



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Memorandum

AUG 03 2004

To: Solicitor  
Inspector General  
Assistant Secretaries  
Heads of Bureaus  
Departmental Offices

From: P. Lynn Scarlett   
Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

Subject: Travel and Transportation Cost Savings Initiative

The FY 2005 budget proposal identified six Management Improvement Initiatives to promote cost reduction in the Department. Reducing the cost of travel is one of these initiatives. Based on a review of existing processes, it was determined that significant savings can be achieved through enhanced traveler education and greater management oversight. Through increased awareness of the various costs options for performing business travel, there are many opportunities for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of programs by making better informed travel decisions.

To assist travelers in identifying best travel practices, a "Travel Guide for the Smart Traveler" (Guide) has been developed. The Guide (Attachment 1) contains policies and procedures designed to minimize travel costs in today's operating environment. It has been determined that significant cost savings can be realized through enforcing mandatory use of electronic tickets (e-tickets) when available; reducing fees associated with personal excess baggage; obtaining tickets two business days in advance of travel (instead of five business days in advance); and carefully following guidance for rental cars. Attachments 2 through 5, respectively, address each of these specialized areas in detail.

The greater these measures are followed, the greater the Department and its Programs will benefit. Should you have questions or require additional information on this subject please contact Carol L. Sampson, Associate Director, Office of Financial Management on (202) 208-4701.

Attachments:

- (1 of 5) Travel Guide for the Smart Traveler
- (2 of 5) Mandatory Use of Electronic Tickets (e-tickets) When Available
- (3 of 5) Traveling with Excess Baggage
- (4 of 5) Ticket Issuance
- (5 of 5) Rental Car Guidance

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Travel Guide for the Smart Traveler

Office of Financial Management  
July, 2004

## **Travel Guide for the Smart Traveler**

The purpose of this document is to establish and communicate standards and effective procedures for reducing travel costs while **complying with Federal Travel Regulations and Department policies**. It is **also designed** to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all travelers for official travel. The challenge faced for effective travel management is to exert an appropriate level of control over each of the thousands of transactions that comprise the Department's annual travel budget. Without adequate and appropriate controls, every transaction can cost the Department more than it should. The incremental cost can be a few cents or a few dollars, but when the increase is applied to thousands of transactions, the total can be substantial.

The Department will reimburse travelers for the cost of accommodations and services, which meet reasonable and customary standards for convenience, safety and comfort in accord with the Federal Travel Regulation. Travelers should incur expenses prudently to assist in controlling the Department's travel budget.

### INITIATING TRAVEL

#### **Where can I find travel regulations for the Department?**

All employees of the Department are covered by the Federal Travel Regulation and 347 DM DOI FTR Implementing Instructions (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/oden/index.html>). DOI FTR Implementing Instructions are maintained by the Office of Financial Management, Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget. Travelers should also be aware of additional Bureau specific regulations.

#### **Do I need a travel authorization to travel?**

Except in emergencies, every traveler must have written permission in advance to travel on official business (41 CFR 301-2.1). The authorization (DI-1020 or other Bureau approved form) includes the purposes, places, dates, conditions, limitations, and estimated costs of the travel, as well as accounting information. Managers should know current travel policy and inform staff of Department/Bureau policy and procedures. Managers should first determine if travel is really necessary to achieve Departmental goals. A traveler may deviate from the directed itinerary; however, reimbursement will be limited to the lower of the costs between the authorized itinerary, and the itinerary elected by the traveler. There are three basic types of travel authorizations:

- Unlimited open: An authorization allowing an employee to travel for any official purpose without further authorization. (This is rare, and reserved for high level officials.)
- Limited open: An authorization allowing an employee to travel on official business without further authorization under certain specific conditions, i.e., travel to specific geographic area(s), for specific purpose(s), subject to trip cost ceilings, or for specific periods of time. (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam0216a.pdf>)

- Trip-by-trip: An authorization allowing an individual or group of individuals to take one specific official business trip, which must include specific purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs.

