

PART 301-51-PAYING TRAVEL EXPENSES

Subpart A-General

Sec.

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301-51.1(a) What is the preferred method to procure common carrier transportation?

The preferred method to procure common carrier transportation is a centrally-billed account at a Travel Management Center (TMC). In emergency situations when the Citibank Government travel card is used to procure common carrier transportation, you must follow the requirements of *Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)*, 301-10.106(a) - (c). In order to receive full reimbursement, employees are required to annotate the complete account number on the passenger receipt when using the individual Government Citibank travel card to purchase e-tickets.

301-51.1(b) How do I pay charges associated with converting foreign currency at an embassy abroad?

You are required to use your Government Citibank travel card to pay charges for converting foreign currency at an embassy abroad.

301-51.2(a) What classes of employees are exempt from the mandatory use of the Government travel card?

In addition to the classes of employees exempted in the FTR, and in the Department of Commerce (DOC) Travel Handbook from the mandatory use of the travel charge card, NOAA exempts employees who have a disability that would either limit or prevent them from using a Government travel card and employees who are not authorized to obtain a Government travel card due to low credit scoring.

1) Employees with a disability will submit a memoranda of request for exemption from the mandatory use of the Government travel card:

- must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority;
- must be signed by the Assistant Administrator, Line Office or Director, Staff Office; and
- will be reviewed for approval on a case-by-case basis by the Director, Finance Office/Comptroller.

2) Employees who are not authorized to obtain a Government travel card due to low credit scoring will be advised by their servicing Agency Program Coordinator (APC) that they have been declined for the Government travel card and will need to either use personal funds or submit travel advance paperwork to their servicing finance office. When an advance is requested, the servicing APC will send an e-mail approval for the employee to use travel advances for any and all future trips to both the employee and to the Chief of the servicing finance office. The e-mail approval from the APC must accompany all travel advance paperwork when submitted to finance for processing.

301-51.3(a) Who has the authority to request all other exemptions from the mandatory use of the Government travel card?

Memoranda of request for all other exemptions from the mandatory use of the Government travel card must be signed by the Line Office Chief Financial Officer (CFO)/Management and Budget Chief, or Staff Office Director, and be submitted thru the Director, Finance Office/Comptroller, to the NOAA CFO. The NOAA CFO will forward requests to the DOC Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration for approval. DOC must report all exemptions to General Services Administration (GSA).

301-51.5 How may I pay for official travel expenses if I receive an exemption from the use of the Government travel card?

When you receive an exemption from the use of the Government travel card, you are still expected to procure common carrier transportation on the centrally-billed account within a TMC, and use one of the following methods to pay all other official travel expenses:

(a) Personal funds (cash or personal charge card) will be used to pay for official travel expenses for:

- Employees who travel five times or less a year and elect to not use the Government travel card;
- Employees whose travel cards have been canceled because of delinquency or use for non-official purposes; or
- Intermittent, seasonal, or temporary employees who have limited appointments.

NOTE: Travel advances will not be authorized for employees mentioned in 301-51.5(a).

(b) Travel advances are authorized to pay for official travel expenses for:

- Invitational traveler who possess a bank account (bank account can be either a U.S. bank account or foreign bank account); or
- Employees with disabilities who were granted an exemption. A travel advance form and memoranda of request should be faxed to the Chief, Travel and Purchases Branch, Accounting Operations Division, Finance Office, or the Chief of your servicing finance office. In addition, the original travel advance form should be mailed to the servicing finance office for proper documentation; or
- Employees who are not authorized to obtain a Government travel card due to low credit scoring.

NOTE: The total advance amount is based on Block 6 of the Travel Manager Travel Authorization Default form and is limited to 80% of the estimated cash expenses. In addition, ATM withdrawals taken from the Government travel card can never exceed 80% of the estimated cash expenses.

(c) Convenience checks are advances which can be used to pay for official travel expenses for:

- Invitational travelers who do not possess a bank account.

301-51.8 How does the NOAA office obtain travel advances?

The NOAA office can obtain travel advances one of the following ways:

(a) **Travel Advance:** The NOAA office will submit a travel advance form and a travel authorization to the servicing finance office. The travel advance will be deposited directly to the traveler's bank account within 2 - 3 days (notify your servicing finance office for direct deposit set-up); or

(b) **Convenience Check:** The office inviting the invitational traveler will submit a travel advance form and a travel authorization to an imprest fund cashier who can issue a convenience check. Contact your servicing finance office for the location of an imprest fund cashier who can issue convenience checks. The imprest fund cashier will sign the Travel Advance (to indicate payment), to note that the advance was paid by convenience check, attach it to the Travel Authorization and forward both documents to the servicing finance office.

