

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 6509.33 - Federal Travel Regulation (GSA)
Zero Code**

Amendment: 6509.33-2024-1

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Approved by: Robert Velasco, Chief Financial Officer

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Responsible Staff: Chief Financial Officer, Financial Policy

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Superseded Document(s): 6509.33-2020-1, November 09, 2020

All previous versions, chapters, and supplements of FSH 6509.33, including:

6509.33 - Information

6509.33-2001-1, Chapter 302 - Relocation Allowances (Digest)

6509.33-2001-1, Chapter 302 - Relocation Allowances (Part 302-2)

6509.33-2001-1, Part 302-2 - Allowances for Subsistence and Transportation

6509.33-1993-1, Part 302-4 - Travel to Seek Residence Quarters

6509.33-1992-8, Part 302-8 - Transportation and Temporary Storage of Household Goods and Professional Books, Papers, and Equipment

6509.33-1992-9, Part 302.9 - Allowances for Nontemporary Storage of Household Goods

6509.33-2004-2, Part 303-73 - Agency Requirements for Payment of Expenses Connected with the Death of Certain Employees

6509.33-1992-5, Part 304-2 - Approval of Contributions or Payments

6509.33-93-1, Part 302-4 - Travel to Seek Residence Quarters

6509.33-93-1, Part 302-4 - Travel to Seek Residence Quarters (Transmittal)

6509.33-1992-1, Chapter 303 - Payment of Expenses Connected with the Death of Certain Employees

6509.33-1992-1, Chapter 303 - Payment of Expenses Connected with the Death of Certain Employees (Transmittal)

6509.33-1992-8, Part 302-8 - Transportation and Temporary Storage of Household Goods and Professional Books, Papers, and Equipment

6509.33-1992-8, Part 302-8 - Transportation and Temporary Storage of Household Goods and Professional Books, Papers, and Equipment (Transmittal)

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6509.33-2001-1, Part 302-1 - Applicability, General Rules, and Eligibility Conditions - Subpart c - Employee's Temporary Change of Station

6509.33-2001-1, Part 302-10 - Allowance for Transportation and Emergency Storage of a privately Owned Vehicle

6509.33-1992-9, Part 302-9 - Allowances for Non-Temporary Storage of Household Goods

6509.33-1992-9, Part 302-9 - Allowances for Non-Temporary Storage of Household Goods (Transmittal)

6509.33-1992-5, Part 304-2 - Approval of Contributions or Payments

6509.33-1992-5, Part 304-2 - Approval of Contributions or Payments (Transmittal)

6509.33-2011-1, Part 302-12 - Use of Relocation Services Company

6509.33-2006-3, Part 302-14 - Home Marketing Incentive Payments

6509.33-2006-5, Part 302-5 - Allowance for Househunting Trip Expenses

6509.33-2005-1, Part 302-5 - Allowance for Househunting Trip Expenses

6509.33-2015-2, Chapter 304 - Payment from A Non-Federal Source for Travel Expenses

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

Zero Code: Revises the chapter and sets forth direction. Arranges sections by content area and incorporates existing incident and emergency travel guidance.

Section 01: Renumbers section from “1” to “01”. Changes title from Purpose to Authority and sets forth direction to reflect Zero Code.

Section 02: Renumbers section from “2” to “02”. Changes title from Cancellation to Objectives and sets forth direction to reflect Zero Code.

Section 03: Renumbers section “3” to “03” and sets forth direction.

Section 04: Renumbers section from “4” to “04”.

Section 05: Renumbers section from “5” to “05”.

Section 06: Renumbers section from “6” to 06”.

Section 07: Renumbers from “7” to “07”. and sets forth direction.

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01 - Authority

1. **Title 41 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle F, Federal Travel Regulation System, Parts 300 through 304 (or FTR), promulgated by the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA).** The FTR implements statutory requirements and travel policies for Executive Branch federal civilian employees and others authorized to travel at the Government's expense.
2. **Travel/Per Diem Bulletins supplementing the FTR issued by the Administrator of GSA, including:**
 - a. **FTR Bulletin 18-09, Calculating Actual Expense Reimbursement.** Clarifies methods to calculate actual expense reimbursement.
 - b. **FTR Bulletin 24-02, Sustainable Transportation for Official Temporary Duty (TDY) Travel.** Encourages Federal travelers to make sustainable, cost-effective transportation choices when conducting official TDY travel.
 - c. **FTR Bulletin 23-04, Emergency Travel.** Clarifies the authority to reimburse emergency travel for employees on TDY.
3. **Supplements to FTR issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that are the primary source of the Department's policies:**
 - a. **Departmental Regulation (DR) 2300-001, Government Travel Card Regulation.** Prescribes policies and procedures governing the use of USDA's travel charge card program.
 - b. **DR 2300-002, USDA Relocation Allowance Regulation.** Incorporates FTR Part 302 and supplements policy specific to USDA relocation activities.
 - c. **DR 2300-004, USDA Evacuation Policies and Procedures.** Contains guidance on subsistence pay (special allowance) for evacuated employees.
 - d. **DR 2300-005, Agriculture Travel Regulation.** Provides guidance for managing TDY travel specific to the USDA.
 - e. **DR 2340-001, Payment of MEDEVAC and Medical Expenses of Employees on Overseas Temporary Duty Assignment** (expires October 2025). Contains policy and procedures for payment of Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) for USDA employees who are on official TDY overseas.
4. **5 U.S.C. 5742 - Transportation of remains, dependents, and effects; death occurring away from official station or abroad.** Prescribes guidelines for the use of appropriated

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funds for travel and transportation expenses in the case of an employee death while on official travel.

