

MIDWEST AREA
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
MANUAL

TRAVEL

Created by
Program Administrative Support Task Group

The [REE Bulletin 00-307](#), Reducing Travel Costs, was distributed from Headquarters to all REE employees on April 05, 2000. The following provides additional policy and guidance for the Midwest Area.

- It is **mandatory** to purchase all airline tickets, lodging and car rentals through the designated Travel Management Company (TMC). Purchase of these items in any other manner is in direct violation of the Federal Travel Regulations and will not be approved.
- All official travel related expenses are to be charged to the Government Contractor-Issued Travel Charge Card (see application on PASTG Travel Web Site). Any employee who travels must be issued a government travel card. [Bulletin 03-304](#) should be given to all employees applying for a government travel card. [Appendix A-2](#) must be signed by the traveler & immediate supervisor prior to being submitted to the Area Transportation Assistant for processing.
- A canceled travel charge card account reflects misuse or non-payment. For this reason, employees with canceled charge card accounts are considered high risk in the repayment of travel advances. **An employee who has had the travel charge card canceled for misuse or non-payment may not apply for a travel advance from NFC.**
- Travel advances will not be authorized to cover the cost of restricted fare tickets. Travel advances may be authorized for foreign travel and new employees.
- Restricted fare tickets ([Bulletin 05-312](#)) should not be purchased in lieu of the contract fare unless it results in an overall savings to the government. The restricted fare ticket price, plus the possible penalty assessment and any additional per diem incurred due to extra overnight stays, should be less than the contract fare.
- You **must** meet one of the exceptions in [P&P 343.4](#), Contract Air Services that are listed below, for not using the contract fares. A **justification must accompany the AD202** that explains which exception was met. The exception code is to be used in the transportation method of the AD202. The exceptions are:
 - **Non Use Codes**
 - 1) Space or scheduled flights are not available in time to accomplish the purpose of travel; use of contract service would require the traveler to incur additional unnecessary costs that would increase the total cost of the trip (i.e., overnight lodging or additional per diem or subsistence costs); or
 - 2) The contractor's (contract carrier's) flight schedule is inconsistent with explicit policies of individual Federal departments and agencies, where applicable, to schedule travel during normal working hours; or
 - 3) 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. Promotional or restrictive fares may be used by REE employees when such fares are based on the application of these non use codes. The promotional or restrictive fare should only be used when the traveler can meet the requirements of the stated fare. **If a REE employee fails to meet the requirements of the restrictive fare through no fault of the U.S. Government, the employee is personally responsible for the payment of any penalties incurred;** or
 - 4) If rail service available, cost effective, and consistent with the Mission.

- You may not purchase restricted fare tickets without an approved AD202 which specifically approves the purchase of a restricted fare. **A note must be written on the bottom of the AD202 stating "requesting approval to purchase restricted fare"**. If the Approving Official is not the fundholder of the traveler's Unit, the fundholder **must** initial the AD202 giving concurrence to the request for a restricted fare. The traveler must complete the "**Restricted Statement**" form (page) and have it signed by the authorizing official/fundholder. The Approving Official must approve requests on a case-by-case basis; no "blanket" approvals will be allowed as the cost savings must be determined on each travel request.
- Penalties incurred for an official trip that is canceled by the government will be considered a cost to the government.
- Penalties incurred for an official trip canceled by the traveler for personal reasons will be considered a cost to the traveler.
- If an airline ticket needs to be issued 15 days or more early to hold pricing down, the sample memo on the next page should be completed and sent to the ATA for the Area Director's signature before it is sent to Steve Helmrich. Steve Helmrich's office will call the TMC and have the ticket issued. The traveler will receive a ticketed itinerary e-mail. If the price has increased before ticketing, the TMC will call the traveler with a new quote. Please be aware that the timing of the charge on the Travel Card may cause the traveler to have to pay for the ticket before reimbursement occurs.