### **Do I need a Government travel charge card to travel?**

New employees who are expected to travel on official business are required to apply for a charge card in the travel business line within 30 calendar days of their appointment (41 CFR Chapter 301-51.1). Travelers in possession of a Government charge card are required to use it while in an official travel status. Unless there is an approved exemption, travelers must use the Government travel charge card for the purchase of transportation tickets, lodging, and car rental expenses, and when possible for meals, taxi, parking, and ATM fees (41 CFR 301-51.2). Do NOT use the travel charge card for personal travel. The office should always purchase airfare for travelers without a Government travel charge card on the Bank of America corporate account. For more information on the charge card, visit <http://www.doi.gov/pam/integratedcard.html>.

### **How do I make travel arrangements?**

First, you must have a travel authorization. **In the case of emergency travel, the traveler can obtain verbal authorization and make a notation on the voucher that this was emergency travel.** Then, you must use the Travel Management Center (TMC) servicing the Department. Effective January 1, 2001, use of the DOI TMC was made mandatory for Department travelers (41 CFR Part 301-73.102). Currently the Department's TMC is Omega World Travel. Service numbers can be found at: [http://www.doi.gov/pfm/tmc/tmc\\_num.html](http://www.doi.gov/pfm/tmc/tmc_num.html); The Website to update profiles, request reservations, or to ask questions is: <http://www.doitravel.com/>. All aspects of travel should be completed using the TMC. This includes air ticket, rental car and lodging. If planning a trip where a block of rooms is being reserved, then deal directly with the hotel. Also, if you need assistance with a hotel room or car rental only, call the **Hotel and Car Only Desk** at 877-867-9013 (a transaction fee will not be charged).

### **Am I required to use the on-line booking tool (Trip Manager)?**

The on-line booking tool, Trip Manager, is the Department's preferred way to arrange travel. It is provided through the TMC, with a transaction fee of \$10.50, which is a savings of over 50% versus the traditional agent reservation. There are some exceptions for using the on-line booking tool; these are;

- Not recommended for trips with multiple destinations
- User must have internet access
- Foreign travel not available
- Not all airlines are represented (i.e. Southwest Airlines)
- Not all hotels are listed (call Hotel Only Desk - 877-867-9013)

### **What expenses will the Government pay for official travel?**

The Government will pay for (41 CFR 301-2.2):

- Authorized transportation expenses (i.e. airline, local transit, taxi plus tip, and rental cars), mileage allowances for privately owned vehicles, parking, and tolls;
- Lodging (up to a fixed per diem amount);
- Meals and incidentals;
- Lodging tax when not exempted by the local taxing authority;
- Laundry expenses for travel requiring four or more consecutive nights lodging (domestic travel only);
- Official phone calls;
- One brief daily personal call using the least-cost-to-the-government method available, such as, a Government telephone, Federal Calling Card or prepaid calling card. Using a Federal calling card **is** the preferred best practice. (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam03-17.html>)

### **Can I get a travel cash advance?**

Yes (41 CFR 301-51.200). Cash advances may be secured from an ATM honoring your Government travel charge card. Advances can be obtained within 5 days prior to travel and while in travel status (within 3 days of the start of travel for FWS travelers) – but not after travel is complete. Advances are limited to the local M&IE (meals and incidental expenses) rate for the travel location times the number of days of travel plus any anticipated out-of-pocket reimbursable expenses that cannot be put on your charge card. Remember: On the first and last day of your travel, you only receive 3/4 of your M&IE rate. This must be factored into your allowable advance. Withdrawals may not exceed \$250 per day and \$500 per week. Obtaining your ATM cash advance from Bank of America ATM locations eliminates the bank usage fee. For a list of these locations, go to: [http://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com/atm\\_locations.asp](http://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com/atm_locations.asp)

If ATM services are not available and your meal and incidental expenses are expected to exceed \$50, employees may apply for an advance through their supervisor (SF-1038). A deposit may be made electronically (DD/EFT) into an employee's checking, savings, or other designated account. Convenience checks are **not to be** used to provide travel advances.