5. **7 U.S.C. 2228 - Emergency subsistence for employees.** Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide subsistence payments to employees under emergency conditions.
6. **Decisions issued by the Government Accountability Office's Office of General Counsel.** Government Accountability Office (GAO) issues decisions and opinions on matters of appropriations law, including on the use of appropriated funds for federal employee travel. Decisions relevant to this handbook include, but are not limited to:
 - a. **B-245649.** Allows return travel expenses from Outside of the Continental United States (OCONUS) locations to be paid to an employee only if they intend to return at the time of separation.
 - b. **B-247585.** Disallows employees from receiving an allowance for delayed return travel if they separate from Federal service for the purpose of accepting private employment.
 - c. **B-207094.** Clarifies that return travel may only be paid to an employee when it is incidental to the employee's separation and take place within a reasonable time after separation.
7. **Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-126, Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft.** Prescribes policies to be followed by Agencies in acquiring, managing, using, accounting for the costs of, and disposing of aircraft.
8. **Forest Service Handbook 1309.19, Casualty Assistance Handbook.** Provides guidance for managing response to death and serious injuries involving an employee, volunteer, intern, Job Corps student, contractor, or collaborator.
9. **Forest Service Handbook 5709.16 Chapter 30, Aviation Operations.** Establishes aviation standards and procedures for all aviation activities, including the use of Agency-owned aircraft.
10. **Forest Service Handbook 7109.19 Chapter 60, Fleet Equipment Management Handbook.** Establishes policy and procedures for the use of Forest Service fleet vehicles.

02 - Objectives

This directive supplements the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) issued by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). This directive also supplements Departmental Regulations (DR)

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issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): DR 2300-001, Government Travel Card Regulation; DR 2300-002, USDA Relocation Allowance Regulation; DR 2300-004, USDA Evacuation Policies and Procedures; DR 2300-005, Agriculture Travel Regulation.

This directive applies to the travel of employees, individuals employed intermittently, and non-employees who execute official activities. All provisions of this directive must comply with applicable Federal guidance. Interpretations of and advice regarding this directive must be issued only by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and CFO Financial Policy staff.

The objectives of this directive are to:

1. Ensure that official travel has been authorized in advance and that funds are used in accordance with established policies.
2. Ensure the accurate and timely submission and reporting of official travel expenses.
3. Maintain and enforce internal procedures to minimize the opportunity for erroneous payments, misuse of travel funds, and misuse of the travel charge card.
4. Provide for the accurate and timely approval and reimbursement of official travel expenses.

Units are expected to carefully plan and manage travel costs, and to mitigate the risk or appearance of inappropriate spending and activities. To ensure efficient spending, Units are encouraged to consider strategic alternatives to travel, including local or technological alternatives (for example, virtual meetings). All events must be held at the most cost-effective location, considering such factors as per diem, transportation, and use of GSA's Federal Meeting Spaces before rental of facilities.

Personnel policies, including those applicable when employees are in travel status, are outside the scope of this document. Managers and employees should seek the guidance of their servicing personnel office for policies pertaining to pay, compensatory time off for travel, other compensatory time, personnel benefits, requirements for overseas assignments (such as cost of living allowances and hardship pay differentials), administering leave, and other personnel actions involving employees on official travel. Refer to FSH 6109.11 for more information.

03 - Policy

The Forest Service shall authorize travel deemed necessary to conduct official Government business and shall reimburse employees for official expenses associated with such authorized travel, in accordance with the authorities in section 01 and the policy below.

03.1 - General Travel Management

The policy contained in this section applies generally to all official Government travel undertaken by Forest Service employees and/or funded by the Forest Service.

03.11 - Travel Authorizations

1. An open, interim, or trip-by-trip authorization must be approved in the Agency travel system prior to incurring any official travel expenses.
2. For arranged travel, the travel arranger shall input the travel information in the Agency travel system. The travel authorization must be approved by an Approving Official other than the travel arranger.
3. Travel authorizations issued after official travel has occurred may only be reimbursed if the travel expenses are related to incident business, disaster recovery, or threatened law enforcement employees and members of their families. A resource order must be uploaded to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system, when applicable.

03.12 - Payment for Travel

Payment for all official travel expenses must be made in accordance with the policies in this section and with the authorities in section 01.

