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OVERVIEW

6.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides policy and procedures for reimbursing U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) employees and non-employees (called “travelers” throughout) for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses incurred while performing official Temporary Duty Travel (TDY) on behalf of the Service.

6.2 What is the scope of this chapter?

A. This chapter covers lodging and Meals and Incidental Expense (M&IE) allowances for travelers conducting TDY travel.

B. This chapter does not cover:

(1) Permanent Change of Station (PCS) (see 266 FW 1);

(2) Temporary Change of Station (TCS) (see Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), 41 CFR Part 302, Subpart E); and

(3) Local travel in and around a permanent duty station (see 265 FW 12).

6.3 What is the overall policy?

A. We reimburse travelers for reasonable costs associated with the lodging and M&IE required for official TDY travel. The total reimbursement for a single day of lodging and M&IE 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 M&IE. This method of reimbursement is called "lodgings-plus" (see section 6.24).

C. We reimburse travelers for only those expenses necessary and allowable to perform official TDY travel.

6.4 What are the authorities for this chapter? See 265 FW 1 for a list of the authorities for all the chapters in Part 265.

6.5 What terms do you need to know to understand this chapter?

A. Approving officials are supervisors, Directorate members (i.e., Regional Directors; Assistant Directors; Director, National Conservation Training Center (NCTC); Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS)), and other officials who approve travel-related transactions (e.g., authorizations and vouchers).

B. Commuting residence is the location where a traveler commutes to and from work the majority of the time. It is not always the location listed on the traveler's personnel forms.

C. CONUS is the acronym for the 48 contiguous states in the United States (i.e., all the states except Alaska and Hawaii).

D. Conventional lodging means hotels, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, and boarding houses.

E. Electronic travel system is an automated, web-based process that Service employees, travel arrangers, and approving officials use to plan, document, manage, and monitor TDY travel (see 265 FW 2). ConcurGov is the Service's current electronic travel system.

F. FedRooms is the official U.S. Government hotel program that all Federal and military travelers may use on official business.

G. Nonconventional lodging means houses, rented rooms, camping, and home rental services (e.g., Airbnb, Trovit).

H. OCONUS is the acronym for outside the contiguous United States.

I. Per diem is the sum of the daily allowable costs associated with lodging and M&IE.

J. Permanent duty station, for the purposes of travel, means the street address to which the employee most commonly reports (i.e., the majority of the time). There are permanent duty stations that cover a large contiguous area of more than 50 miles, and that Service employees must regularly maintain or patrol. For such duty stations, traveling from one area to another, regardless of distance, is part of the employee's regular duty and does not qualify as TDY travel.

K. TDY travel is travel that is performed for official purposes and is over 50 miles from the traveler's permanent duty station and commuting residence.

L. Travel Management Center (TMC) (i.e., Duluth Travel, Inc. and El Sol Travel, Inc.) is responsible for assisting travelers with booking and adjusting travel itineraries. The TMC charges higher fees to assist with booking travel and adjusting reservations than those associated with self-service booking through ConcurGov.

RESPONSIBILITIES

6.6 What are the responsibilities related to lodging, meals, and incidental expense allowances for travel? See Table 6-1.

Table 6-1: Responsibilities for Lodging, Meals, and Incidental Expense Allowances for TDY Travel

This Employee…	Is responsible for…
A. The Director	Approving or declining to approve Servicewide policy.
B. Directorate members	**(1)** Approving extended exceptions to the 50-mile requirements (but not below 30 miles) due to travel challenges associated with weather, terrain, or required mode of transportation; **(2)** Approving per diem within 30-50 miles of the traveler's permanent duty station and commuting residence on a case-by-case basis; **(3)** Issuing guidance on travel-related issues as necessary; and **(4)** Approving actual expense reimbursement of 151% to 300% of the standard per diem rate.
C. Joint Administrative Operations (JAO), Administrative Operations Center (AOC), Travel Team (i.e., Federal Agency Travel Administrators (FATA), Audit team, Help Desk team)	Providing travelers with guidance on the FTR and Department of the Interior (Department) and Service travel policies.
D. Approving officials	Approving actual expense reimbursement of 101% to 150% of the standard per diem rate.
E. Travelers	**(1)** Familiarizing themselves with TDY travel policy, and **(2)** Complying with the FTR and Departmental and Service policies.
F. Travel arrangers	**(1)** Familiarizing themselves with TDY travel policy, and **(2)** Using the electronic travel system in adherence with the FTR.

