestic OCONUS locations or foreign locations; per diem rates in these locations account for lodging taxes.

(3) A traveler staying at the residence of a friend, associate, or family member may not receive reimbursement for costs paid to the host without evidence (i.e., receipts) that the host incurred additional expenses (e.g., increased rental cost charged by a commercial third-party business) due to the guest's presence. We do not reimburse travelers for costs related to the maintenance of a residence (e.g., insurance, repairs, utilities), even on a prorated or other basis.

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B. Meals

(1) Travelers may only receive reimbursement for meals up to the maximum amount authorized on their travel authorization.

(2) A traveler may not request reimbursement for meals that the Government provides (also see section 6.10).

(3) If the traveler inadvertently incurs a personal charge on his or her hotel bill (e.g., mini-bar snack, movie), the traveler should try to pay the hotel for the personal expense using cash or another form of personal payment. The GSA SmartPay 2 program prohibits travelers from charging personal expenses to their Government charge card. If the hotel refuses to split the personal expenses onto a separate official hotel bill, the traveler must reduce his or her M&IE allowance by the amount of the personal charge. See Chapter 6 in the *Temporary Duty Handbook: A Guide to the TDY Process* for additional information on this topic.

C. Incidental Expenses

(1) A traveler may use the incidental expense allowance included in his or her per diem entitlement to defray the cost associated with any of the following travel-related expenses:

(a) Reasonable tips to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and hotel maids.

(b) Transportation between places of lodging or business and restaurants when a traveler cannot get suitable meals at the TDY business site and does not have a rental car.

(c) Costs associated with mailing travel documentation and paying Government charge card statements when the traveler will not return from travel in time to submit the documentation without penalty.

(2) A traveler may not claim items covered by the incidental expense allowance as separate expenses on a travel voucher.

6.8 How does the Service calculate per diem under the Lodgings-Plus method?

A. The traveler receives up to 100% of the maximum lodging allowance for each travel day that requires lodging. We will reimburse the traveler for the actual cost associated with his or her lodging, up to the maximum per diem rate.

B. On the first day of a trip, the traveler receives up to 75% of the maximum M&IE allowance of the destination location. On the final day of a trip, the traveler receives up to 75% of the maximum M&IE allowance of the location from the preceding calendar day. The traveler receives up to 100% of the maximum M&IE allowance of the TDY location for each day between the first and last days of travel.

C. The electronic travel system automatically populates a traveler's TDY locations with the applicable per diem allowances for lodging and M&IE based on the itinerary. It is the traveler's responsibility to adjust the locations and allowances to ensure that the total per diem reimbursement requests accurately reflect the allowable costs incurred during travel.

6.9 How is Lodgings-Plus reimbursement impacted when a traveler is in TDY status for 12-24 hours? When a traveler is in TDY status for a total of 12-24 hours, the amount of reimbursement depends on whether or not the traveler needs lodging.

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A. If lodging is not required, the traveler may claim up to 75% of the maximum M&IE allowance. If the trip includes multiple per diem locations, the traveler may use the highest of the applicable per diem rates.

B. If lodging is required, the traveler may claim the actual cost of lodging up to 100% of the maximum lodging allowance and up to 75% of the maximum M&IE allowance. The traveler must use the pre-authorized TDY location to determine the M&IE reimbursement rate.

6.10 How does the Service calculate Lodgings-Plus reimbursement when a traveler gets lodging or meals for free?

A. When lodging is provided for free, the traveler may not claim any reimbursement associated with lodging and may claim only an M&IE allowance.

B. When the Government provides meals for free, the traveler must deduct the allowance for each meal from the total per diem allowance. The only exceptions are when a traveler cannot eat a Government-provided meal for health or religious reasons, which must be documented on the travel authorization.

(1) Travelers should be aware that a continental breakfast provided at a conference or training where the Service pays the conference registration or training fee is a Government-provided breakfast. The traveler must deduct the meal from the M&IE allowance.

(2) Meals provided by the Government to travelers at field camps under the Camp Rate method of reimbursement also qualify as Government-provided meals. See section 6.16 below for additional information on this topic.

6.11 What other methods does the Service use to reimburse travelers for per diem expenses? The other methods we may use to reimburse travelers include:

A. Actual Subsistence (sections 6.12 and 6.13),

B. Mixed Reimbursement (section 6.14),

C. Flat Rate (section 6.15), and

D. Camp Rate (section 6.16).

6.12 When may the Service use the Actual Subsistence method to reimburse travelers? A traveler may receive Actual Subsistence reimbursement when the applicable maximum per diem rate does not cover his or her travel expenses. An Approving Official (see section 6.13) may authorize Actual Subsistence reimbursement for lodging or M&IE or a combination of these. A traveler may get Actual Subsistence if:

A. The traveler gets cost estimates for hotels in the area and no lodging is available within the established lodging rate.

B. The cost associated with renting a car and traveling to a hotel within the established lodging rate is greater than the cost of receiving Actual Subsistence reimbursement to stay at a hotel accessible by foot or an alternate form of transportation (e.g., complimentary shuttle).

