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Article 8

Official Travel

Section 1. Compensation and Travel

A. The Parties recognize that employees may be required to perform essential travel away from their official duty station. The Parties further agree that such travel should be arranged and scheduled so as to minimize the effect of such travel on employees. Travel reimbursement will be paid in accordance with applicable Federal Travel Regulations and this agreement.

B. When the employee is required to travel during non-duty hours, the employee will be paid overtime when such travel constitutes hours of work under 5 U.S.C. or the Fair Labor Standards Act, if applicable.

If an employee is required to travel on non-duty time, SSA will make every reasonable effort to give a written explanation prior to traveling. If notice is not provided before traveling, it will be provided subsequently upon request of the employee.

23 C. To the maximum extent practicable, time spent in travel status away from an
24 employee's official duty station will be scheduled by the Agency within normal
25 working hours of the traveling employee(s). To this end, the Agency agrees to
26 the maximum extent practicable:

27

28 1. whenever possible, schedule events to allow employees to travel during
29 their normal duty hours.

30

31 2. allow an employee to travel on the day preceding and/or after an event
32 when travel on the day of an event would be outside the traveling
33 employee's regular duty hours.

34

35 D. Employees retain the right to travel on their own time if they so choose, but are
36 responsible for any additional cost incurred to do so.

37

38 E. If an employee is unable to return home during normal duty hours, the employee
39 may request to do so during non-duty hours, and if approved by an authorized
40 management official, will receive appropriate compensation in accordance with
41 the law and this agreement.

42

43

44

45 Section 2. Compensatory Time Off for Travel

46

47 A. Employees will receive travel compensatory time in accordance with law and
48 regulation.

49

50 B. Employees are required to document their time spent in travel. ~~on an Agency~~
51 ~~designated form. Management will provide this form to the employee prior to~~
52 ~~travel.~~

53

54 C. Requests for compensatory time off for travel will normally be submitted within 5
55 work days of completion of travel.

56

57 D. Disapproved requests will be returned to the employee with a verbal explanation
58 or written if requested.

59

60 E. Employees requesting travel compensatory time off will use the **agency**
61 **prescribed form SSA-74** or equivalent. ~~by marking "Other" and indicating~~
62 ~~"Travel Comp. Time".~~

63

64 F. Information on Compensatory Time for Travel will be contained on the Agency
65 website.

66

67

68 Section 3. Change from Per Diem Allowance to Actual Expenses

69

70 A. Advance Authorization. An employee scheduled to travel in an area, for which a
71 per diem allowance is prescribed, may request advance authorization for travel
72 on the basis of actual expenses. Any such request will normally be approved
73 when the supporting justification showing warranted circumstances for the
74 request meet Agency-wide guidelines.

75

76 B. ~~Post-Approval.~~ Reimbursement for actual expenses allowable under law and/or
77 government wide rules and regulations will normally be authorized on a ~~post~~**pre**
78 approval basis if the employee can justify that prudent expenses required by the
79 ordered travel exceeds (as defined by Agency-wide guidelines) the prescribed
80 per diem rate. **When necessary, if there are extenuating circumstances,**
81 **actual expenses may be authorized on a post approval basis by amending**
82 **the travel authorization and including a justification.** This provision applies
83 only to travel involving assignments of 30 calendar days or less.

84

85 C. While employees are assigned to training or duty away from their regular duty
86 station, they may elect to return home during non-workdays or non-work hours.
87 In such cases, they will be reimbursed for travel expenses not to exceed the
88 amount reimbursable had employees remained at the temporary duty station.
89 However, if there is a personal or family emergency, such as the death or serious

90 illness of a member of the traveling employee's family or individual related by
91 affinity; or, a catastrophic occurrence or impending natural disaster, such as fire
92 or flood which directly affects the traveling employee's home, requiring the
93 employee to return to their principal residence, the Agency will pay the
94 reasonable costs (including transportation and per diem) of the traveling
95 employee returning to their principal residence.

96

97 D. A copy of official SSA travel regulations will be made available for employees to
98 review upon request. The Agency will inform employees of the appropriate
99 website for travel regulations and tax implications for long term details.

100

101 E. When an employee in travel status is injured or becomes ill and is expected to
102 remain so for at least four days, the Agency will reimburse the employee for
103 expenses incurred in returning to the employee's normal duty station. In
104 accordance with the provisions of Article 31, a Medical Certificate may be
105 required. Allowances for expenses will be paid in accordance with applicable
106 Federal Travel Regulations.

107

108

109 Section 4. Continuation of Approved Travel Expenses

110

111 Employees who are unable to arrive at, or return from their destination during regular
112 duty hours will be reimbursed for authorized travel expenses provided said inability

113 to arrive or return is due to arduous travel conditions beyond the employee's control
114 resulting from natural calamity, unavailability of transportation, or severe weather.

