

**Forest Service Handbook
Service Wide - Washington Office
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**Forest Service Handbook 1309.19 – Casualty Assistance Handbook
Chapter 30 – Serious Injury and Medical Emergency Administration**

Amendment Number: 1309.19-2024-3

Effective date: January 19, 2024

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: Antoine Dixon, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

Date approved: January 12, 2024

Responsible Staff: Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OSOH)

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s): 1309.19_30, Amendment 1309.19-2019-1, August 13, 2019

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

1309.19 Chapter 30: Revises chapter and sets forth codes, captions, and direction for Casualty Assistance.

Section 31: Establishes reporting time to be within 72 hours after an incident takes place.

Section 31.1: Changes title from “Medical Care for Serious Injury” to “Medical Care for Injury, Illness, or Disease” and sets forth direction on when Department of Labor, Office of Workers’ Compensation Program partially pays a provider.

Section 31.3: Updates direction to be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority; adds reference to FSH 6509.33, zero code, section 3q, Transportation Expense.

Removes requirement for use of form FS 5700 10 Flight Request/Justification for Administrative Use of Aircraft.

Section 31.4: Removes travel Managements Service restrictions of First Class or Business Class accommodations without prior approval from the Department of Agriculture. Adds Chief Financial Officer approval for Emergency premium class travel accommodations.

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Effective August 13, 2019. Revisions as listed below to FSH 1309.19, chapter 30:

Section 31.1: Establishes direction and employee relief process for medical transportation claims that have been denied by the Department of Labor Office of Workers' Compensation.

Section 31.3: Revises direction for family member's travel, including transportation in Government vehicles and aircrafts.

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31 - Serious Injury and Medical Emergency

This section describes the allowable funding and administrative processes when serious injuries or medical emergencies occur. All incidents must be reported within 72 hours in the Forest Service's electronic safety case management reporting system.

The majority of medical emergencies such as chest pain, heart attack, or appendicitis may not be work related and are covered by the employee's personal medical insurance. Only the Department of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation Program (DOLOWCP) determines whether a medical emergency, serious injury or illness is work related.

31.1 - Medical Care for Injury, Illness or Disease

All work related catastrophic or traumatic injury claims are covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act and adjudicated by DOLOWCP. These medical services include, but are not limited to, examinations, treatments, hospitalization, medications, appliances, medical supplies, and transportation, as prescribed or recommended by competent medical authority. In addition, these services must, in the opinion of the DOLOWCP, potentially cure, give relief to, or reduce the degree of the period of disability. Preventive care may not be authorized.

To ensure employees receive immediate medical care when necessary, and in accordance with Title 20 Code of Federal Regulations part 10.300(b), Employer shall issue Form CA-16 within four hours of the claimed injury. The Supervisor or an authorized agency representative may provide verbal authorization for examination and/or treatment. Contact Human Resources Management/Worker's Compensation within 48 hours or first business day via Human Resources Management Contact Center at 877-372-7248, Option 2 for Human Resources Management to report the authorization.

Once the claim is adjudicated and accepted, the DOLOWCP does not impose limits on the amount of medical expenses or the length of time for which they are paid. As long as the charges represent the reasonable and customary fees for the services involved and the treatment is recommended by a competent medical authority.

When an employee requires medical treatment because of a disease or illness, which is believed to be work related, the employee should arrange for the necessary medical treatment. If DOLOWCP accepts the claim, DOLOWCP will pay for medical treatment that is required by the condition(s) accepted, including treatment received prior to acceptance. Furthermore, when DOLOWCP partially pays a provider in accordance with the fee schedule of maximum allowable charges, the provider will be subject to exclusion procedures if they provide, collect, or

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attempts to collect from the employee, either directly or through a collection agent, any amount in excess of the charge allowed by DOLOWCP.

If DOLOWCP denies the claim under Federal Employee's Compensation Act, secondary coverage is provided through the employee's Federal Employee Health Benefit or private insurance program. The Forest Service Chief Financial Officer (CFO) may authorize payment of specific medical supplies, services, and other immediate relief for employees, on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with Title 16 United States Code part 554b, Medical care for employees engaged in hazardous work; notification and transportation of employees, only when the employee was engaged in hazardous work when the incident occurred.