United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

xxdatexx

SUBJECT: Early Ticket Request

TO: Steve Helmrich, Director, FMD

FROM: Steven Shafer, Director

- **More than 15 days prior to departure**
- **The authorization (202) must be approved. (If Foreign or outside funds, must be signed by MWA.)**
- **If the ticket is Non-Refundable, also sign form in bulletin 05-312**
- **Email this to Kit Mernick, ATA, MWA.**

I am authorizing the issuance of air travel tickets which must be purchased by xxdatexx for xxTravelerxx traveling to xxCity,State/City,Countryxx on xxdatexx. The record locator for xxTravelerxx is xxLocator#xx. xxTravelerxx was quoted a price of \$xxx. (Give brief reason)

Please issue the ticket at this price. If the price has changed from the quoted amount, please contact xxxxxTravelerxxxx at xxxphonexxxx to ensure that the traveler still wishes the ticket at the increased price.

Thank you for your assistance.



Helpful Travel Web Sites:

Airline City Pairs:

<http://www.fedtravel.com/gsa/default.asp>

Currency Converter: <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>

FedRooms: <http://www.fedrooms.com>

GSA Federal Travel Site: (includes Per Diem rates, POV rates, GSA Value Lodging, etc.)

<http://www.gsa.gov/travel.htm>

Hotel/Motel Fire Safety Act

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.htm>

Mapquest: (create driving directions between two locations)

<http://www.mapquest.com/>

Bank of America Government Services:

<http://www.bankofamerica.com/government/>

Office of Government-wide Policy (links to Federal Travel Regs, Per Diem Rates, etc.)

<http://www.gsa.gov/>

Passport & Visa Information

<http://www.state.gov/travelandbusiness/>

Per Diem Allowances for Foreign Areas

<http://www.state.gov/www/perdiems/index.html>

Travel-related P&Ps

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/fmd/issuances.htm#travel>

Travel Warnings & Consular Information Sheets (Dept of State):

http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

Vaccination Information for International Travel:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Helpful References for Travel:

ARIS Manual, [Chapter on FTIS](#) (Foreign Travel Information System)

See <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/index.htm> for current Policies & Procedures and Bulletins

Policies and Procedures

340.0	Delegations of Authority to Approve Travel
341.2	Acceptance of Travel Funds from Non-Federal Sources
342.1	Per Diem and Actual Subsistence Allowances
342.03	Travel Advances
343.1	Approval of Premium Class Air Travel (ARS)
343.3	Procurement of Passenger Transportation Services
343.4	Contract Air Service
343.6	Use of U.S. Flag Air Carriers for Foreign Travel
344.2	Foreign Travel Plan (ARS)
345.1	Foreign Travel Itineraries (ARS)
345.3	Passport, Visas & Security Clearances for Foreign Travel

Bulletins

98-310	Revisions to the Foreign Travel Approval Process
00-302	Reimbursement for Taxes on Lodging Obtained in OCONUS (non-foreign) Locations.
00-304	Conference Planning
00-305	Acceptance of Travel Expenses from Non-Federal Sources
00-307	Reducing Travel Costs
01-303	Coding Transaction Fees Assessed by Travel Management Centers (TMC) on Travel Vouchers
01-314	Premium-Class Transportation
02-302	Frequent Traveler Benefits and Other Promotional Benefits
03-302	Local Travel Expenses
05-303	USDA FedTraveler Policy
05-304	Procedures for Arranging Leisure Travel in Conjunction with Official Travel
05-309	Restricted Fares for FY 2006 Travel
05-312	Use of Restricted Fares
05-313	Use and Management of Travel Charge Cards
07-303	Changes to Privately-Owned Vehicle Mileage Rates (this bulletin subject to change periodically)

Reference information from NFC web site: <http://dab.nfc.usda.gov/pubs/na-pubsmain.html>

- National Finance Center Procedures Manual, Title II - Voucher and Invoice Payment Manual; Chapter 2, Travel and Transportation Payments, Section 1, Travel System (**updated 4/3/02**)
- National Finance Center Procedures Manual, Title VI - Systems Access Manual, Chapter 6, Travel and Transportation, Section 1, Travel Online Data Entry
- National Finance Center Procedures Manual, Title VI - Systems Access Manual; Chapter 6, Travel and Transportation Payments; Section 3, Travel System Online Inquiry.

Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) are on the Internet and will be more current than printed copy.