301-51.9 Who do I contact to apply for a Government travel card?

(a) All Line and Staff Offices, other than NMFS and NWS, will call (301) 444-2107, fax (301) 413-3066; and

(b) NMFS employees will call (301) 713-1364 x194, fax (301) 713-2258; and

(c) NWS employees will call (301) 713-0720 x112, fax (301) 608-0850.

**Policy and Procedures for the Use of the
Contractor-issued Government Travel Charge Card**

B. RESPONSIBILITIES

2(a). Directors, Financial Management Centers (FMC(s)) or their designee(s).

(1) Complete on-line cardholder training so that there is a basic understanding of the travel card program. This on-line training provides information on traveling for the Government and reviews how to use the travel card. Please visit our website for the on-line training:
<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~finance/Citibank.htm>

(2) Ensure that all employees in your FMC who perform five or more official trips a year are issued the card, unless an exemption has been granted.

(3) Contact cardholders to provide acknowledgment statements when requested by the Agency Organization Program Coordinator (AOPC). An acknowledgment statement is a certification that the employee has read all applicable travel card regulations and will comply with all travel card policies. The acknowledgment statement must be submitted with the travel card application. Please visit the website referenced above and click on "Travel Card Application Package" to view a copy of the acknowledgment statement.

(4) Advise employees to submit requests for reinstatement of canceled accounts to the Line Office Chief Financial Officer (CFO)/Management and Budget Chief, or Staff Office Director, which will be submitted to Citibank for approval. Cards are rarely reinstated when canceled by Citibank.

(5) Review each of the following monthly Total Business Reporting (TBR) reports issued by Citibank through the Citibank Electronic Reporting System (CERS):

TBR 00100, Report Manifest - Listing of all reports available.

TBR 00210 (cycle), Account Listing - An Alphabetical listing of cardholders within your respective FMC

TBR 00230-01 (monthly), Forecast of Reissue - Travel cards that are scheduled to be reissued. Note: travel cards are automatically reissued every two years.

TBR 00230-02 (monthly), Forecast of Non-Reissue - Travel cards that will not be reissued for various reasons, such as delinquency, terminated employees, travel card returned, etc.

TBR 00320 (cycle), Account Cash Advance - Listing of cash advances.

TBR 00360 (cycle), Account Suspension and Cancellation

TBR 00361 (cycle), Account Presuspension and Cancellation

TBR 00370 (cycle), Declined Authorization Report - Listing of purchases which have been declined. Travel cards may be declined for many reasons. The most commonly used codes follow:

0006 *lost card; pending transfer* - Cardholder reported the card lost, and then found the card and tried to use it, but the account was closed.

0031 *account coded (credit rating)* - card is either suspended or closed.

0111 *invalid PIN* - invalid pin entered.

0112 *exceeds ATM daily limit* - exceeds the daily amount authorized.

0125 *invalid card verification value* - the 3 digit number on the back of the card is invalid.

0134 *CRV status* - Cardholder never activated card.

0207 *invalid expiration date* - merchant entered incorrect expiration date

0048 *not enough money* - went over their authorized credit limit.

0818 *exceeded account MCCG velocity menu* - exceeds the weekly amount authorized.

0823 *MCCG include, no match* - Merchant Category Code not allowed.

TBR 00401 (cycle), Detailed Account Cycle Report - Listing of purchases and cash advances.

(6) Review **TBR 00210** and ensure that appropriate individual credit limits are established commensurate with the line office mission. Credit limits should be lowered, and rarely raised, on a case-by-case basis through your servicing AOPC. An e-mail from the employee's approving official must be sent to the servicing AOPC when credit limits are temporarily raised. The e-mail request must contain the employee's name, dates of travel and total amount needed. In emergency circumstances, credit limits can be increased by a request from an employee with a follow-up e-mail from the approving official.

(7) Review **TBR 00210** to decide which cards will be canceled. Cards that will rarely be used within a five year period should be deactivated by lowering the credit limit to \$1 (see #6 above). Deactivated cards are held in a temporary suspension until they are needed. Contact your servicing AOPC to reactivate travel cards. Cards that will not be used within a 5 year period should be canceled through your servicing AOPC via e-mail request.