03.12a - Travel Charge Card

1. Travel charge cards must be used for payment of official travel expenses unless there is an exemption, subject to the provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Expenses might not be reimbursed if travelers use a personal card.
2. Travel charge cards must only be issued to employees whose pay is administered by the USDA National Finance Center. Casual hires, volunteers, and invitational travelers are not eligible for a travel charge card.
3. All travel charge card transactions are subject to review. Potential misuse and delinquent travel charge card accounts will be referred to Employee Relations for investigation, possible account deactivation, and/or disciplinary action.
4. Monthly limits are established by the Department, based on credit scores. Temporary limit increases may be granted (sec. 04). Use form FS-6500-0207, *Request to Increase Government Travel Card Limit*, when practical, or the Budget and Finance (B&F) electronic travel card maintenance request, available

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at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/tc/Lists/Travel%20Card%20Maintenance/Item/newifs.aspx>.

5. Travel charge card account balances must be paid in full when due, and before a cardholder leaves the Agency. Any remaining balance is subject to the Agency's "Off Boarding" offset process.
6. Travel charge card accounts closed or cancelled for cause by the bank will not be reinstated.
7. Travel charge card accounts for temporary or seasonal hires are to be deactivated before they enter a non-pay status.
8. Travel cardholders are required to take annual travel charge card training or be subject to loss of their travel charge card privileges.

03.12b - Travel Advance

1. Only travelers without a travel charge card are permitted to receive a travel advance, which must be done via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Use Form FS-6500-0233, *Request for Travel Advance*.
2. Travel advances for those without a travel charge card are limited to the maximum per diem rate applicable to the locality multiplied by the number of days of authorized travel, up to a 30-day period at a time.
3. Travel advances via Automated Teller Machine (ATM) withdrawal for those with a travel charge card are limited to the Meals and Incidental Expenses rate applicable to the locality, multiplied by the number of days of authorized travel, up to a 30-day period at a time.

03.12c - Centrally Billed Account

1. The Centrally Billed Account (CBA) may only be used by travelers without a travel charge card who are authorized by the Chief of the Forest Service to not have a travel charge card.
2. When the CBA is properly authorized, travelers must file a voucher to reimburse the CBA, accordingly (sec. 03.110). If travel is cancelled, a voucher must still be filed to pay all related fees incurred for travel arrangements.
3. The CBA must be fully reconciled and not have outstanding charges exceeding a 60-day threshold. Therefore, unvouchered CBA travel expenses must be routinely monitored for immediate resolution.

03.13 - Transportation Expenses

1. Travelers will use the most efficient means of transportation available, relative with the nature and purpose of official duties.
2. Cost comparisons are required. A traveler's reimbursement will be limited to the most efficient and cost-effective method of transportation. Form FS-6500-0006, *Travel Cost Comparison*, must be uploaded to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system, when applicable.
3. The following guidelines shall be followed when using a vehicle for official travel:
 - a. Travelers shall use a Government-Owned Vehicle (GOV) if a GOV is available and the vehicle is suitable for the needs of official activities.
 - b. Travelers shall use a rental vehicle, which must be reserved through the Agency travel system, if a GOV is not available or suitable for official activities. Travelers shall use the least expensive compact car available in the Agency travel system.
 - c. Travelers shall only use a Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV) if the use of a POV is more advantageous to the Government than a rental vehicle.
 - (1) Use Form FS-6500-0006, *Travel Cost Comparison*, as documentation. Include the cost of parking at a common carrier terminal, if applicable. Parking fees at a common carrier terminal may not exceed the cost of a special conveyance fare for roundtrip travel to and from the terminal. The approved form must be attached to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system. Reimbursement is limited to the applicable GSA mileage rate.
4. Travelers shall only use special conveyances which have been authorized by USDA or in writing by the Chief of the Forest Service. Authorized special conveyances currently include, but are not limited to: taxis, innovative mobility technology companies, transportation networking companies, horses, and mules.
5. The following guidelines shall be followed when using a contract carrier for official travel:
 - a. Travelers shall obtain transportation using the Agency travel system or the Agency Travel Management Service. Transportation arrangements made directly with the carrier or through another commercial means will not be reimbursed above the contract fare (that is, the city pair fare established by GSA). Use Form FS-6500-0006, *Travel Cost Comparison*, as documentation. The approved form must be attached to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system.

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- b. Travelers are responsible for obtaining credit for unused tickets, deposits, or for reporting a loss to the carrier.
- 6. The following guidelines shall be followed when traveling using Non-Contract or Non-Refundable Fares:
 - a. These fares must be approved in the Agency travel system in advance of the tickets being purchased.
 - b. Travelers shall know or reasonably anticipate that they will use the ticket(s).
 - c. If official travel is canceled, the traveler shall claim the cost of the ticket(s) and any associated fees in the Agency travel system.
- 7. The following guidelines shall be followed for official travel using a Government-owned Aircraft:
 - a. Travelers shall obtain approval from the Chief of the Forest Service, using Form FS-5700-0010, *Flight Request/Justification for Administrative Use of Aircraft*, (FSM 5700) .
 - b. Use Form FS-6500-0006, Travel Cost Comparison, to justify that travel by Government aircraft is more advantageous to the Government than travel by common carrier or other means (for example, ship, train, vehicle, and so forth).

