


Approved for Release
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Date

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (DOC)
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

TRAVEL BULLETIN #14, FY 2011

SUBJECT: Other than Coach-Class Travel Accommodations Amendment to *DOC Travel Handbook*

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

EXPIRATION DATE: Effective until canceled or superseded

PURPOSE: This bulletin serves to clarify DOC travel policy related to other than coach-class travel accommodations.

BACKGROUND: GSA updated guidance on the use of other than coach-class travel accommodations in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) effective November 27, 2009. In this guidance GSA directs agencies to:

- Require annual certifications for medical disabilities or other special needs accommodations unless the disability is a lifelong condition, in which case a one-time certification statement is required;
- Develop and issue internal guidance that explains when mission criteria and the intent of that mission requires other than coach-class travel accommodations; and
- Define what constitutes a rest period upon arrival.

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENT: The FTR § 301-10.123 and § 301-10.162 state an agency may authorize the use of other than coach-class travel accommodations when certain circumstances occur.

First-class airline and other than coach-class train accommodations may be approved if:

1. No coach-class accommodations are reasonably available within 24 hours of the arrival or departure time;
2. Necessary to accommodate medical disability or other special need;
3. Exceptional security circumstances exist; and

4. Required due to agency mission. (See C301-70.102 for detailed guidance regarding the requirements of this circumstance).

Business-class travel airline accommodations **may** be approved if:

1. Necessary to accommodate medical disability or other special need;
2. Exceptional security circumstances exist;
3. Coach-class accommodations on a foreign air carrier do not provide adequate health or sanitation standards;
4. Regularly scheduled flights provide only other than coach-class accommodations (e.g., an all business class airline);
5. Transportation costs are paid in full by a non-Federal source;
6. The 14-hour rule applies: origin and/or destination are OCONUS; flight time exceeds 14 hours; and the traveler is required to report to duty the following day or sooner;
7. Business class results in an overall cost savings to the Government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or lost productive time while awaiting coach-class accommodations (the justification must include the analysis of the cost savings);
8. No space is available in coach class in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed; and
9. Required due to agency mission. (See C301-70.102 for detailed guidance regarding the requirements of this circumstance).

RELATED ORDERS: DOC Department Administrative Order (DAO) 215-10, "Reasonable Accommodation for Applicants with Disabilities," establishes requirements for handling reasonable accommodations requests.

DAO 215-10 § 4.08

A deciding official is a supervisor, manager, principal or servicing human resource manager who has the authority to determine whether a requested accommodation will be provided.

DAO 215-10 § 4.10

A reasonable accommodations coordinator (RAC) is a representative from the operating unit's human resources office who acts as an impartial advisor and has specific responsibilities as part of the reasonable accommodation process.

DAO 215-10 § 17

Under the Rehabilitation Act and Privacy Act, all medical documentation and other information regarding the reasonable accommodation process must be kept confidential and disclosed on a strict need-to-know basis. This means that all medical information including information about functional limitations and reasonable accommodation obtained in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation must be kept secure in files separate from the individual's Official Personnel File. *All medical information and the completed form CD-575 will be kept by the RAC as confidential medical files, separate from personnel records.*

AMENDMENT: DOC Travel Handbook §§ C301-10.120 – 10.125 are replaced with this wording. Section C301-70.102(i) – 70.102(j) are added.

DOC § C301-10.120 Other Than Coach-Class Travel Accommodations

C301-10.121 The CFO/ASA must authorize and approve other than coach-class air and train accommodations for all Office of the Secretary employees, Secretarial Officers, and Heads of Operating Units that report directly to the Secretary.

C301-10.122 Secretarial Officers have delegated authority to authorize and approve other than coach-class air and train accommodations for their employees and other individuals traveling on behalf of the Department. This authority may be redelegated. The redelegation must be at a level high enough to ensure adequate consideration and review of the circumstances necessitating premium-class air and train accommodations.

C301-10.123 When use of other than coach-class travel accommodations is necessary to accommodate a medical disability or other special need, FTR § 301-10.123 (a)(2)(ii) requires that the special need be certified annually in writing according to DOC procedures. However, if the special need is a lifelong condition, then a one-time certification statement is required. In accordance with the FTR and Department Administrative Order (DAO) 215-10, "Reasonable Accommodation for Applicants with Disabilities," a statement of special need based on one of the two following templates, as appropriate, shall be included on form CD-334, "Request for Approval of Extra Fare Air Accommodations."

