

In Reply Refer To:
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To: Service Directorate

From: Assistant Director and Chief Financial Officer - Business Management and Operations
/signed/Janine Velasco, Assistant Director - Business Management and Operations

Subject: Change to Rules on Actual Expense Per Diem

The Department of the Interior (DOI) has issued Financial Management Memorandum (FMM) 2017-021 focusing on a change in policy for the justification of actual expense reimbursement for per diem. There is no longer a requirement on regular temporary duty travel (TDY) assignments to research at least three lodging establishments prior to approving lodging above the standard authorized rate; however, justification is still required. The requirement to research at least three hotels still applies to extended TDYs of 30 days or longer.

In accordance with chapter six of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) TDY Handbook, a traveler may qualify for actual expense reimbursement for lodging and/or meals in any of the following circumstances:

- Costs are inflated due to special circumstances (e.g., conventions, natural disasters) as determined by checking costs in the local area.
- Lodging or meals must be obtained at a prearranged site that exceeds the daily maximum allowance in order to accomplish the official purpose of a trip (e.g., a hotel where a meeting, conference, or training session is held).
- Lodging or meals cannot be obtained within prescribed allowances nearby and travel to an area with lower cost lodging or meals would be unduly burdensome.
- During emergency travel.
- When traveling to a location declared a federal disaster area by the President of the United States or authority no lower than a Directorate member or.
- When the official mission of the trip otherwise requires it (justification required).

Travelers should still provide comments in their Concur vouchers as to which criteria above applies. They should also provide a FWS Form 3-2388 with Directorate member approval if the lodging request is over 150% of the standard authorized rate or if the meals and incidental expense (M&IE) request exceeds the standard authorized rate.

If the first or third criteria above is used for either a regular or an extended TDY, the traveler should explain that they checked Concur for lodging rates in the local area and the Concur hotel printout with room costs should be included in the authorization and voucher receipts.

The distance of the local area to search should be based on the local transportation available to the traveler such as having a rental car or not.

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Regions, field offices, and/or supervisors may establish their documentation requirements for requests for M&IE above the standard authorized rate, such as requiring a printout of local restaurants. As a minimum, the traveler should explain in the FWS Form 3-2388 the availability and costs of restaurants in the local area. For example, the traveler may be in a remote area with only one or two restaurants available and they should explain in the FWS Form 3-2388 that the prices are high. The FWS Form 3-2388 requires Directorate member approval.

If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Travel Coordinator or Mr. Marvin Wilson, Division of Financial Management, at (703) 358-1781, or marvin_wilson@fws.gov.

Attachment