03.14 - Lodging Accommodations

- 1. Lodging arrangements must be booked in the Agency travel system or with the Travel Management Service (TMS). There are two exceptions to this requirement:
 - a. Pre-arranged conference lodging, which must be identified in the travel authorization; and
 - b. If there are no service providers available through either resource.
- 2. Lodging arrangements made outside of the Agency travel system or not with the TMS must be recorded, when prompted, in the Agency travel system; such lodging arrangements are subject to additional scrutiny and could potentially be ineligible for reimbursement (sec. 03.15).
- 3. Lodging accommodations which exceed the established GSA per diem rate require additional approval and justification (sec. 03.22).
- 4. For lodging accommodations for travel less than 30 days, preference should be given to GSA's FedRooms program, made available in the Agency travel system.

5. Lodging accommodations for travel longer than 30 days should be at a reduced rate (sec. 03.16).

03.15 - Nonconventional Lodging

1. Conventional lodging (such as a hotel, motel, or boarding house) is the preferred method of lodging for official travel and must be used when available and practical for the purpose of the travel.
2. Nonconventional lodging (such as AirBNB, VRBO, or FlipKey) may only be used for official travel when both of the following criteria apply:
 - a. No conventional lodging is available in either the Agency travel system or with the Travel Management Service, and
 - b. The traveler is either:
 - (1) A firefighter or other personnel directly engaged in hazard-related emergency (such as wildfire, hurricane, or other natural disaster) response, and Government-provided lodging is also unavailable, or
 - (2) On long-term travel, and non-conventional lodging is the only option available that meets the reduced per diem rate, or
 - (3) Any other traveler, and no conventional lodging is available by any means.
3. Nonconventional lodging is booked by the traveler outside of the Agency travel system, and a justification statement must be attached to the employee's travel authorization and voucher.
4. Reasonable fees associated with nonconventional lodging will be reimbursed when the use of nonconventional lodging has been authorized.
 - a. Service fees may be reimbursed as a miscellaneous expense on the employee's voucher and are not used in calculating the total daily lodging rate.
 - b. Per-stay cleaning fees must be divided over the total number of days the employee occupied the accommodations and added to the base lodging cost to determine the total daily lodging rate.
 - c. The total daily lodging rate will be reimbursed at or below the GSA per diem rate unless actual expenses have been authorized (sec. 03.22), and will be reimbursed at or below the reduced per diem rate if one has been authorized for long-term travel (sec. 03.16).

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5. Any costs (such as service fees or cancellation penalties) incurred by the traveler due to unauthorized use of nonconventional lodging will not be reimbursed.

03.16 - Per Diem

1. To be eligible for per diem, travelers shall be in a travel status for more than 12 hours.
2. Field per diem rates are based on a determination that operational activities may be accomplished more efficiently through the use of remote worksites. Field per diem rates must be established by the local Management Official (sec. 04).
3. A reduced per diem rate of 55 percent is established for travel assignments greater than 30 days (sec. 03.18).
 - a. Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE): For the first 30 days of a travel assignment, the established GSA M&IE rate may be authorized. A reduced M&IE rate of 55 percent will be applied on calendar day 31 of the assignment until the end of the assignment. Interruption of travel does not restart the allowance of the full M&IE.
 - b. Lodging: Prior to reporting for a long-term travel assignment, or during the first 30-day period of the assignment, the traveler shall seek long-term residence accommodations. Travel must be documented on a trip-by-trip travel authorization and must document the best reduced lodging rate available. If a reduced lodging rate cannot be obtained, the traveler may request a higher rate (sec. 03.22).

03.17 - Premium Class Travel

1. Travelers must select coach class transportation, unless other than coach class accommodations are authorized in advance, in writing, and recorded in the Agency travel system.
2. Premium class travel is subject to additional scrutiny and approval. Travelers may have to provide additional justification or documentation. Use Form FS-6500-0262 *Approval Form for Premium Class Travel*, to request and document approval.
3. Requests for reimbursement of fees that allow for early boarding, free checked bags, free beverages, and other items that do not guarantee a specific seat assignment will not be approved for reimbursement.

03.18 - Assignment to Another Duty Station

1. For an assignment to another duty station lasting less than 6 months, a traveler will receive temporary duty (TDY) travel allowances.

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2. For an assignment to another duty station lasting 6 months or more in duration, including extensions, a cost comparison must be constructed to determine and select the most advantageous method of reimbursement between Transfer of Station (TOS), Temporary Change of Station (TCS), and TDY travel allowances.
3. Except as otherwise indicated in the Federal Travel Regulation, travelers are required to use the TMS or GSA's Long-term Lodging (LTL), available at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-a-trip/lodging/long-term-lodging>, services to obtain extended-stay lodging.
4. Lodging expenses should be negotiated to a reduced rate based on the established GSA per diem rate for the area. Lodging and Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) are to be reduced to 55 percent of the established GSA per diem rate, starting on calendar day 31 of an assignment. The 55 percent reduction does not apply to Field per diem rates.