PER DIEM RATES

For domestic rates: <http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>

DOMESTIC M&IE DEDUCTION CHART

M&IE	\$39	\$44	\$49	\$54	\$59	\$64
Breakfast	7	8	9	10	11	12
Lunch	11	12	13	15	16	18
Dinner	18	21	24	26	29	31
Incidentals	3	3	3	3	3	3

For foreign rates: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm/>

For foreign chart of M&IE deductions:
<http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm/651.htm>

GENERAL TRAVEL RULES

- 12 Hour Rule: **NO** per diem is allowed for travel less than 12 hours or within the official duty station area (35 mile radius of official duty station).
- Travel within one calendar day: **NO** per diem paid within a set mile radius to be determined by your LAO.
- Travel of more than one calendar day: **NO** per diem when the travel is performed within a 35 mile radius of the employee's official duty station.
- No one can approve their own travel authorization or travel voucher. The Delegation of Authority memo will come from the Area office each fiscal year.
- If possible, approving officials shall schedule travel to prevent employees from having to travel during non-duty hours.
- Personal travel cannot be booked through the TMC. Purchase the ticket early and take it to the airline to add personal travel legs. Remember, however, that this will cause early billing to the BOA card.
- Employees may pay their government travel charge account at no cost at <http://www.myeasypayment.com>
- Receipts are required for lodging and car rental regardless of the amount. Receipts are required for all other expenses for \$75 or more.
- Sporadic travelers (once or twice a year) should call the number on the back of the travel card to make sure their travel card is active. The issuing bank may inactivate it for non-use.
- When signing the application for the travel card, the traveler agrees to "promise to pay for all Charges made by you...until paid in full" and "All payments are due by the due date specified on your statement" regardless of whether or not the employee has been reimbursed for the travel. Delinquency in payment of the monthly travel card billing is considered card abuse. Card abuse and misuse may be subject to disciplinary actions under the appropriate agency and civilian personnel regulations.

- Blankets cannot have Outside Funds or Actual Subsistence.
- Non-employee in GOV (property issue): no liability insurance to cover them.

Travel That Requires Special Approval:

- Annual Leave (Attach SF-71 to Agency copy of Authorization, indicate leave taken on travel voucher, ensure T&A agrees, and no per diem during annual leave will be reimbursed) See [Bulletin 05-304](#) and [P&P 344.2](#).
- Deviations for personal convenience from the normal mode of transportation or itinerary. Once official travel has been established with the travel management agency, the traveler must exchange the tickets issued for official travel directly with the airline and have the airlines reissue the tickets to add any non-official destinations. The traveler must pay any cost differential with a personal credit card. The difference in cost is the responsibility of the traveler and may not be reimbursed.
- Travel that combines official travel with personal travel (annual leave in conjunction with foreign travel must not be more than 3-5 days—see [P&P 344.2](#)).
- Offsite meetings which costs USDA \$25,000 or more.
- Continuation of per diem due to illness or injury
- Non-refundable airline tickets (see page 12 for REE form). Use of the Travel Management Company is mandatory. Use of non-contract carriers must be pre-approved. Non-Refundable airline tickets are not authorized to be purchased until the traveler has an approved travel authorization. Assure the itinerary is ticketed before the traveler departs.

Registration Fees and the Travel Card

- Registration fees **CANNOT BE PAID VIA THE TRAVEL CARD!** They must be paid by **GOVERNMENT PURCHASE CARD**.
 - If there are no purchase cards within the unit to take care of the registration fees, please have the employee work with the Location Purchasing Agent or LAO to process the registration. Using a personal credit card, or cash, rather than using the purchase card WHEN possible, is not acceptable. If the purchase card will not be accepted for payment, documentation (conference information, name and phone number of the person signing the receipt) from the sponsor(s) of the meeting must be sent to the ATA, along with the request for reimbursement (SF-1164). You must include the receipt of personal payment (cash) by the traveler and documentation from the organization stating that they do not take the government purchase card. The SF-1164 will not be approved for payment until documentation has been received. If cash is used for a foreign registration fee, the exchange rate paid will be the rate at the time NFC processes the reimbursement. If a personal credit card is used, a copy of the statement with the charge must be attached to the SF-1164.
 - If credit cards are not accepted by vendor a government check may be sent.
 - If at a meeting where they divide the cost of the meeting expenses and expect payment from participants, the employee should get documentation from the chairperson of the meeting that they do not accept the government purchase card. When the traveler returns, complete an SF-1164 and forward it through channels (your LAO) to Area Transportation Assistant in Peoria. **Using a personal credit card or cash, rather than the government purchase card when possible, is not acceptable.**

On-line travel

To do "On-Line" travel, you must have the "ARSNet" and "TN3270" programs added to your computer.