115

116

117 Section 5. Advancement of Expenses

118

119 ~~Employees required to travel shall have the option of requesting a travel advance.~~

120 ~~Such requests shall be filed by the employee as soon as possible and processed by~~

121 ~~the Administration as expeditiously as possible. Normally the Administration will not~~

122 ~~require an employee to travel overnight prior to receiving a travel advance. The~~

123 ~~Administration shall process all claims for travel expenses as expeditiously as~~

124 ~~possible. If an employee should not have adequate funds, the Administration will~~

125 ~~make every effort to make alternative arrangements.~~

126 **Employees required to travel must obtain and use the Government travel card**

127 **for all official travel expenses and the ATM program for authorized cash**

128 **withdrawals. Travel cash advances will only be authorized for first time**

129 **travelers who have applied for the Government travel card but do not have**

130 **time to receive the travel card prior to traveling, and for those employees on a**

131 **long-term assignment who have to pay a security deposit and/or the lodging**

132 **facility in which they stay does not accept the Government travel card. Other**

133 **requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis.**

134

135 Section 6. Reimbursements

136

137 A. Management will provide appropriate assistance to employees with travel orders,
138 travel advances, travel authorizations, travel vouchers, and travel arrangements
139 ~~(e.g., Travel Manager).~~

140

141 B. Management is responsible for insuring that employees are reimbursed timely.
142 In an effort to pay employees timely, the Agency will endeavor to work closely
143 with employees when errors are encountered. It is the employee's responsibility
144 for notifying the travel card contractor when a payment issue occurs. If payment
145 to the employee is not made within 30 days from the submission of the travel
146 voucher to the appropriate agency official or agency employee, interest/penalties
147 shall accrue pursuant to the Prompt Payment Act.

148

149 C. Electronic notification of travel payments will be issued to employees ~~when this~~
150 ~~feature is available.~~

151

152 D. In the event that a claim for travel expenses is denied, the Agency will notify the
153 employee timely and identify the basis for denial. Upon request, management
154 will provide a written explanation. In such cases, the Agency will pay non-
155 disputed expenses.

156

157

158 Section 7. Use of Privately Owned Vehicles/Government Furnished
159 Vehicles/Common Carrier

160

161 Bargaining unit employees will not be required to use privately owned vehicles, nor
162 will they suffer any loss of pay, reprisal, or adverse action on account of refusal to
163 use a POV for Government business, unless such use is made a condition of
164 employment. If the Administration decides to make use of privately owned vehicles
165 a condition of employment, the Employer will notify the Union and meet its obligation
166 to bargain under 5 U.S.C. 71.

167

168 A. Reasonable periods of time spent by a traveling employee during regular duty
169 hours to make emergency repairs to or refueling of vehicles used to conduct
170 government business will be considered duty time.

171

172 B. In situations where a traveling employee is required to pick up or return a
173 government-furnished vehicle from a motor pool, without first checking in and/or
174 out of the permanent duty station, the Administration will schedule the travel
175 assignments so that the traveler may leave home at the same hour he/she would
176 leave to report to the office, and, upon return, so that he/she may arrive home at
177 the same time he/she would ordinarily arrive had he/she worked at the office.

178

- 179 C. When an employee uses a privately owned vehicle instead of an available
180 government-furnished vehicle (GFV), mileage will be paid at the maximum
181 reduced rate consistent with GSA regulations.
182
- 183 D. In all other cases, mileage for use of privately owned vehicles (POVs) will be
184 compensated at the maximum rate permitted by GSA.
185
- 186 E. Requests for the use of POV/Rental Cars will be acted on using current SSA
187 policies in a fair and equitable manner.
188
- 189 F. Common carrier will be used whenever it is reasonably available, unless:
190
- 191 1. the use of common carrier would seriously interfere with the performance of
192 official business;
 - 193
 - 194 2. or such use imposes an undue hardship on the employee; or
195
 - 196 3. the Federal Travel regulations provide for some other mode; or
197
 - 198 4. the employee requests and receives approval to use a POV or rental car; or
199
 - 200 5. there is a leased GSA automobile made available to the employee.
201

202

203 Section 8. Document and Property Loss/Theft

204

205 An employee is accountable for government documents or property in their
206 possession and/or custody. Employees exercising ~~reasonable~~ care **in accordance**
207 **with Agency policy** will not be held responsible for documents or property
208 damaged, lost, or stolen from their possession and/or custody.

209

210

211 Section 9. Protective Assistance and Communications While in Travel Status

212

213 A. The Administration recognizes that some travel job assignments present a threat
214 to the personal safety of employees. When such circumstances are brought to
215 the attention of the supervisor by employees or the Union, appropriate measures
216 will be taken to assure the safety of the employee. The parties agree to jointly
217 review existing protective procedures from time to time to assure that employees
218 receive the maximum feasible protection from such dangers.

219

220 ~~B. Employees in travel status will be reimbursed \$3.00 per day to make personal~~
221 ~~calls. Exceptions for additional reimbursement may be granted by the travel~~
222 ~~authorizing official in cases of emergency.~~

223

224 **C.B.** If an employee is in travel status for at least one week at a single SSA facility,
225 management will provide the employee with email access at that facility when
226 possible. Management will consider requests for email access from employees
227 in travel status for durations of less than one week.

228

229

230 Section 10. Long-Term Assignments and Training Arrangements

231

232 An employee on a long-term assignment will be authorized occasional return trip(s)
233 to his/her permanent duty station approximately at the mid-way point of the detail
234 between 120 and 180 days and for details of 180 days or more approximately every
235 90 days at government expense on non-workdays or during periods of leave.

236 Reimbursement for long term assignments and training arrangements will be in
237 accordance with Federal Travel Regulations.

238

239

240 Section 11. Travel Attendants

241

242 In accordance with law, employees in travel status with a qualified disabling
243 condition who require the assistance of an attendant will be provided such
244 assistance by the Agency. Travel and per diem will be paid for the attendant.

245