PER DIEM

6.7 What are the different types of per diem rates?

A. CONUS. The General Services Administration (GSA) establishes maximum per diem reimbursement rates for locations within the contiguous United States.

B. OCONUS. The Department of Defense (DOD) Per Diem, Travel, and Transportation Allowance Committee establishes maximum per diem reimbursement rates for domestic locations outside of the contiguous United States (e.g., Alaska, Hawaii).

C. Foreign. The State Department Office of Allowances establishes maximum foreign per diem rates on a monthly basis.

6.8 What methods does the Service use to reimburse travelers for per diem expenses?

A. Actual expense. A traveler may receive actual expense reimbursement when the applicable maximum per diem rate does not cover the travel expenses. Approving officials may authorize actual expense reimbursement for lodging, M&IE, or a combination of these, but there are limitations on how much over the standard per diem an approving official may authorize (see section 6.11D).

B. Camp rate. An approving official may authorize a camp rate when a traveler must eat and lodge at certain types of nonconventional facilities during TDY travel (e.g., bunkhouse, research vessel, field camp).

C. Flat rate. 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 per diem rate for the TDY location.

D. Lodgings-plus. The lodgings-plus method is the standard method that we use to provide per diem reimbursement to travelers. 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.

E. Mixed reimbursement. An approving official may authorize mixed reimbursement when the trip must be split between the lodgings-plus and actual expense methods of reimbursement.

6.9 When are travelers eligible to 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 the traveler's permanent duty station and commuting residence.

6.10 Are there circumstances when a traveler may be eligible for per diem reimbursement within 50 miles of their permanent duty station and commuting residence? A traveler may receive per diem reimbursement at a TDY location within 30-50 miles from their permanent duty station and commuting residence when:

A. Attending a meeting, conference, or training and there would be a benefit from remaining onsite with colleagues. The traveler must:

(1) Obtain prior approval on the TDY Travel – Discretionary and Trip-by-Trip Entitlements form (FWS Form 3-2388) from their supervising Directorate member, and

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

B. A traveler experiences inclement weather and believes that their personal safety or health would be jeopardized by returning from the TDY location. The traveler must:

(1) Obtain approval on the TDY Travel – Discretionary and Trip-by-Trip Entitlements form (FWS Form 3-2388) from their supervising Directorate member. 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), they may seek approval after the trip.

(2) Amend the travel authorization to reflect the change if the traveler traveled on dates not included on the original authorization.

(3) Include a copy of the form with the receipt packet.

C. The supervising Directorate member grants a TDY location an extended (e.g., 5-year) exception to the 50-mile requirement. The traveler must:

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

(2) Include a copy of the memo that the supervising Directorate member issued with the receipt packet.

6.11 How does a traveler obtain approval for actual expense reimbursement?

A. An approving official may authorize the actual expense method of reimbursement when:

(1) Costs are inflated due to special circumstances (e.g., conventions, natural disasters),

(2) The traveler must obtain lodging or meals at a prearranged site to accomplish the official purpose of the trip (e.g., a hotel where a meeting, conference, or training session is held),

(3) The traveler cannot obtain lodging or meals nearby within standard allowances, and travel to an area with lower-cost lodging or meals would be unduly burdensome,

(4) There is a need for emergency travel,

(5) The traveler must go to a part of the United States that the President has declared as a Federal disaster area, or

(6) The official mission of the trip requires a traveler to incur actual expenses.

B. Travelers must obtain authorization on the TDY Travel – Discretionary and Trip-by-Trip Entitlements form (FWS Form 3-2388) for actual expense reimbursement prior to the beginning of the trip unless the Department or the Service has issued a blanket approval for Presidentially declared disaster areas.