Log on to ARSNet. Enter your password when prompted. Once connected, select "continue" button or hit Return. Notice the lock icon in bottom right corner of status bar. Click on your TN3270 icon. The NFC Banner screen will appear as below. See the corresponding numbers regarding input:

```
=====
== 07/19/2003          D4C32782          V2563540          PF1=HELP ==
=====
==
==              NN      NN          FFFFFFFF          CCCCCCCC ==
==              NNN     NN          FFFFFFFF          CCCCCCCC ==
==              NNNN    NN          FF              CCC ==
==              NN NN NN          FFFFFFFF          CCC ==
==              NN  NNNN          FFFFFFFF          CCC ==
==              NN   NNN          FF              CCCCCCCC ==
==              NN    NN          FF              CCCCCCCC ==
==
==  =====  ==
==  =====  National Finance Center  =====  ==
==  =====  Office of the Chief Financial Officer  =====  ==
==  =====  United States Department of Agriculture  =====  ==
==  =====  ==
==              For Authorized Use Only ==
== ENTER USER ID = [1] _____ PASSWORD = [2]          NEW PASSWORD? [3] ==
==                                     (Y or N) ==
== ENTER APPLICATION NAME = _[4] TRVL OR PRESS ENTER FOR MENU ==
=====
```

- [1]Enter User ID: Type your Travel ID at the prompt and tab once. (The Area Office will be able to assist you if you do not know your User ID.)
- [2]Password: Type your password. The first position must be an alpha character. If you get the message "password has expired" or just want to change your password, press tab once and enter 'Y' in field [3]. Press Tab to Application Name. Password will expire after 60 days of non-use.
- [3]New Password: This field is required if your current password has expired and the system requests a new password. However, you may change your password at any time (once per day) by keying in a new password. Press Tab.
- [4]Enter Application Name: Key in **TRVL** and press **ENTER** to proceed.

The NFC Menu Screen is displayed (see below), unless NFC needs to communicate special messages. In this case, the Bulletin Board screen is displayed. Read the message(s) shown and press **ENTER** to proceed to the Menu Screen:

See the corresponding numbers for input instructions:

```

**          TTTTTTTTTTTT   RRRRRRRR   VVV       VVV LLL          **
** TTTTTTTTTTTT   RRRRRRRRRR VVV       VVV LLL          **
**          TTT      RRR      RRR   VVV   VVV   LLL          **
**          TTT      RRRRRRRRRR   VVV VVV   LLL      NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER **
**          TTT      RRR   RRR      VVV VVV   LLL      TRAVEL SYSTEM (TRVL) **
**          TTT      RRR      RRR      VVVVVV   LLLLLLLLLL   SIGNON SCREEN **
**          TTT      RRR      RRR      VVVVV   LLLLLLLLLL          **
**          **          DEPARTMENT: [1]          **
**          **          SERVICING AGENCY: [2]     **
**          **          AGENCY: [3]             **
**          **          OFFICE NUMBER: [4]       **
**          **          FOR "INQUIRY" PRESS ENTER KEY, OTHERWISE ENTER SIGNON DATA **
**          **          ENTER= PROCESS          CLEAR= EXIT          **
**          **          *****

```

For an Inquiry, press the enter key to progress to the Inquiry menu. For travel authorizations and vouchers, enter data as follows:

- [1]** DEPARTMENT: Enter AG Tab to next field
- [2]** SERVICING AGENCY: Enter 03 Tab to next field
- [3]** AGENCY: Enter 1st level of your mode code (i.e. 36) Tab to next field
- [4]** OFFICE NUMBER: Enter levels 2 and 3 of your location mode code (i.e. 4501).
Press the enter key on your number keypad to process the request.