03.19 - Travel Vouchers

1. Travelers shall submit vouchers in the Agency travel system within 5 business days after the completion of travel, or every 2 weeks if on long-term or continuous travel. Travelers may be referred to Employee Relations if a voucher is not submitted within 20 days.
2. Receipts are required to be attached to the travel voucher in the Agency travel system for all transportation, lodging, vehicle rentals (including refueling expenses), and for every expense over \$75.
3. Approving officials shall review and approve or disapprove travel vouchers within 5 business days of receipt. Approving officials may be referred to Employee Relations if a voucher is not processed within 20 days. Approving Officials may be sent a "Bill for Collection" for any interest due owed by the Agency, in accordance with the Prompt Payment Act.
4. A pre-trip travel voucher may need to be filed for international travel fees, non-refundable ticket purchases, or charges to the Centrally Billed Account.
5. A travel voucher may be required to pay for fees associated with a cancelled trip.
6. The method of reimbursement must be accurately selected in the Agency travel system to ensure proper reimbursements are made (for example, CBA or, travel charge card).
7. Travelers shall digitally sign vouchers for the travel arranger to process in the Agency travel system.

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8. Travelers who save the Forest Service money while on official travel may be eligible for a Travel Gainsharing Award. Use Form FS-6500-0004, *Forest Service Travel Savings*, as documentation. Refer to the Human Resources Management (HRM) Intranet, available at <https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm/>, for more information.

03.110 - Travel Debt

1. Travelers shall be given due process for all travel-related debt. See FSM 6530 for more information.
2. Travelers shall pay travel-related debt upon discovery.
3. Travelers will receive a "Bill for Collection" if monies are owed to the Government, such as when any of the following occurs:
 - a. The traveler receives a reimbursement for a TDY travel expense in error, to include being reimbursed for an expense that was charged to the CBA.
 - b. A travel advance is not offset by a travel voucher.
 - c. A Household Goods Shipment is in excess of 18,000 pounds, when special handling was required.
 - d. A travel voucher audit results in the discovery of an overpayment of travel related expenses.

03.2 - Temporary Duty Travel

Travel expenses incurred because of temporary duty travel (TDY) shall be reimbursed in accordance with the following policies.

03.21 - Approvals [Reserved]

03.22 - Actual Expenses

1. Travelers shall request approval for actual expenses (expenses exceeding the set per diem rate) in advance of travel, to the fullest extent possible. Actual expenses may only be approved when acceptable subsistence (that is, lodging and/or meals and incidental expenses) at or below the GSA per diem rate for a location is unavailable.
2. Form FS-6500-0276, *Actual Expenses Request Approval*, must be used to obtain and document approval for actual expenses in accordance with the approval thresholds, but not to exceed 300 percent of the GSA per diem rates for a location (sec. 04). The approved form must be attached to the travel authorization and the travel voucher in the Agency travel system.

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3. Actual expenses are calculated using the GSA's "no itemization" method. For more details on the calculation method, refer to the CFO B&F Actual Expense webpage, available at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/travelhd/Help%20Articles/Actual%20Expenses.aspx>.
4. For firefighters and other personnel directly supporting emergency incident response (such as wildfire, hurricane, other natural disaster, or emergency fuels and health treatments (such as, prescribed fire)), when practical and when time permits prior to travel, form FS-6500-0276, *Actual Expenses Request Approval*, should be used to document approval for actual expenses. If approval is not granted prior to travel due to exigent circumstances, documentation, including a copy of the employee's resource order and a justification signed by the employee's supervisor, must be attached to the employee's voucher in the Agency's travel system.

03.23 - Incident Travel

1. Employees must use the Agency travel system or the Travel Management Service to accomplish all official travel.
2. Administratively Determined (AD) employees traveling on official incident business may be reimbursed using GSA's Form OF-288, *Incident Time Report*. See the CFO B&F Incident Finance SharePoint site, available at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/CasualPay/SitePages/Home.aspx> for more information.
3. An open, interim, or trip-by-trip authorization must be approved in the Agency Travel system prior to incurring any official travel expenses. For incident travel, a resource order may be used in combination with an open travel authorization (sec. 03.11).
4. Reimbursement for per diem expenses (that is, lodging and/or M&IE) during an emergency in the local travel area is only authorized when warranted by emergency conditions connected with official activities for any official duty lasting more than 12 hours, regardless of actual miles from the official duty station or residence. Emergency conditions may include wildfire, hurricanes, or other disaster response and support that would endanger a traveler's physical health or safety if the individual were to return to their duty station or residence.
 - a. Reimbursement will not be paid if an individual is not in travel status, is in travel status for less than 12 hours, or does not incur per diem expenses while in travel status.
 - b. Preauthorization must be obtained prior to incurring expenses when possible. In emergent circumstances where preauthorization is not possible, post-travel

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authorization may be granted on a case-by-case basis with a justification statement uploaded to the Agency travel system, signed by the employee's line officer.

- c. For reimbursement to be paid, a resource order, GSA's Standard Form 261, *Crew Time Report*, or GSA's Form OF-288, *Incident Time Report*, must be uploaded to the travel voucher in the Agency travel system.
- d. Reimbursement is limited to the established GSA per diem rate or a lower rate subject to provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreement. If meals are provided, travelers will not be reimbursed for meals.
- e. This special authority does not apply to meetings, trainings, or other administrative activities.

