



NOAA CBS INTEGRATED TRAVEL MANAGER DISPATCH #7 Travel Manager and Obligation Numbers June 2009

Did you know that...?

When a Travel Authorization is electronically approved in Travel Manager it results in an obligation(s) posting into the Core Financial System (CFS)? During that same process, pertinent information relating to the obligation posting(s) is returned back to Travel Manager. This data is referred to as the Obligation Detail Information (ODI) and consists of the Centrally Billed Account (CBA) Obligation number, Traveler Purchase Order (PO) number and Organizational ID number, all of which play a vital role in both the Charge Card provider billing process and traveler claim for reimbursement.



When the ODI is returned to Travel Manager, it is:

1. Stored in the Travel Manager data base with the Travel Authorization so that
 - Travel Manager is aware that an obligation posting has occurred for the specific authorization.
 - Subsequent attempts to change (amend) the authorization will result in the appropriate obligation being modified in CFS.
 - Utilized during the Travel Voucher funds checking and posting process.
2. Displayed onscreen in the Comments window, providing a verification point that funding has been obligated for the authorization.
3. Generated on the hard copy Travel Manager Default forms and used for data input by the Travel Management Center (TMC) for billing purposes.

How is the Obligation Detail Information Used?

The answer to this question depends on the type of document being processed.

Travel Authorizations: The ODI is used to assist the TMC in their billing process.

- The CBA Obligation number is used to ensure common carrier billing charges are matched to the obligated funds and are not processed as a second hit against the Line Office budget.

- The Organization ID number, which consists of the Bureau and first two (2) levels of the CBS Organization code, is used to process any additional TMC on-site and/or after hour fees that may be incurred.

Travel Vouchers: The ODI is used during the funds check process. When a Travel Voucher is stamped SIGNED or APPROVED, Travel Manager uses the ODI to ensure

- Funding validation is occurring against the appropriate obligation.
- The appropriate obligation will be liquidated once the document is posted and approved for payment in CFS.



What if the Obligation Detail Information is not displayed on the Travel Authorization?

If the ODI is not displayed on a Travel Authorization, this indicates that either the authorization has not been electronically approved in Travel Manager or during the approval process the ODI failed to be returned to Travel Manager. In either case the Travel Authorization should not be printed out for circulation for hard copy signatures nor should it be provided to the TMC for ticketing purposes.

Failure to provide the TMC a Travel Authorization with properly documented ODI will result in a second hit against the Line Office budget.

Note: When electronically approving Travel Authorizations, it is vital that Approving Officials allow the posting process to complete. Closing the Travel Authorization or Internet browser prematurely may result in posting failures, either within CFS or Travel Manager. Approving Officials can be certain the process has completed in its entirety when the system displays the Document Preparation Home Page with the obligation posting results (Traveler PO#, CBA Obligation #, if applicable).

How will Emergency Travel and/or System Downtime impact the ability to provide ODI data to the TMC? What's the Contingency Plan?

First, let's understand our definition of Emergency travel and System Downtime:



Emergency Travel and System Downtime

1. Emergency Travel is an unforeseen combination of circumstances resulting in the immediate need to travel.
2. System Downtime is an occurrence in which one or more of the CBS applications are inaccessible to users due, but not limited, to causes such as system maintenance, Internet connectivity, restricted access, unforeseen technical difficulty, etc. System downtime can impact Travel Manager and CFS simultaneously or independently.

The following provisions have been made with the TMC vendors (AdTrav, Panda and US Travel) to handle cases of emergency travel. The TMC will accept either the Commerce Department CD-29 Travel Authorization form or the Travel Manager Default Travel Authorization form in situations where time is of the essence and the travel must be prepared before the authorization can have the appropriate electronic approvals applied or where the system is unavailable.

Follow this "rule of thumb" to know what form to submit:

- If Travel Manager is available, the Travel Manager Default Travel Authorization form may be used.
- If Travel Manager is not available, the Department of Commerce form CD-29 may be used.

In either case, the CBA Obligation number **will not** appear on the document you fax to your TMC. Users will be required to annotate one of the following in the Comments field:

- *"Emergency Travel" - Time Sensitive - Obligation Information not Available*.
- *"System Downtime" - Time Sensitive - Obligation Information not Available*.

It is important to note that when billing charges are submitted on behalf of documents processed under this contingency plan, they will be processed as "No Match" transactions resulting in a second hit against the Line Office budget. The Undelivered Order (UDO) transaction (obligated funding) will be de-obligated via standard operating procedures by

personnel within the Accounting Operations Division (AOD) or upon earlier request by the Line Office.

Anytime the Department of Commerce form CD-29 is used during the interim process, users will be required to re-enter the authorization information into Travel Manager once the system becomes available.

Key Notes:

- Although Travel Manager users do not directly access CFS, its availability is crucial to document processing in Travel Manager. CFS must be available to allow actions within Travel Manager to occur such as funds checking and document posting.
- Travel Manager availability impacts whether or not users can access, create, and print documents from within Travel Manager. Should official travel orders be required during a time when Travel Manager is not available, the Department of Commerce Form CD-29 can be used in place of the Travel Manager Default Travel Authorization form. The CD Forms directory can be located at http://ocio.os.doc.gov/ITPolicyandPrograms/Electronic_Forms/index.htm. If the CD-29 form is used during the interim process, users will be required to re-enter the authorization information into Travel Manager once the system becomes available.
- CFS availability impacts whether or not a user is able to electronically stamp a document in Travel Manager and have it result in an obligation posting to CFS. Should official travel orders be required during a time CFS is not available, the Travel Manager Default Travel Authorization form can be used; however it will not be able to receive electronic signatures until CFS availability has been restored.



On the Horizon

- The TMC will begin to refuse acceptance of any Travel Authorization that does not provide the CBA Obligation number in Block 8 of the Travel Manager Default Travel Authorization form, with the exception of authorizations submitted under the "Emergency" contingency plan.

Note: The user community will be notified well in advance prior to this enforcement being implemented.



- The Finance Office is working diligently to reduce the requirement for both hard copy and electronic signatures. Once implemented, the ODI is envisioned to be exchanged between Travel Manager and the TMC thereby:
 - Reducing keystroke errors
 - Increasing the accuracy of ACCS charges
 - Reducing the number of un-reconciled transactions
 - Auto initiating the authorization to ticket reservation(s).

Lessons Learned....

- The CBA Obligation Number is not populated on a Travel Authorization until it has been electronically approved/data linked into CFS.
- Travel Authorizations should not be printed for hard copy signatures until after being electronically approved/data linked.
- When faxing Travel Authorizations to the TMC (i.e., AdTrav, Panda, U.S. Travel), the CBA Obligation Number must appear in Block 8 of the Travel Authorization.
- A contingency plan is available to accommodate submitting Travel Authorizations to the TMC during periods of system downtime or "Emergency" travel.