### **How should I communicate with my office or family while on travel?** (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam03-17.html>)

Use the least cost to the Government method available such as Government telephones (if available at the temporary duty site), Federal Calling Cards or pre-paid calling cards for long-distance calls while on official travel (347 DM 301-12.20; 301-12.23).

For official calls, you may pay for the charges with your Government travel charge card or use cash when other options are not available or acceptable. An explanation must be placed on or attached to the travel voucher claiming reimbursement for all cash payments. The explanation must state that the use of other methods were attempted and determined to be unacceptable by the service provider or were not available to you.

For personal calls, employees may make a brief daily personal call in the most practical manner. Employees may be reimbursed on a one time only basis for calls made home and charged to the hotel room, Government travel charge card, or personal charge card. This reimbursement will be limited to not more than \$5.00 per day for each day of travel and the reimbursement voucher must contain an explanation of why a Federal Calling Card or a prepaid calling card was not used. Failure to obtain a Federal Calling Card or prepaid calling card will not be justification for consideration of future claims for reimbursement of personal telephone calls.

## AIR TRAVEL

### **What is a contract city pair fare?**

A contract city pair fare is a special discounted fare offered only to Government travelers on official business. These discounted fares require no advance purchase and have no minimum or maximum stay requirements, travel time limits, charges for cancellations or blackout periods. The tickets are fully refundable and funds from unused/cancelled tickets are returned to the bureau. The contract requires carriers to offer Government travelers a seat, if one is available.

### **Should I use a contract city-pair fare?**

Yes. The Department is a mandatory user of the GSA city-pair contract. Travelers on official business are required to use the contract carrier when one is available, unless a specific exception applies (41 CFR 301-10.107). This required use is the incentive necessary to obtain airline participation in the city pair program and allows the airlines the business volume necessary to offer discounted rates. If you do not use a city pair contract airline, and one is available, your reimbursement will be limited to the price of a ticket using the city-pair airline carrier.

There are five exceptions:

- Space or a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of your travel, or use of contract service would require you to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs which would increase the total cost of the trip;
- The contractor's flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of your Federal department or agency with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours;
- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government, to include the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses;
- Rail service is available, and such service is cost effective and is consistent with mission requirements; or
- Smoking is permitted on the contract flight and the nonsmoking section of the aircraft for the contract flight is not acceptable to you.

### **Which airport should I use in a city with multiple airports?**

Ticket costs may differ from airport to airport in the same area. If you are within commuting distance of two airports that have city-pair contract airline service, you should use the airport that will allow accomplishment of your official travel in the most expedient and cost effective manner (347 DM 301-10.1). Although rare, exceptions to using the lowest cost airport in a multiple airport area are:

- time constraints
- weather
- cost, including loss of productive time
- safety

### **What should I do if my trip is cancelled?**

Travelers must make every attempt to cancel or change travel arrangements prior to ticket issuance (41 CFR 301-10.113). Call the Department TMC to cancel arrangements as soon as you learn the trip is cancelled or changed. If you used Trip Manager, and your ticket has not been issued, cancel your trip in Trip Manager.

### **Can I purchase a non-refundable airfare?**

Yes, if one of the contract city pair fare exceptions ([listed above](#)) applies, and the approving official authorizes use of a non-refundable fare in advance. Additional costs or penalties incurred from unauthorized use of non-contract service are borne by the traveler (41 CFR 301-10.109). Travelers must know or reasonably anticipate, based on the planned trip, that the ticket will be used to avoid costly penalties (41 CFR 301-10.108). Consider and fully understand the airfare's applicable restrictions, change and cancellation penalties before accepting the itinerary. Such penalties are reimbursable only if your approving authority agrees that any itinerary change or cancellation was in the best interest of the Department. In the event of changed plans, cancellation and other penalties will be reimbursed provided that the cancellation or change was made for the convenience of the Department or was necessitated by circumstances of an emergency nature affecting the traveler. The approving authority must approve the costs.

### **How many days in advance are tickets issued?**

Tickets are issued two (2) business days in advance. Travelers may request earlier or later issuance, if preferred.