03.24 - Mixed Official and Personal (Leisure) Travel

- 1. The Agency travel system may not be used for any personal travel arrangements. Travelers must first book their official travel in the Agency travel system or using the TMS, and then contact the common carrier to make adjustments, as needed.
- 2. Government fares and/or rates must not be used for personal travel, except where vendors offer such fares and/or rates unsolicited.
- 3. Travelers shall not be reimbursed for any additional travel costs incurred for the convenience of the traveler, such as interruption of travel or travel via an alternate or indirect route.
- 4. Travelers shall provide documentation and a justification in the Agency travel system when they stop for personal reasons en route to, from, or between points of official business. Use Form FS-6500-0006, *Travel Cost Comparison*, as documentation. The approved form must be attached to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system.
- 5. Travelers will not be reimbursed for any fees or costs resulting from personal travel, even if the additional costs are a result of official travel being canceled.
- 6. Any cost savings resulting from modified travel, such as exchanged tickets, must be reflected on the travel voucher and returned to the Government.

03.25 - International (Foreign) Travel

- 1. Any foreign travel outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) must be reviewed and coordinated by the Director of International Programs for the Chief of the Forest Service and USDA approval. All foreign travel must be automatically routed in the

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Agency travel system to the Director of International Programs. Use Form FS-6500-0001, *Foreign Travel Proposal*, as documentation.

2. Employees on foreign travel must take agency designated training, complete agency designated forms, and comply with USDA DR 3580-005, Securing Client Devices for International Travel. Refer to the Foreign Travel Website, available at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/travelhd/Help%20Articles/Foreign%20Travel.aspx>, for general guidance.
3. The Department of Defense prescribes and updates, at least once a year, rates for non-foreign OCONUS areas (for example, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and so forth). For questions, contact the Defense Travel Management Office at 571-372-1300.
4. The Department of State prescribes rates for foreign OCONUS areas and updates these rates at the beginning of every month. For questions, contact the Office of Allowances at allowancesO@state.gov or at 202-663-1121.

03.26 - Invitational Travel

1. Invitational travelers, including Personal Assistance Services (PAS), shall request a profile and be established in the Agency travel system.
2. Invitational travelers shall adhere to all Federal, Departmental, and Agency travel policies and procedures.
3. For security purposes, invitational travelers are not authorized direct access to the Agency travel system. They must use their designated travel arranger to make all travel reservations and file all travel in the Agency travel system (sec. 03.11 and sec. 03.110).
4. Contractors are not considered invitational travelers and should not use the Agency's travel system to make travel arrangements.

03.27 - Travel and Transportation for Casualty Assistance Program

1. The cost of transporting employee remains cannot exceed the cost of a common carrier that is normally used for transportation of remains. Use form FS-6500-0006, *Travel Cost Comparison*, to complete and document the required cost comparison supporting the decision made.
2. Escorts for the transportation of remains are limited to no more than two employees. Escorts shall be separate from the Forest Service Honor Guard.
3. When an employee suffers a serious injury while in a travel status, a family member may travel to the location where the employee is receiving medical treatment to serve as a

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nonmedical attendant, 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.

4. Families of deceased employees may not travel at Government expense. The only exception is that one representative may travel to attend a federally-sponsored award ceremony, memorial service, or other function that is an honorary recognition of the deceased employee, in accordance with the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act.
5. Family travel is considered Invitational Travel (sec. 03.26).
6. The appropriation or fund available for the activity in which the injured traveler was engaged must be charged with all allowable travel expenses.
7. See FSH 1309.13, Death and Serious Injury Handbook, for more information.

03.3 - Local Travel

1. Employees shall request reimbursement for local travel expenses using form FS-6500-229, *Request for Reimbursement* (see the CFO-B&F Miscellaneous Payments SharePoint site, available at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/MiscPay/SitePages/Home.aspx>.)
2. The mileage costs for normal commuting between an employee's official residence and their official duty station are not eligible for reimbursement or other payment from appropriated funds and must be deducted when submitting a reimbursement request for local travel.
3. Reimbursement for transportation expenses during hours of work is limited to actual expenses; use the established GSA mileage rate for use of a privately-owned vehicle.
4. Per diem expenses (that is, lodging and M&IE) may generally not be paid for local travel. Refer to section 03.23 for guidance regarding emergency per diem in the local travel area.
5. Individually Billed Accounts and Government travel charge cards may not be used for local travel expenses.

03.4 - Transfers of Station

Transfer of Station allowances are authorized in accordance with the following policies and the authorities in section 01.

03.41 - General Provisions for Transfers of Station

1. All taxes associated with a transfer of station must be paid by the employee, including third-party payments made on their behalf.
2. Employees must meet the 50-mile distance test to be eligible for transfer of station allowances (sec. 05).

03.41a - Mandatory Benefits for Transfers of Station [Reserved]

03.41b - Discretionary Benefits for Transfers of Station

1. Temporary Quarters:
 - a. The traveler may choose between a lump sum payment and the actual Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expenses (TQSE) methods of reimbursement.
 - b. Temporary Quarters are authorized in 30-day increments and shall not exceed 120 days, including any days spent on the House Hunting Trip.
2. House Hunting Trip:
 - a. The traveler may choose between a lump sum payment and per diem.
 - b. The number of days taken towards a house hunting trip will be reduced from the number of days a traveler is authorized TQSE.
3. Shipment of a Privately-owned vehicle (POV):
 - a. Domestic relocations: One vehicle may be shipped when it has been determined to be the most advantageous method. A second vehicle may be authorized when there are at least two licensed drivers in the household.
 - b. Foreign relocations: Only one vehicle may be shipped when it has been determined to be more advantageous and cost effective.
4. Use of a Relocation Services Company/Relocation Services Program
 - a. Transferees requesting re-entry into the program are responsible for all related fees associated with any previous entry into the program.
5. Property Management is a discretionary item available only for temporary changes of station and foreign transfers of station.