31.2 - Hospital Liaison

The Unit Line Officer is responsible for assigning a Hospital Liaison to provide support to the employee and their family should a work-related injury occur.

31.3 - Family Member Travel and Per Diem

Transportation of family members is a necessary expenditure for maintaining employee morale, productivity, and retention. reference, Comptroller General. B-270446, Feb. 11, 1997.

When an employee is seriously injured while on assignment (including while in travel status), or suffers a medical emergency in travel status, appropriated funds, on a case-by-case basis, may be used to pay for travel expenses of family members. Family members may travel to the location where an employee is receiving medical treatment to serve as a non-medical attendant reference Title 41 Code of Federal Regulations part 301subpart 13, Travel of an Employee with Special Needs, or because their presence is required by law during the evaluation or treatment of a patient. Dependent family members incapable of self-care may also be authorized to travel, reference, Comptroller General, B-270446, Feb. 11, 1997.

Family travel follows the standard invitational travel process and must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority. Work with the CFO- , Budget and Finance Travel Operations Branch to arrange family travel, reference FSH 6509.33, Federal Travel Regulation, section 3e, Family Travel. Charge family travel expenses to the fund and program where the employee was working when the incident occurred.

1. Government Vehicles

There may be circumstances when a government vehicle is a more cost-efficient option for family travel. A written request to authorize non-government persons to travel in government vehicles must be submitted to Regional Foresters, or Station and Institute Directors. Include a justification for the purpose of the trip, the reason(s) why a non-government person's transportation is necessary to the Government, and identification

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of any known or associated hazards with the trip reference FSH 6509.33 Federal Travel Regulations, section 3q, Transportation Expense.

2. Government Aircraft

Only the Department of Agriculture Office of General Counsel authorizes the administrative use of a government aircraft for non-government persons. Reference FSM 5710, Aviation Business.

31.4 - Transportation of Injured or Sick Employee to Residence

Employees who suffer a serious/catastrophic or traumatic injury or medical emergency while in an official travel status are entitled to government-provided transportation back to the employee's duty station, place of residence, reference FSH 6509.33, zero code, section 4(f) Responsibilities, or to an alternate location as prescribed by the competent medical authority.

Medical transportation of the injured employee must be authorized by DOLOWCP. The Unit Line Officer or designated representative must contact Human Resources Management/Workers Compensation to secure DOLOWCP authorization for transportation. Transportation by common carrier must be arranged through the Agency's electronic travel system. Budget and Finance Travel Operations Branch can provide guidance for obtaining the special approval required when other than coach airlines reservations are medically necessary, as documented by a competent medical authority. The CFO approves emergency premium class travel accommodations when necessary.

31.5 - Employee Personal Property

Ensure employee personal property is inventoried and safeguarded in a secure location until all investigations are completed. Return the property to the employee or authorized family representative as soon as possible.

Transportation costs to return a deceased employee's baggage or other personal property to their official duty station or residence are allowable. Insurance or reimbursement for loss of damage to the baggage is not authorized, reference Title 41 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 303- 70.300). The family may request to return property to an alternate destination, and the allowable expense cannot exceed the cost of transportation to the deceased's residence Title 41 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 303-70.302).

If the employee or authorized family representative identifies lost or damaged personal property, contact CFO, Budget and Finance Claims, to ensure completion of the appropriate forms and documentation. Claims personnel will provide the necessary information and assistance to the claimant in working through the claims process.

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31.6 - Contractors and Cooperators

Federal contractors are not covered by the Federal Employee Compensation Act and are required to have State workers compensation coverage. Expenses related to the treatment of injured or ill contractors, or their employees is the responsibility of the contractor.

State employees and other cooperators experiencing injury or illness while performing Forest Service work are covered by the home agency's compensation program. Serious Injury and Medical Emergency Administration.

When the Agency responds to the death or serious injury of a cooperator or contractor, due care and concern is shown at the scene. Following the immediate emergency response, the Chief must approve any additional activity requiring the use of appropriated funds, for example, designation of employees to serve in the role of liaison or escort for the injured contractor or cooperator. Requests to the Chief must be in writing and approved prior to the expenditure of appropriations.