- a. For an Employee with a Transitory Condition: In accordance with DAO 215-10, the employee's deciding official / supervisor, [NAME], consulted the operating unit's RAC, [NAME], on [DATE]. The deciding official / supervisor has [approved / disapproved] the request for reasonable accommodation.
Note: The statement is an attestation that a consultation occurred on a specific date and resulted in an approval or disapproval. No separate signature is required. When the authorizing official signs the travel authorization and form CD-334, he/she attests that the information in the statement is correct. No extra level or additional level of authorization is required. The date of the consultation included in the statement must be within one year of the date of travel, unless the employee has a lifelong condition.
- b. For an Employee with a Lifelong Condition:
In accordance with DAO 215-10, the employee's deciding official / supervisor, [NAME], consulted the operating unit's RAC, [NAME]. The employee has a lifelong condition, and the deciding official / supervisor has [approved / disapproved] the request for reasonable accommodation.

C301-10.124 Travel authorizations with other than coach-class travel requests must show actual travel dates and match exactly, the actual travel dates on form CD-334 (or bureau approved form). If the employee has a change after forms are prepared, the employee may "ink" the changed dates and obtain the approving official's initials of the change on the travel authorization; however, a new form CD-334 (or bureau approved form) must be completed and

signed showing the corrected actual dates of travel. The travel authorization and other than coach-class travel request dates must match the itinerary.

C301-10.125 Form CD-334, "Request for Approval of Extra Fare Air Accommodations," is used to authorize other than coach-class air and train accommodations. Whenever other than coach-class travel is authorized, a copy of form CD-334 and a copy of the travel authorization must be submitted to a central servicing organization within each bureau for reporting purposes. Form CD-334 is not required when the upgrade is paid for from either the employee's personal funds or through the use of frequent traveler benefits.

Definition of Report to Duty

For the purposes of the DOC Travel Handbook, "required to report to duty" is defined as: the employee is required by his/her supervisor to report to duty at the official duty station as defined by FTR § 300-3.1, or the temporary duty (TDY) location, or other duty location in accordance with an approved telework agreement.

C301-70.102 Requests for Other Than Coach-Class travel Accommodations Based on "Agency Mission"

The Department anticipates that it would be highly unusual and there would be very few instances where "agency mission" would justify other than coach-class travel accommodations. Instances where it would be appropriate would generally be circumstances in which matters would be highly sensitive and time critical.

- a. Approval Process. Requests for other than coach-class travel accommodations based on "agency mission" require written approval by the following official:
 1. For the Office of the Secretary and heads of Operating Units: Chief of Staff;
 2. For Operating Units: the Head of the Operating Unit, or his/her Deputy.
- b. Justification for Use of the Agency Mission Exception.
 1. A full written justification must be included which describes:
 - a) The exceptional nature of the mission requirements; and
 - b) Why alternatives which would allow the use of coach-class travel accommodations are not sufficient.
 2. In no case may a request be based upon a traveler's grade or position.
 3. A request for other than coach-class travel will not be approved when a traveler chooses, for personal or other non-official reasons, an alternative schedule or indirect route which gives rise to the need for upgraded travel accommodations to allow enhanced rest or working conditions.
 4. "Agency mission" exception generally involves circumstances where travelers have unanticipated responsibilities or significant workload issues which make functioning after travel difficult without an upgrade. The following situations generally do not fall within the "agency mission" exception:
 - a) Delivery of a speech;
 - b) Participation in a training conference;

- c) Routine Departmental business during regular work hours; and
- d) Attendance at luncheons, dinners, or other such events.

Example: The employee is unable to travel from the official duty station the day before important international trade negotiations because of major meetings scheduled up through close of business. The employee must travel overnight and both prepare for the negotiations and rest during the flight. There is no opportunity for a rest period en route or at the destination, and the employee is required to begin negotiations upon arrival.

C301-70.102 Definition of a Rest Period

A rest period (or rest stop) is defined as an interval of rest at either an intermediate point en route or at the official temporary duty (TDY) location, allowing for appropriate overnight lodging, and does not exceed 24 hours. A rest period begins upon arrival at the approved rest period location and ends at departure from the approved rest period location.

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