### **What should I do if a city pair does not exist for my trip?**

When there is no contract fare, consider combining two city pairs, or selecting a one-stop connection flight. Non-stop flights may be more costly than connecting flights. **Be flexible** with airline preference, itinerary preference, time of booking, departure/arrival time preferences, and promotional fares or capacity controlled seats. Where possible, use

low cost airlines when the rate is less. Prices usually are lower in highly populated cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Portland, Seattle, Reno, Atlanta, Newark, Chicago, Detroit, and Columbus. Try to choose the most economical fare available. Discuss these options with Omega or consider these options when you are using the online booking system, Trip Manager.

**Will I be reimbursed for a paper ticket if an e-ticket is available?**

No. Travelers will not be reimbursed for paper tickets or fees associated with paper tickets when e-tickets are available nor will the Department continue to incur this cost. Travelers requesting paper tickets will need to provide a personal form of payment to TMC at time of reservation.

**Will I be reimbursed for excess baggage costs?**

Travelers will not be reimbursed for overweight baggage unless Government supplies/materials/equipment are being transported and excess baggage has been authorized.

**What is the best practice when my travel plans change?**

Reduce transaction fees by keeping flight changes to a minimum. A transaction fee is not charged when the ticket is not reissued. If the city pair and fare remain the same and the travel date or flight time is the only change, the ticket does not need to be reissued. If you are at the airport, ask the airline to assist you with alternate arrangements.

**Can I keep my frequent flyer miles?**

Yes. You may use frequent flyer miles for personal use or to upgrade your government coach fare (41 CFR 301-53.3; <http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam02-01.html>). However, choosing not to use the contract carrier because of frequent flyer clubs is a violation of the city pair contract, unless a specific exception applies. Any expenses/fees involved with frequent flyer clubs/miles will be the responsibility of the traveler, not the Department.

**RENTAL CARS**

**Am I entitled to a rental car while in travel status?**

Possibly (347 DM 301-10.422). Rental cars should be used only when it is cost effective over other forms of local transportation or when the rental car is required to perform the required duties. You should not get a rental car unless the cost of commuting by taxi would exceed the cost of the rental car for the period. Automobile rentals should be limited to situations where other means of transportation are not practical, economical or available, and in emergency situations. Whenever practical, the most economical means

of transportation to and from hotels and terminals should be used. Many hotels provide complimentary shuttle service to and from airports. Public transportation is available in the top cities used by Department travelers: Denver, Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Washington, DC.

**Which rental car company should I use?**

The Department does not require you to use any one particular rental car company; however, your selection must be a company that is under contract to DOD and should be the lowest cost when all factors are considered (i.e., location of the pick up and drop off points and availability of compact size rental rates) (347 DM 301-10.501). There is frequently a variation in rental car fees at the same location. Consider using an off-airport location, because airport taxes can increase the rental cost approximately 24%. Many hotels offer a shuttle to/from the airport and have rental car companies onsite at the hotel.

**Should I purchase the optional protection products offered when renting a vehicle (i.e. damage waiver, personal accident insurance, personal effects coverage, supplemental liability protection)?**

No, choose a company that is under contract to DOD, which already includes insurance. DOD administers a contract for all Government agencies (347 DM 301-10.502). The companies covered by the contract must provide current model cars and insurance as part of the rental fee. In addition, the companies may not charge for authorizing additional government drivers. Rental cars should only be used for conduct of official business. For example, visiting relatives or friends using while on temporary duty may invalidate insurance coverage should you be involved in an accident. Non-Government employees and family members not performing official travel and holding a current travel authorization may not drive a rental car. Car rentals should always be reserved through the TMC to ensure the rental is under the DOD contract. A copy of the current rental car agreement is located at <http://www.mtmc.army.mil/frontDoor/0,1865,OID=3--215-219-501-501,00.html>.

**Do I have to fill up the gas tank before returning the vehicle to the rental car company?**

That depends on your travel plans. Some rental car companies offer gas at or below the market rate when you pre-pay for a tank. If you intend to travel a long distance, inquire about pre-paying for gas. If you do not plan to use a full tank, this would not be beneficial.

