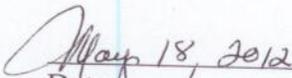
  
Approved for Release  
Mary C. Pleffner  
Director for Administrative Services

  
Date May 18, 2012

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

TRAVEL BULLETIN #04, FY 2012

**SUBJECT:** Other than Coach-Class Travel Accommodations

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** May 1, 2012

**EXPIRATION DATE:** Effective until canceled or superseded

**PURPOSE:** This bulletin is issued to restrict the use of other than coach-class travel.

**BACKGROUND:** Government wide policy requires that economy/coach-class accommodations must be used for official business travel unless proper approval documentation is provided that would justify the use of other than coach-class accommodations. Only the least expensive class of travel accommodations that meets the Government's mission as well as the traveler's needs may be authorized. To that end, the use of other than coach-class travel must always be the exception and limited to cases where travel cannot be accomplished using coach-class. (NOTE: Use of the lowest class of Acela train service is considered coach-class and therefore, a CD-334, "Request for Approval of Extra Fare Accommodations" is not required. See Travel Bulletin #05, FY 12 for guidance on use of extra-fare train service.)

**POLICIES/PROCEDURES:** To ensure the prudent use of limited Government resources, the Department has established higher levels of approval for all business or first class travel requests. Additionally, the Department is now requiring additional justification to use the 14 hour rule (defined when the origin and/or destination are OCONUS, and the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours).

**Other than coach-class travel** accommodations may be approved only if:

1. Necessary to accommodate medical disability or other special need – must be coordinated with your Bureau's Reasonable Accommodations Coordinator;
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) and no other carrier options that do provide coach-class accommodations are available;
5. Transportation costs are paid in full by a non-Federal source;
6. The 14-hour rule may apply if:
  - a. origin and/or destination are OCONUS;
  - b. scheduled flight time, including non-overnight stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours AND the traveler is required to report to duty the following day or sooner;
  - c. scheduled flight time is the flight time between the originating departure point and the ultimate arrival point, including scheduled non-overnight time spent at airports during plane changes. Scheduled non-overnight time does not include time spent at the originating or ultimate arrival airports;
  - d. traveler is unable to schedule a flight with a rest stop en route or arriving the day prior to allow a rest period before starting work;
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; or
9. Required due to agency mission.

**JUSTIFICATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS:** The "length of flight" in and of itself is no longer sufficient justification to authorize other than coach-class accommodations. Travel must now be arranged for the employee to commence travel early enough to provide for rest stop en route or upon arrival at the destination to avoid the use of other than coach-class travel. All requests under the 14-hour rule must contain justification.

In nearly all cases, the payment of an extra day of per diem will be more cost effective than other than coach-class travel accommodations. If the payment for a rest period(s) is more expensive than the cost for flying premium class, the traveler must provide a cost analysis as part of the CD-334, "Request for Approval of Extra Fare Accommodations".

Coach-class transportation accommodations must be used for the return flight if the traveler's return is not critical and the traveler can rest before reporting back to work. Travelers may be authorized a rest stop en route to their official duty station or may be granted excused absence to rest after returning home from travel for more than 14-hours using coach-class accommodations. Requests for other than coach-class accommodations under the 14-hour rule for return travel must justify why the traveler's return to work at their official duty station is critical to the Department's mission.

The "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 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. Examples of where it might be appropriate would be circumstances in which matters are highly sensitive and time critical.

The following situations generally do not fall within the "agency mission" exception:

- a) Delivery of a speech;
- b) Participation in training or a conference;
- c) Routine Departmental business during regular work hours; and
- d) Attendance at luncheons, dinners or other such events.

Use of the "agency mission" exception requires a full written justification that 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.

In no case may a request be based upon a traveler's grade or position. 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. Travelers can upgrade to utilize business class at their own expense.

**APPROVALS:** Chief Operating Officers or CFOs or equivalent, with no authority to delegate further must pre-approve the CD-334.

Form CD-334, "Request for Approval of Other Than Coach-Class 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 through the use of frequent traveler benefits. See Travel Bulletin #5, FY 12 for guidance on extra-fare train requirements.

**OFFICE OF COMMERCE SERVICES:** Marilyn Stoll, Associate Director, Office of Commerce Services, [MStoll@doc.gov](mailto:MStoll@doc.gov), 202-482-3721.

**PROGRAM MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION:** Lester Weisbeck, Chief, Travel Management Division, [LWeisbeck@doc.gov](mailto:LWeisbeck@doc.gov), 202-482-1818.