(8) Review **TBR 00230-01** and **TBR 00230-02** to verify which cardholders should be reissued travel cards and which cardholders should not. **TBR 00230-02** will show cards that will not be reissued for various reasons. The code "T2 Return Mail" generally means that cardholder statements have been returned to Citibank due to a change of address. FMCs should inform travelers who appear on this report with a "T2 Return Mail" code to contact Citibank and either cancel their account or provide a new address. Citibank's customer service number is 1-800-790-7206.

(9) Review **TBR 00360** and **TBR 00361** and ensure that the employee's supervisor takes appropriate administrative disciplinary action when travel card accounts become delinquent, i.e., the account is past due 60 days or more. Currently, the servicing AOPC sends e-mail notifications to employees who appear on these reports, and their supervisors. The NOAA Travel Office prepares a monthly report of delinquencies which is sent to each Line Office CFO/Management and Budget Chief, or Staff Office Director for review. FMCs should maintain a record of any disciplinary actions taken, as well as the employee's response.

(10) Assist cardholders whose travel vouchers have not been authorized by approving officials in a timely fashion so that cardholders can make timely payments to Citibank. Travel vouchers must be submitted to the servicing finance office for payment within 5 working days after completion of travel, or every 30 days if in a continual travel status.

(11) Review **TBR 00320**, **TBR 00370**, and **TBR 00401** and ensure that employees are not misusing their travel card. Misuse is defined as using the travel card for personal use, e.g., using the travel card while not on official business and/or using the travel card to purchase personal items. Notify the employee's supervisor of any questionable or inappropriate charges. At the discretion of the FMC or the supervisor, the card may be revoked for misuse. See "Travel Card Misconduct and Corrective Measures at the following web-site:
<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/CITL.misconduct.pdf>.

(12) Prepare and submit to the servicing AOPC quarterly reports of disciplinary actions taken for cardholders whose accounts are delinquent or have been misused. The AOPC will review the FMCs' reports of disciplinary actions to ensure appropriate disciplinary actions were taken consistently for all NOAA FMCs. If appropriate disciplinary action is not taken, the reports will be forwarded to the Line Office CFO/Management and Budget Chief, or Staff Office Director for review. Negative reports are required.

Quarterly reports will be submitted in the following format:

FMC Information: FMC Contact Name, FMC Office Title, FMC Code, and Phone Number.

Traveler Information: Traveler's Name, Type of Misuse, and Disciplinary Action Taken.

Quarterly reports are due by COB January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15 of each year and will be submitted to the appropriate AOPC. See #13 below. Reports must be retained for a one-year period before they are destroyed.

(13) Call your servicing AOPC if further interpretation of reports and/or further guidance is needed:

(i) All Line and Staff Offices, other than NMFS and NWS, will call (301) 444-2126,
20020 Century Blvd, Suite 1C, Germantown, MD 20874
Fax (301) 413-3066

(ii) NMFS employees will call (301) 713-1364 x194
Office of Management and Budget
1315 East West Highway, Room 1441 Silver Spring, MD 20910
Fax (301) 713-2258

(iii) NWS employees will call (301) 713-0420 x104
1325 East West Highway, Room 18407 Silver Spring, MD 20910
Fax (301) 608-0850

(14) Review the following:

Federal Travel Regulation Chapter 301-51:

http://www.gsa.gov/gsa/cm_attachments/GSA_DOCUMENT/030205_FTR_R2QA53_0Z5RD_Z-i34K-pR.pdf

Department of Commerce (DOC) Travel Regulation 301-51:

<http://www.osec.doc.gov/oas/travel/CTR-INTERIM-DRAFTv1-1.pdf>

NOAA Travel Regulation, Chapter 301-51:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/TR.301-51.pdf>

Department Administrative Order (DAO) 202-751

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/CITI.misconduct.pdf>

In addition, please call the help desk - 800-790-7206; option 2, option 2, option 3, when you are experiencing any problems with CERS, or need to reset your password. Please visit the Citibank website: <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/CITI.html>

CERS Tips

- § CERS will hold reports for 13 months.
- § User Ids and/or Passwords should not be shared with other employees.
- § Reports are sent electronically either “cycle” (21st of every month) or “monthly” (end of the month).
- § Internet explorer is the preferred browser over Netscape for accessing reports.
- § Use the “Folders” icon instead of the “back” icon to return to the previous page.
- § New reports are sent via e-mail and only current reports can be viewed from the e-mail internet site. To access all reports available, login to CERS via the internet site.
- § Inability to access a report may indicate that there is no activity.
- § Reports without detail may indicate that there is no activity.