If pre-payment for fuel is not available or not beneficial, you should fill the tank prior to returning the vehicle. Gasoline charges are more costly at the car rental agency than at a local gasoline station. Time constraints may occasionally make it impossible to fill up before returning the car, however, this practice should not be routine.

### **What size rental car may I rent?**

You are authorized to rent a compact size car (347 DM 301-10.503), unless transporting a large amount of Government property or providing transportation to more than two other employees who are on official travel. With adequate justification, approving officials have the flexibility to override the size, based on operational needs, safety, weather, physical needs of the employee and other considerations.

### HOTELS/LODGING

#### **Where should I stay?**

The Department allows you to select any place of public lodging; however, your selection should comply with provisions of the Fire Safety Act (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.htm>) and should be at or below the per diem rate. In order to reduce travel costs, always consider the following:

- **per diem rate:** considering all factors, find the lowest cost at or below the per diem rate;
- **distance:** stay close to the place of business to save on transportation costs;
- **amenities:** stay at locations where airport transportation is provided, public transportation is readily available, and restaurants are nearby; or where parking is free;
- **special rates:** request the lowest rate, which is not always the “Government” rate;
- **Tax exempt:** For states that accept tax exempt status for Federal travel, the travel charge card has a tax exempt code on it. Please be sure to ask about this when making hotel accommodations.

#### **What happens if the hotel cost is more than the per diem rate?**

Travelers are expected to stay in lodging at or below the per diem rate. There are circumstances where reimbursement is paid on an actual expense basis (347 DM 301-11.300). Trips should be approved in advance on a trip-by-trip basis. Approval may be authorized when:

- lodging and/or meals are procured at a prearranged place such as a hotel where a meeting, conference or training session is held;
- costs have escalated because of special events (e.g., missile launching periods, sporting events, World's Fair, conventions, natural);
- lodging and meal expenses within prescribed allowances cannot be obtained nearby; and costs to commute to/from the nearby location consume most or all of the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging; or
- because of mission requirements.

#### **Do I need to cancel my hotel reservation if my trip is cancelled or changes?**

Yes. Many hotels charge for reserved rooms that have not been canceled in advance. Be sure to obtain a cancellation code from the hotel.

**Will I receive a reduced Per Diem rate for long term (30 or more days) temporary duty or training travel?**

When travel assignments involve extended periods at temporary duty or training locations, the per diem rate will be reduced to 55 per cent of the full per diem rate (lodging plus M&IE) specified in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) for the location, unless a different rate is fully justified. Under unusual situations the reduced rate may be increased or decreased depending on the conditions and necessary cost that must be incurred by the traveler. The reduced rate should be established based on the conditions that exist when the travel is performed; thus, if a traveler is forced to incur unusual lodging and/or meal cost due to the assignment, the rate should be based on cost data provided. The reduced per diem rate is applicable from the first day of the assignment through the last day of the assignment. (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam94-37.html>)

PERSONALLY OWNED VEHICLE (POV)

**Will I be reimbursed if I drive my POV to the airport and park it while I am on travel?**

It depends (347 DM 301-10.422). If the mileage and parking costs exceed what a taxi would have cost, you will only be reimbursed the cost of a taxi. If the cost is less than a taxi, you will be reimbursed. If you discover the taxi is more expensive, please inform your authorizer of the taxi cost. Parking receipts are required if the cost exceeds \$75.00.

**If I drive my POV to the airport, where should I park?**

You should make every effort to park in long term parking, if available. Avoid daily (short term) parking and valet parking. Valet or short term parking may be reimbursed when critical circumstances arise (<http://www.doi.gov/pfm/fam99-16.html>).

ALTERNATIVES

**Are there alternatives to traveling?**

When travel is purely for the purpose of communicating, other communication options may be less expensive. Teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and web conferencing, should be considered as alternatives to travel when cost savings can be realized. These can be very effective tools to bring employees and others together (e.g., business/project team meetings, interviews, hearings and trials, distance learning, training and workshops).