The following screen will appear:

```

TV00001          NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER          10:26:41
07/19/03          TRAVEL SYSTEM (TRVL) MENU
                  (REMOTE)
MODE      TASK      DESCRIPTION          MODE      TASK      DESCRIPTION
-----
ENTRY     10      AUTHORIZATION/ADVANCE   REPORTS    30      INQUIRY REPORT
          11      VOUCHER (TDY)
          12      VOUCHER (RELOCATION)

INQUIRY  20      INQUIRY MENU

                  ENTER TASK:
SELECT SPECIFIC TASK  -----  HIT "ENTER" KEY
CLEAR= EXIT          PF1= SIGNON SCREEN          PF11= SELECT DOCUMENT
ENTER= PROCESS

```

To complete a new authorization/advance, enter 10; 11 to complete a voucher, etc. To view or print an authorization or voucher that has previously been done, enter 10 (or 11 for a voucher) in the ENTER TASK: field and then press F11 to select the appropriate document.

A good reference for the on-line process is NFC Procedures Manual Title VI (Systems Access Manual), Chapter 6 (Travel and Transportation), Section 1 (Travel Online Data Entry)

* Logging OFF the NFC Program:

It is very important to log off the NFC system correctly. To log off of the NFC travel system, complete these steps:

- 1) Use the F1 key to reach the TRVL Menu (the screen that has your originating office number on it -- i.e. AG 03 36 4501).
- 2) At the TRVL Menu, press the Escape key.
- 3) You will then get the message - V3 ENTER NEXT TASK CODE:
- 4) Type "bye" and press the enter key on your keypad.
- 5) Then press F3; it should be an option on the bottom of the screen. Place an "x" by option 1 and hit enter on your number keypad.
- 6) Select the Red arrow (top left corner) to disconnect. Select "Yes" to disconnect.
- 7) Select "Host" then "Exit" to close TN3270 Plus.
- 8) Click the lock symbol in bottom right status bar. Choose 'Disconnect' to log off ARSNet.

*** Online Travel Tips and Quick Reference Guide**

Do not use decimals; type \$50.00 as 5000; # of days per diem as 250 not 2.50

[Tab] - to move from field to field within the document

[Shift][Tab] to back up a field.

[Enter] - use the enter key located on the number pad to process information at the end of each page and go to the next page. Instructions for previous, page, save, and/or save and exit are displayed at the bottom of the screen.

[Ctrl F5] - to clear key errors

[0485] or [0105]: POV rates (use whole number for whatever rate you're using)

*** Printing Instructions**

At the Travel System Menu screen:

Choose 10, for Authorizations or
Choose 11, for vouchers

Press F11 - This will allow you to view the list of documents available to print. Place an **X** in front of the document you would like to print to select it. (See below)

TV02001	NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER			14:07:11	10/06/06	
TRAVEL SYSTEM (TRVL)				(REMOTE) DOCUMENT		
SELECTION LIST FOR AUTHORIZATION/ADVANCE						
SEL	SOCIAL SECURITY	AUTHORIZATION NUMBER	TYPE TRAVEL	TRAVEL DATE	RELEASE DATE	CURRENT STATUS
___	123 45 6789	6BM0336450003	DM	10 01 06	99 99 99	PENDING
___	123 45 6784	6BM0336450002	DM	10 01 06	99 99 99	PENDING
X ___	123 45 6789	6CS0336450017	DM	10 05 06	99 99 99	PENDING
___	234 56 7890	6CS0336450016	DM	10 05 06	99 99 99	PENDING
___	345 67 8901	6CS0336450015	DM	10 05 06	99 99 99	PENDING
					PAGE: 0001	
MAKE SELECTION THEN PRESS THE ENTER KEY OR PFKEY						
CLEAR= EXIT		PF1= MENU	PF4= DELETE	PF8 = NEXT PAGE	PF12= PRINT	
ENTER= PROCESS		PF2= ADD DOC	PF7= PREV PAGE	PF10= RELEASE		