03.5 - Conferences and Mission Operational Events Management

1. All hosted events must be held in accessible facilities and incorporate sustainable practices to reduce the environmental impact.
2. All conference packages must be approved and submitted in the Agency tracking system for conferences at least 60 days before any funds are obligated.
3. All mission operational packages must be documented on Form FS-6500-0282, *Request for Approval of Mission Operational Event*.
4. Employees shall receive approval from the Chief Financial Officer/Senior Accountable Travel Official (CFO/SATO) before obligating any conference-related funds and any funds over \$40,000 for mission operational packages.
5. If an individual traveler receives funds from a non-Federal source, the traveler shall use form AD-1101, *Acceptance of Payment for Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source*, available at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-1101.pdf>. The approved form must be attached to the travel authorization and travel voucher in the Agency travel system.
6. If a speaker will be individually attending an event on their own accord as a speaker, consultant, and so forth, they shall use Form OE-101, *Request for Prior Approval of Outside Activity/Employment*, available at https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USFS_OE_101.pdf.
7. If the Agency receives funds from a non-Federal source, the Office of General Counsel shall review and approve the acceptance of the funds.
8. See the CFO-B&F Sharepoint, available at <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-cfo-bfp/conferences/SitePages/Home.aspx>, for more information on package processing procedures.

04 - Responsibility

Delegated officials are required to maintain necessary copies of official travel records to respond to internal audits or external inquiries from Congress, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), or any other applicable agency.

04.1 - Chief of the Forest Service

Delegation from the GSA Administrator, through the Department of Agriculture, to the Chief of the Forest Service.

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Per the GSA Administrator, through the FTR and through the USDA ATR, the Chief of the Forest Service is authorized to implement policies for travel by employees and others authorized to travel at Forest Service expense. It is the responsibility of the Chief of the Forest Service, as the Agency Head, to:

1. Approve actual expense requests above 150 percent of per diem.
2. Approve payment of subsistence and transportation expenses for threatened law enforcement employees. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) shall be notified of all instances where threatened individuals are moved into temporary living accommodations either at or away from their official duty station.
3. Approve the administrative use of a Government aircraft.
4. Approve travel requests for attendance at a funeral or memorial service for a non-employee.
5. Designate the specific award ceremonies for which employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The Chief of the Forest Service may also approve travel for one individual related by blood or affinity of the employee's choosing.

04.2 - Chief Financial Officer

Delegation from the Chief of the Forest Service to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

It is the responsibility of the Forest Service CFO to:

1. Approve actual expense requests above 150 percent of per diem for all hazard related emergencies, such as disease, fire, and natural disasters.
2. Approve family travel and per diem expenses exceeding 30 days and/or more than one round trip.
3. Approve requests for travel hardship advances.
4. Approve mission operational packages that cost \$40,000 or more and all conference packages.
5. Ensure employees are trained and knowledgeable about travel regulations, manuals, processes, and the Agency travel system. This includes mandating that approving officials and all new employees be trained, and when necessary, refresher training for employees is provided.
6. Oversee the Forest Service's travel policy, travel processes, travel card program, and conference/meetings management procedures.

7. Promote and maximize travel card rebates.
8. Serve as the Senior Accountable Travel Official (SATO) and further delegate this authority to others as necessary.

04.21 - Director, Financial Policy

Delegation from the Forest Service CFO to the Director of Financial Policy.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Financial Policy to:

1. Submit travel regulations to USDA Office of the Chief Financial Officer for review by Departmental staff, as requested.
2. Prescribe policy and procedures for all types of travel.

04.22 - Director, Financial Management Systems

Delegation from the Forest Service CFO to the Director of Financial Management Systems.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Financial Management Systems to:

1. Develop, in concert with USDA, load, update, and maintain the Agency travel system, and all tables such as organizational, group, permission, and accounting tables.
2. Manage the Agency travel system and the interface of travel transactions related to the Agency core financial system.

04.23 - Director, Budget and Finance

Delegation from the Forest Service CFO to the Director of Budget and Finance.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Budget and Finance to:

1. Establish and implement procedures for use and monitoring of the Centrally Billed Account, including the requirement to reconcile the account each month, to make sure the account is paid in a timely manner, and to mitigate delinquent account balances.
2. Maintain and submit all required travel-related reports in a timely manner.
3. Oversee the travel charge card program in accordance with Departmental Regulation 2300-001, Government Travel Card Regulation, including processing temporary limit increases on travel cards.
4. Perform or assist employees with all travel-related processes.

5. Refer travelers or approving officials to Employee Relations if a travel voucher is not processed within 20 days.

04.3 - Management Officials

Delegation from the Chief of the Forest Service to Management Officials.