**What other options should be considered to carry out government business?**

When less costly and advantageous to the Department consider:

- Traveling by car and/or carpooling

- Taking the train instead of air travel
- Greater use of public transportation
- Reducing the frequency of regularly scheduled out-of-town meetings
- Restrict the number of staff traveling to the same destination for the same purpose.
- Coordinating between bureaus/agencies for joint travel arrangements when more than one bureau/agency is involved
- Utilizing video recordings, bulletin boards, E-mail, internet

## TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

### **How do I get reimbursed for expenses incurred while on travel?**

You must submit a Travel Voucher (SF-1012 or other Bureau approved form) along with a copy of your travel authorization (DI-1020 or other Bureau approved form) within five working days after completion of the trip (41 CFR 301-52.3). The voucher must accurately reflect your travel and be supported by documentation and receipts where applicable (transportation ticket/itinerary, lodging, other expenses over \$75). The voucher must be signed by you and your supervisor and sent to the fiscal or finance office that serves your organization.

### **Do I have to pay the charge card bill?**

Cardholders must comply with the terms and conditions of the Bank of America Cardholder Agreement, including the timely payment of account balances. Travelers must submit a payment to Bank of America for the entire balance by the payment due date, even if reimbursement has not been received. Employees, supervisors, and your accounting office all have time frames for which they are to follow. If the accounting office processes payment for a valid travel voucher more than 30 days after it is received, it is required to include a late payment fee at the prevailing Treasury rate.

Non-payment of individually billed balances may result in suspension of your account; cancellation of charge card privileges; late fees; restrictions on charge card privileges; returned check fee of \$20 if a check is returned due to non-sufficient funds; collection fees, which may include attorney fees and court costs; withholding of wages; reporting delinquent balances to credit bureaus; and/or disciplinary action (<http://www.doi.gov/hrm/guidance/tabpnfn3.htm>). Having a delinquent account can affect your **personal** credit history. For more information, see the Department's charge card guide (<http://www.doi.gov/pam/chargecard/>).

There are items that are centrally billed (airline, rental car, some public transportation, lodging in BOR), and there are items (hotel except BOR, meals, cash advances, incidentals) that the traveler is responsible to pay to the charge card company. Please review all charges carefully for accuracy. If you see any errors, even if it was centrally billed, please make every effort to have the error corrected. Contact your Bureau charge card coordinator for assistance or additional information (<http://www.doi.gov/pam/chargecard/bureauAPCs.html>).

Remember it is the traveler's responsibility to submit a correct voucher within five days of returning from travel, which will allow sufficient time for the voucher payment to be processed (41 CFR 301-52.7).

## **CONTACTS**

Office of Financial Management  
Room 5412 (MS 5412 – MIB)  
(202) 208-4701

BIA Travel Team  
703-390-6540

BLM Travel Team  
NBC - Denver, CO  
303-236-6060

BOR Travel Team  
303 445-3453

FWS Travel Team  
703-358-2050

NPS Travel Team  
(703) 487-9190

MMS Finance Division  
703-787-1487

OSM Travel Team  
303-236-0330

USGS Travel Team  
703-648-7680

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Mandatory Use of Electronic Tickets

Office of Financial Management  
July, 2004

## **Mandatory Use of Electronic Tickets (e-tickets) When Available**

Especially during the tight budget times, the Department must closely control travel budgets. Airlines have increasingly moved in the direction of eliminating paper tickets and even may assess additional charges for paper tickets when e-tickets are available. Most airlines are currently charging a processing fee, ranging from \$20 to \$50, for paper tickets issued when e-tickets are available. The following paragraphs cite new policy and guidance on the mandatory use of e-tickets, when available, for official travel.

Effective July 31, 2004, travelers requesting paper tickets when traveling to a location where e-tickets are available will not be reimbursed for processing fees or mailing charges associated with purchasing a paper ticket. The traveler must provide OWT with a personal (not Government) charge card. OWT will charge a paper ticket fee (airline's charge) and an overnight mail fee of \$6.00 to the traveler's personal (not Government) charge card. Travelers requesting paper tickets are reminded to reserve airline tickets far enough in advance for the paper ticket to be delivered.