C. Approving officials determine the appropriate reimbursement rate on a case-by-case basis, and record this rate on the TDY Travel – Discretionary and Trip-by-Trip Entitlements form (FWS Form 3-2388).

D. All actual expense reimbursements must be approved as follows:

(1) For 101% to 150% of the standard per diem rate, by the approving official, or

(2) For 151% to 300% of the standard per diem rate, by the supervising Directorate member.

6.12 When may a traveler receive per diem reimbursement for a rest period?

A. Rest periods are only allowed when traveling by air, and approving officials may authorize a traveler to claim per diem reimbursement for a rest period of up to 24 hours when a TDY trip meets **all** of the following conditions:

(1) Travel is direct between duty points that are separated by at least 3 time zones,

(2) At least one duty point is OCONUS,

(3) Travel between the duty points is in coach class accommodations (see 265 FW 5),

(4) Scheduled flight time (including stopovers less than 8 hours) exceeds 14 hours, and

(5) Travel takes a direct or usual traveled route.

B. If rest periods are authorized, travelers may claim:

(1) Lodging, not to exceed the allowable location lodging rate,

(2) M&IE, not to exceed the per diem meal rate of the location,

(3) Transportation to obtain lodging and meals using the most cost-effective method, and

(4) Charges for baggage storage.

6.13 When may a traveler receive per diem reimbursement on leave or non-workdays during TDY travel?

A. Sick leave or non-workdays (e.g., Federal holiday, other scheduled non-workday). Travelers may claim per diem reimbursement if on TDY status the day before and after the non-workday.

B. Annual leave. Travelers who take annual leave for more than one half of the work hours for the day while on TDY status are not eligible for M&IE. All leave must be incidental to the official purpose of the trip.

LODGING

6.14 How does a traveler obtain lodging for TDY travel? Travelers must book conventional lodging reservations in the electronic travel system or contact the TMC to use the FedRooms lodging program. For nonconventional lodging, see section 6.15A(2).

6.15 Are there instances when a traveler may obtain lodging directly from a lodging establishment?

A. Travelers may book directly when:

(1) Attending a conference and they must reserve a room that conference organizers procured under a blanket purchase agreement or held under a "block" reservation,

(2) Known lodging cannot be located through the electronic travel system or the TMC (e.g., nonconventional lodging, corporate lodging, etc.),

(3) Pre-arranged lodging is found to be substandard or unsafe, or

(4) In an emergency situation as we describe in 265 FW 10.

B. Travelers are responsible for ensuring rates for all days of stay are within the allowable lodging allowance or obtain prior approval to exceed the locality rate.

C. Travelers may not use a third-party travel website (e.g., Travelocity, Expedia, etc.) to book lodging.

6.16 What is the Service's policy on paying State lodging taxes? Travelers performing official non-foreign travel should attempt to obtain a tax exempt status by requesting removal of taxes from their hotel bill (see GSA's State Tax Exemption Information for Government Charge Cards). If a traveler cannot obtain tax exempt status:

A. CONUS and non-foreign OCONUS travel. Lodging taxes are not included in the traveler's lodging allowance. Travelers must claim lodging taxes as a separate line item in the electronic travel system.

B. Foreign travel. Lodging taxes are included in the traveler's lodging allowance. Travelers may not claim lodging taxes as a separate line item in the electronic travel system.

6.17 Can a traveler claim lodging costs when choosing to stay at a friend's or relative's home? When a traveler stays at the residence of a friend, associate, or family member, any lodging reimbursement is limited to the additional costs, up to the locality lodging rate, that are incurred as a direct result of the traveler's stay (e.g., increased rental cost charged by a commercial, third-party business). Travelers must provide receipts to justify any amount claimed. 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.

6.18 Can a traveler claim lodging costs if they own a secondary residence at the TDY location? No. If a traveler owns a residence at a TDY site (e.g., rental property, second residence, or recreational vehicle), the traveler may not claim lodging reimbursement.

