

**From:** DOECAST

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**To:** ORO Federal Employees; OSTI Data Control; PNSO Federal Employees; TJSO Distribution List

**Subject:** Frequently Asked Travel Questions

## **Frequently Asked Travel Questions**

To better serve its travel customers, the Office of Financial Policy has prepared the following travel questions and answers.

- 1. May I accept a meal from a contractor?** Sometimes. Acceptance of free meals from contractors could constitute a violation of 5 U.S.C. § 7353 and 5 C.F.R. 2635.301 et. seq. You should consult with your ethics counselor prior to accepting such a gift.
- 2. Must I reduce my per diem when the cost of meals is included in the conference registration fee?** Yes. However, if you cannot eat a meal for health or religious reasons, or must eat at another site for official business, per diem is not required to be reduced. Reduction of per diem for meals provided must be accomplished through the pertinent DOE online travel processing system. Call the customer assistance hotline (301-903-4340) for specific instructions.
- 3. May I be reimbursed for lodging and food at my official duty station?** No. Per diem is not payable within 50 miles of your official duty station. An exception is made for employees responsible for the protection of life and/or property when there is a threat to life and/or property.
- 4. May I use a non-contract carrier if it provides a cheaper fare than the contract carrier?** A non-contract carrier may not be authorized unless a contract carrier is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of the travel or a non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public. If the non-contract fare is non-refundable, restricted, or has specific eligibility requirements, you must reasonably expect to use the ticket. Additionally, your supervisor must authorize use of a non-contract carrier, and the ticket must be obtained through the agency Travel Management Service (TMS) unless the carrier is not accessible by the TMS.
- 5. Are lodging taxes included in the lodging allowance?** Lodging taxes are included in the allowance for foreign per diem and may not be claimed separately. However, lodging taxes are not included in the allowance for domestic per diem and lodging taxes are claimed separately. For a list of states that exempt lodging taxes and copies of exemption forms go to: [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) and in the search box type "state tax exemption." Click on "State Tax Exemption Forms Overview" and then click on "State Tax Exemption Forms Library" on the left side of screen.
- 6. Will I be reimbursed lodging costs if I stay with friends or relatives while on official travel?** You will not be reimbursed for lodging costs when you stay with friends

or relatives unless the additional costs incurred by your friends or relatives can be substantiated and DOE determines the costs to be reasonable.

**7. Will I be reimbursed for the optional insurance on my rental car?** No. The cost of optional insurance on a rental car is not reimbursable. The Federal government is self-insured; optional insurance is therefore at the employee's expense.

**8. May I use my personal credit card to obtain airline tickets, lodging, or rental cars for official business?** Transportation must be obtained with your government travel card or a DOE centrally billed account. In the event you do not have a government travel card, you may book your lodging and rental car with your personal credit card.

Questions concerning travel policy should be addressed to Rossana Ballantine, Travel and General Fiscal Policy Team, at (202) 586-0853 or [rossana.ballantine@hq.doe.gov](mailto:rossana.ballantine@hq.doe.gov).