A waiver from this mandatory requirement to use electronic tickets will **only** be issued for travel to locations where e-tickets are not available, or on a case-by-case basis for foreign travel. The waiver must be justified in detail on the approved travel authorization or voucher.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Traveling with Excess Baggage

Office of Financial Management  
July, 2004

## **Traveling with Excess Baggage**

The Department is constantly exploring various alternatives for reducing travel costs. The Airline industry introduced excess baggage fees in late 2002. The following policy and guidance is provided on managing excess baggage fees reported on travel vouchers. Most airlines will allow oversize or overweight baggage or additional baggage for an additional fee which varies depending on the situation and may cost up to \$80 per bag.

Effective July 31, 2004, travelers will no longer be routinely reimbursed for fees associated with oversize or overweight baggage or additional baggage. The traveler must provide the airline with a personal (not Government) charge card at time of travel. The airline will charge the excess baggage fee to the traveler's personal (not Government) charge card. Travelers will only be reimbursed for fees associated with oversize or overweight baggage or additional baggage when:

- Government supplies/materials/equipment are being transported; and,
- Oversize/overweight/additional baggage has been authorized on the travel authorization.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Ticket Issuance

Office of Financial Management  
July, 2004

## **Ticket Issuance**

The Department is committed to reducing travel costs. One way to decrease travel expenses is to reduce the number of business days prior to travel that the tickets are issued. A large number of Department travelers are not canceling unused tickets prior to issuance or experience last minute changes after issuance. These events accounted for more than 15,000 inoperative airline tickets issued last year. As a result, travel funds are spent on administrative costs rather than on actual travel. For example:

- Transaction fees are unnecessarily paid with each issued ticket
- Restricted tickets remain unused
- Some refundable tickets are not refunded (e.g. Southwest Airlines)

Airline tickets are currently issued five (5) business days in advance of travel. In an attempt to cut travel costs, effective July 31, 2004, tickets will be issued two (2) business days in advance. Travelers or travel planners may request earlier or later issuance, if preferred. Generally, travel plans tend to change closer to the date of travel, and instituting this initiative should result in fewer tickets issued. This change is expected to save the Department additional transaction fees costing \$10.50 for reservations made via Trip Manager and over \$24 for traditional travel agent service.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Rental Car Guidance

Office of Financial Management  
July, 2004

## **Rental Car Guidance**

The Department is committed to establishing standards and effective procedures for reducing travel costs while complying with Government regulations and ensuring consistent and fair treatment for all Department travelers. The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are intended to provide Department guidance for rental cars while performing in a temporary duty status.

### **May I reserve a rental car each time I travel?**

No, rental cars are authorized only when necessary in the performance of official business travel. Rental cars may be rented when:

- use of a rental car is necessary because it is the only transportation available;
- use of a rental car results in a lower overall cost than using public transportation;
- necessary to transport a large amount of Government property that requires a larger car;
- you are providing transportation to two or more other employees who are also on official travel.

Your travel authorization must state that use of a rental vehicle is permitted when advantageous to the Government, and must specifically authorize use. Rental cars should not be parked for long periods, but should be turned in and later rented as needed.

### **If a rental car is not authorized, how will I commute from one place to another?**

The lowest cost ground transportation method should be used.

- Public transportation should be considered first, since it is usually the least expensive, especially in certain densely populated urban areas, such as New York, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Public transportation in such areas is more cost effective.
- Shuttles are usually less expensive, also. You should use courtesy transportation service when furnished by the Government, common carriers, and hotels/motels to the maximum extent possible.
- A taxi may be used when the cost is less than or equal to the cost of shuttle or public transportation. If the taxi cost exceeds the cost of a rental car, then a rental car should be authorized.