6.19 Can a traveler claim dual lodging costs when a trip requires an official deviation? If a traveler 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 What if a traveler inadvertently incurs a personal charge on their hotel bill? The traveler should try to pay the hotel for the personal expense using cash or another form of personal payment. The GSA SmartPay Program prohibits travelers from charging personal expenses to their Government-issued travel charge card (e.g., meal at hotel restaurant). If the hotel refuses to split the personal expenses onto a separate official hotel bill, the traveler must reduce their M&IE allowance by the amount of the personal charge.

6.21 Can a traveler pay an advance room deposit? Travelers may pay an advance deposit using their Government-issued travel charge card when lodging facilities require payment prior to scheduled travel. If the traveler does not complete the TDY trip for personal convenience, they must repay the loss of the deposit to the Service within 30 days. Approving officials may grant exemptions in extenuating circumstances (e.g., severe weather, illness).

MEALS AND INCIDENTAL EXPENSES

6.22 How are travelers reimbursed for meal costs on TDY travel? Travelers may only receive reimbursement for meals up to the maximum amount authorized on their travel authorization.

A. Government-provided meals. A traveler may not request reimbursement for meals that the Government provides as a part of a meeting or conference registration fee, or that are added to a base lodging rate.

B. Complimentary meals. These are meals that a hotel or air carrier provides at their expense and not the expense of the Government (e.g., when hotels do not factor the cost of a complimentary meal in the cost of lodging or it is not itemized on the hotel bill). Travelers are not required to deduct complimentary meals from their daily M&IE reimbursement. However, in support of the Department's effort to reduce travel costs, the Service *encourages* travelers to deduct these meals from their M&IE.

C. Refusing Government-provided or complimentary meals. If a traveler is unable to consume a meal for medical or religious reasons and was unable to obtain an alternate meal in advance, they may claim the full M&IE amount.

6.23 What does the incidental expense amount of M&IE cover on TDY travel?

A. Travelers may use the incidental expense allowance included in their per diem entitlement to defray the cost associated with any of the following travel-related expenses:

(1) Reasonable tips to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and hotel housekeeping;

(2) 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; and

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

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

REIMBURSEMENTS

6.24 How does the Service calculate reimbursement under the lodgings-plus method? Lodgings-plus per diem reimbursement is the Service's default method for reimbursing lodging expenses and M&IE.

A. TDY Status > 24 hours. See Table 6-2.

Table 6-2: Lodgings-Plus Per Diem Reimbursement >24 hours

Reimbursement Type	First day of travel	All other travel days	Last day of travel
Lodging	Actual cost associated with lodging, up to the maximum per diem rate for the TDY location	Actual cost associated with lodging, up to the maximum per diem rate for the TDY location	N/A

Reimbursement Type	First day of travel	All other travel days	Last day of travel
M&IE	75% of the maximum M&IE rate of the TDY location	100% of the maximum M&IE allowance of the TDY location	75% of the maximum M&IE allowance of the TDY location from the preceding day

B. 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.

(1) No lodging required. 75% of the maximum M&IE rate of the TDY location. If the trip includes multiple per diem locations, the traveler may use the highest of the applicable per diem rates.

(2) Lodging required. Actual cost associated with lodging, up to the maximum per diem rate for the TDY location and 75% of the maximum M&IE rate. The traveler must use the pre-authorized TDY location to determine the M&IE reimbursement rate.

6.25 How does the Service calculate reimbursement under the actual expense method? Travelers must provide itemized receipts for all expenses they claim under the actual expense method of reimbursement. Reimbursement is limited to the actual costs that the traveler incurs. We will not reimburse for costs not supported by receipts unless there is a reasonable justification for not providing a receipt (e.g., threatened law enforcement/investigative employee with security concerns).

6.26 How does the Service calculate reimbursement under the mixed reimbursement method?

A. 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).

B. A traveler may only claim reimbursement under one method per day (e.g., lodgings-plus, actual expense, etc.). We use the traveler's travel status and TDY location at 12:00 a.m. (midnight) to determine the appropriate method of per diem reimbursement for that day.

6.27 How does the Service calculate reimbursement under the flat rate method?

A. The approving 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 to receive reimbursement under the flat rate method.

6.28 How does the Service calculate reimbursement under the camp rate method?

A. 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 to receive reimbursement under the camp rate method.

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