C. The traveler must stay at a specific hotel to accomplish the mission of the TDY assignment.

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D. Vendors temporarily raise the prices for food or lodging beyond the established per diem rate because of a special event at the location (e.g., major conference, convention).

E. Low cost restaurants are not available in the local area.

6.13 What is the process for obtaining and documenting approval for Actual Subsistence reimbursement?

A. Travelers must get approval to receive Actual Subsistence reimbursement before they travel.

(1) To receive reimbursement, traveler must document the request on the Discretionary and Trip-by-Trip Entitlements Form (FWS Form 3-2388).

(2) Approving Officials authorize Actual Subsistence on a case-by-case basis. They may not issue a blanket authorization for Actual Subsistence for an employee, a group of employees, or a location.

(3) The only time we can use a blanket authorization is when GSA and the Department of the Interior authorize Actual Subsistence for a location impacted by a natural or human disaster.

B. Table 6-1 shows who approves Actual Subsistence reimbursement.

Table 6-1: Approval on Actual Subsistence	
Amount	Required Approval
<i>101 to 150% of the standard per diem rate</i>	One of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional Director• Assistant Director• Assistant Regional Director• Division Chief• Project Leader
<i>151 to 300% of the standard per diem rate</i>	Regional Director or Assistant Director

C. Travelers must include a copy of the signed FWS Form 3-2388 with their receipt packet.

6.14 When may the Service use the Mixed Reimbursement method to reimburse travelers?

A. An Approving Official may authorize Mixed Reimbursement when the trip must be split between the Lodgings-Plus and Actual Subsistence methods of reimbursement.

B. The Approving Official must note which TDY location(s) or travel days qualify for each method of reimbursement on the travel authorization or supplemental approval (e.g., FWS Form 3-2388).

C. A traveler may only claim reimbursement under one method per day. We use the employee's travel status and TDY location at 12:00 AM (Midnight) to determine the appropriate method of per diem reimbursement for that day.

6.15 What is the Flat Rate method of reimbursement?

A. In rare cases, Approving Officials may use a Flat Rate to reduce per diem when they can determine in advance that lodging or meal costs will be lower than the GSA rate for the TDY location. The Approving

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Official reduces per diem to a percentage of the maximum allowable rate (e.g., 60% of the maximum allowable rate for a given TDY location) or to a new maximum allowable rate (e.g., \$25 per day).

B. An Approving Official must note the Flat Rate on the travel authorization or FWS Form 3-2388 prior to travel.

C. The traveler does not have to provide receipts or itemize expenses in order to receive reimbursement under the Flat Rate method.

6.16 What is the Camp Rate method of reimbursement?

A. An Approving Official may authorize a Camp Rate when a traveler uses a type of lodging other than a hotel or personal residence during TDY travel (e.g., bunkhouse, research vessel, field camp). The travel authorization or FWS Form 3-2388 must specifically note the Camp Rate.

B. Regional policy dictates who is responsible for establishing the Camp Rate for specific geographical areas, locations, or camping facilities.

C. The traveler does not have to provide receipts or itemize expenses in order to receive reimbursement under the Camp Rate method.

6.17 How does the Service calculate per diem reimbursement when a traveler conducts personal travel in conjunction with official travel? When a traveler conducts personal travel in conjunction with official travel, he or she may receive per diem reimbursement only for the official portion of the trip. The traveler's eligibility for per diem ends at 12:00 AM (Midnight) on the day before he or she takes personal leave for more than half of the work hours in the day. See 265 FW 5 for additional information on planning and documenting personal deviations.

6.18 How does the Service calculate per diem reimbursement when a traveler uses a less efficient mode of transportation for personal reasons? Any time travelers select a mode of transportation for personal reasons, rather than because it is beneficial to the Government, they must complete a cost comparison of the two trip itineraries using FWS Form 3-2387. The Service will reimburse the traveler for the per diem amount associated with the most cost-effective travel itinerary, unless the travel authorization specifically addresses an exception to policy. You can find additional information on cost comparisons and the use of FWS Form 3-2387 in 265 FW 5.

6.19 How does the Service calculate per diem reimbursement when a trip requires an official deviation?

A. When a traveler's trip is interrupted because of an official deviation (i.e., the traveler receives direction to travel to another location), the traveler must contact the travel management center as soon as possible to adjust or cancel reservations as necessary.

B. If the employee incurs lodging costs at two TDY locations due to an official deviation, we will cover the lodging costs at both of these locations. We will reimburse the traveler for additional lodging costs and cancellation penalties only after determining that the traveler acted responsibly and reasonably in adjusting or cancelling reservations.

6.20 Where can employees find additional information about per diem reimbursement? Chapter 6 of the *Temporary Duty Handbook: A Guide to the TDY Process* has more information about per diem reimbursement, including examples and screenshots from the electronic travel system.

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6.21 Who should employees contact with questions about per diem reimbursement? Contact your Regional Travel Coordinator with questions about per diem reimbursement. There is a list of the Regional Travel Coordinators in the *Temporary Duty Handbook: A Guide to the TDY Process*.

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DIRECTOR

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