TV02002
10/06/06

NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER

14:00:06

TRAVEL SYSTEM (TRVL)
(REMOTE) PRINTER DESTINATION SCREEN

JOB ID (A-Z): **A**
DESTINATION OF REMOTE PRINTER: **U9999**
ROUTING INFORMATION: **Sandy**
SELECT BROWSE (DEFAULT TO PRINT) N (Y/N) OPTIONAL
SELECT COPIES (DEFAULT TO 1) 1 OPTIONAL
SELECT (S)INGLE DOCUMENT (DEFAULT) S (S/A/V/B) OPTIONAL
ALL (A)UTHORIZATIONS
ALL (V)OUCHERS
ALL (B)OTH AUTHS AND VOUCHERS
FILL IN THE NECESSARY FIELDS THEN PRESS PF12 TO SUBMIT JOB
CLEAR= EXIT PF1= MENU PF7= PREV PF12= PRINT

Press F12 - The print information screen will display (See Sample below).

- [1]JOB ID (A-Z): Assign your job an identifying letter (i.e. A)
- [2]DESTINATION OF U-PRINTER: Enter your printer ID (i.e., U9999). Type your name in the "Routing Information" field. It is not necessary to complete the other fields on this screen.

Press F12 once more and you will return to the document list. "Job submitted for print" will be displayed at the bottom of the screen.

The authorization will be sent to you as a password-protected pdf document attached to an e-mail message from NFC.

If you receive print jobs from NFC that do not belong to you, please forward them to the Area Transportation Assistant.

**Research, Education and Economics
Acknowledgement of Responsibilities
Purchase of Non-refundable Common Carrier Transportation**

_____ is requesting purchase of non-refundable ticket for travel from _____
(origin)

to _____, on _____
(destination) (dates of travel)

Government Contract Airfare: _____.

Restricted Airfare: _____.

We have read and understand the following:

- Government contract fares, where available, are to be used unless an exemption applies.
- The ticket requested is non-refundable/restricted and that there may be service charges and additional costs that must be paid if changes are made after the tickets are issued. The traveler and authorizing official/fundholder recognize the potential financial risk to the agency should the agency cancel the above listed travel after the purchase of a non-refundable ticket.
 - If changes to travel are ordered by the agency, any additional costs are paid from the authorizing official/fundholders budget.
 - The traveler is responsible for any costs that result from cancellation or changes to the ticket that are not related to official travel or that are made for personal convenience. The traveler is responsible for any costs associated with this ticket if this form is not signed by the fund holder/authorizing official.
- Non-refundable tickets must be used in accordance with REE Policy.
- Non-refundable fares require immediate ticketing, upon request to the travel agent.
- Non-refundable tickets, upon issuance, are charged immediately to the travel charge card account used for payment.
 - If this ticket is charged to the traveler's individually-billed travel charge card account, the traveler recognizes the responsibility to pay the ticket cost when the travel charge card bill is due, and realizes that this bill may be due prior to the end of travel or before reimbursement of the cost of the ticket.
 - If this ticket is charged to the agency GVTS account, the authorizing official/fund holder recognizes that the cost of the ticket may be obligated and paid from their organization's fund balance and realizes that this obligation and payment may occur prior to or before the end of travel. (Fares may only be charged to the GVTS account for foreign travel or if the traveler does not have an individually billed Government travel charge card.
- The traveler recognizes the responsibility to understand the fare restrictions and rebooking rules for the ticket being requested. Some airlines require cancellation, rebooking and reissue of tickets PRIOR to the departure of the original outbound flight and/or continuing flights. Failure to do so may result in the entire ticket value being lost.

I have considered the government contract airfare for this travel and request a nonrefundable/restricted fare because _____. I understand the above responsibilities and authorize my travel office to purchase non-refundable common carrier ticket for the travel listed.

Employee (Traveler) Signature

Date

I authorize the use of non-refundable/restricted fare for the travel and traveler listed above. I understand the agency responsibilities for the use of this ticket and the risk to the government if the travel is canceled or changed.

Authorizing Official/Fundholder Signature

Date

Prepared by:
Travel and Relocation Services Branch
Financial Management Division
September 2005