### **Is there a particular rental car company I should use?**

You may choose a rental car company of your choice, provided that the company participates in DOD's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) agreement, and should reflect the lowest cost option when all factors are considered (i.e., location of the pick up and drop off points and availability of compact size rental rates). DOD administers the agreement for all Government agencies. Use of companies and rental car locations participating in the SDDC agreement is encouraged because their Government rate includes full liability and vehicle loss and damage insurance coverage

for the traveler and the government; they must provide current model cars; provide automatic unlimited mileage; and they may not charge for authorizing additional government drivers. Non-Government employees and family members who are not performing official travel and holding a current travel authorization may not drive a rental car. A copy of the current rental car agreement is located at: <http://www.mtmc.army.mil/CONTENT/656/rentalcaragreement.pdf>.

### **What type of car should I rent?**

DOI employees are normally expected to rent a compact size car while on official travel, unless you are transporting a large amount of Government property that requires a larger car, or you are providing transportation to two or more other employees who are on official travel. If a traveler selects a car rental above the level of a compact without advanced approval, the traveler will be reimbursed at the compact size only.

### **When I attend a conference, may I rent a car?**

You should not obtain a rental car when attending a conference unless the cost of commuting by taxi, shuttle, or courtesy transportation service furnished by hotel/motel would exceed the cost of the rental car for the period; you are transporting a large amount of Government property that requires a larger car; or when you are providing transportation to two or more other employees who are on official travel.

### **Will I be reimbursed for “promotional items fees?”**

No. Some companies charge a “promotional items fee” which is a charge for any traveler who wants to receive frequent flyer mileage. This fee is not an official fee, and cannot be charged to your Department Bank of America charge card. If necessary, instruct your reservation clerk at pick-up that the Department will not pay for this additional fee.

### **Should I fill the gas tank prior to returning the vehicle?**

In most cases, you should fill up the gasoline tank before returning the car to the rental company to avoid premium rates. Some rental car companies offer gas at or below the market rate when you pre-pay for a tank. If you intend to travel a long distance, inquire about pre-paying for gas.

### **Can a Rental Car be used during my TDY for personal travel?**

No. If you have any personal travel scheduled during your TDY travel time, you must turn in the rental vehicle and use your own funds for the personal travel. The Government Charge card should not be used to pay any portion of a rental vehicle for personal travel. (NOTE: This may not be possible for mixed official and political travel.)

## **What should I do about car insurance or if I have an accident while on TDY? (301-10.505 – 507)**

As stated above, where possible, always use rental car companies that participate in DOD's Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) agreement. The Government rate offered under this agreement includes full liability and vehicle loss and damage insurance coverage for the traveler and the government. You must use your Government issued travel charge card to receive this rate. Always arrange rental car reservations through the TMC to ensure booking under the SDDC agreement.

If you have an accident while on TDY, you should notify the police and have an accident report prepared. A copy of the accident (police) report must be provided to the rental car company. The rental car company cannot bill you for any damages incurred to a rental car while it is being used for official business. The rental car company must bill the Department or your bureau for any damages they believe you caused that are not covered under the terms of the contract. Should the rental car company try to bill you or request the name of your personal insurance company, do not provide your personal insurance policy number. Instead, contact the TMC office that arranged the rental and the national office of the rental car company. An investigation of the accident will be conducted. If the investigation reveals the damage was incurred through negligence, improper, or personal use of the vehicle, your bureau will be responsible for collecting the cost of damages from you.

### **If a rental car is approved for an employee while on temporary duty, may a family member or non-federal person be transported in the rental car?**

Yes, family members and other non-federal passengers may ride, but may not drive, the rental vehicle as long as the trip does not increase the distance traveled or increase the cost of the rental car. Rental cars are not Government vehicles and are not controlled by the Government.

**Beware!!** In case of an accident, the rental car company is not required to take responsibility for non-federal persons. The passengers in the vehicle may not be covered by the rental car insurance through the DOD Agreement nor through the Government travel charge card. DOI will not be held accountable for accidents involving non-federal travelers. However, personal auto and health insurance might cover the passengers.

Please check with your personal auto insurance provider prior to including your family or other non-federal passengers in a rental vehicle while on temporary duty.