It is the responsibility of Management Officials to:

1. Approve family travel for up to 30 days and one round trip.
2. Approve payments for travel expenses incurred because of the illness, injury, or death of an employee while the employee was in a travel status.
3. Approve travel requests for attendance at a funeral or memorial service of an employee.
4. Approve mission operational packages less than \$40,000. Approval of mission operational packages less than \$7,000 may be re-delegated to local Line Officers.
5. Establish Field per diem rates, as needed.
6. Ensure Units manage resources in an environmentally positive way, which includes giving preference to virtual events and facilities which consume less energy.
7. Monitor employees' compliance with travel regulations. Management Officials shall immediately report any violation of these regulations to the Forest Service CFO.
8. Review travel charge card delinquent accounts and take immediate corrective actions.

04.4 - Approving Officials

Delegation from the Chief of the Forest Service to Approving Officials.

It is the responsibility of Approving Officials to:

1. Approve actual expense requests up to 150 percent of per diem.
2. Review and approve or disapprove actual expense lodging requests between 150 and 300 percent of per diem for the emergency travel of firefighters and other personnel directly supporting emergency (such as wildfire, hurricane, other natural disaster, or emergency fuels and health treatments (such as, prescribed fire)) response.
3. Manage travel budgets.

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4. Review and approve or disapprove travel authorizations and travel vouchers within 5 business days of receipt.
5. Ensure travel charge cards are deactivated for seasonal or temporary employees.

04.5 - Employees

It is the responsibility of Forest Service employees to:

1. Know and be in compliance with all current travel policies and procedures.
2. Update and maintain their personal information in the Agency travel system and the Agency travel charge card system.
3. Assume the responsibility to use the travel charge card (if issued a travel charge card) only for official travel purposes, reconcile their monthly statements, and pay all outstanding balances by the due date.
4. Submit travel vouchers within 5 business days of return from travel status, or every 2 weeks if on long-term or continuous travel. Employees who are authorized to use the Centrally Billed Account shall still submit a travel voucher within 5 business days of completing travel, for all related expenses, including fees for cancelled trips.

05 - Definitions

Account Deactivation. A method to temporarily block a travel cardholder's ability to perform transactions without canceling the account altogether. While the account is deactivated, any transaction attempted by the cardholder is declined at the point of sale.

Actual Expenses. The payment of actual costs for lodging and meals above set per diem rates, which must be authorized in advance of travel.

Agency Head. The head of an organizational unit of the Department who reports to an Under Secretary (such as the Chief of the Forest Service).

Approving Official. A Line Officer or a supervisor at least one organizational level above the traveler with delegated authority to approve travel authorizations and vouchers.

Cardholder. The legal agent using a travel card to buy goods and services.

Centrally Billed Account. An Agency account used only for transportation by travelers without a travel card or invitational travelers.

Continuous Travel. Travel for 30 days or more with no return to the official duty station or residence.

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Distance Test. The distance test is met when the new official duty station is at least 50 miles further than the old official duty station was from the residence used for commuting to the old official duty station, and the old and new duty stations are also at least 50 miles apart.

FedRooms. GSA's preferred program for lodging options, available through the Agency travel system.

House Hunting Trip. A discretionary relocation allowance authorized for transferees to find permanent housing at a new official duty station.

Invitational Traveler. An individual either not employed or employed intermittently in the Government service, such as a consultant or expert for official activities, who has been authorized to travel at Government expense. This also includes casual hires, volunteers, and family travel.

Line Officer. A Forest Service Officer who has been designated certain authorities and/or responsibilities. See FSM 1230.

Local Travel. Any travel as a result of official business within the 50-mile radius of the employee's official duty station/worksites or approved alternate worksite (such as their permanent residence), using the most direct route and lasting 12 hours or less.

Management Officials. The Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Chiefs, Associate Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Director, the International Institute of Tropical Forestry Director, and the Forest Products Laboratory Director.

Open Authorization. A general authorization allowing an employee to travel on official business without further authorization under specific conditions.

Residence. The location where an employee lives and from which the employee regularly commutes to and from work, on a daily basis.

Senior Accountable Travel Official. An official (in the Forest Service, the CFO or a designee), selected by an Agency Head, who is responsible for related travel reports, internal controls, cost tracking procedures, and activities.

Temporary Change of Station. A relocation to a new official duty station for a temporary period while performing a long-term assignment of 6 months or more and subsequent return to the previous official duty station upon completion of the assignment as indicated on Form SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action.

Temporary Duty Travel. Travel on official business for 12 hours or more away from an employee's duty station or other areas defined by the Agency.

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Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expenses. Expenses incurred by an employee and/or their immediate family while occupying lodging obtained for the purpose of temporary occupancy.

06 - Internal Controls

The Forest Service internal control assessment of travel must be accomplished on an ongoing basis to ensure:

1. All direct and indirect travel expenses are appropriately, accurately, and completely recorded.
2. All conference and meetings management packages are adequately justified with proper supporting documentation.

07 - Records Retention

Refer to FSH 6209.11 Chapter 40 and your local Records Manager for current federal records retention requirements mandated by the United States National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).