December 21, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA & BIS Employees

FROM: Jon P. Alexander
Director Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 11-5
How to Make Official Travel Reservations

The purpose of this advisory is to provide guidance on how to procure official travel and how to take advantage of non-refundable fares when city pair fares are available. There are three basic rules employees must follow when procuring airfare for official government travel. Employees must:

- Procure airfare, lodging, and rental car through ADTRAV;
- Use the Centrally-Billed Account (CBA) to procure airfare; and
- Use city pair fares when available unless an exception applies. City pair fares are fully refundable discounted fares that do not require advance purchase.

Booking Travel Reservations. Employees must book all airfare for official travel through ADTRAV and are not authorized to book airfare through any other source, including any on-line commercial travel agency or with the airline directly. In addition, any changes made to an airline ticket must be made through ADTRAV and not with the airlines directly. Please visit our website for more information on how to contact ADTRAV to make travel reservations: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/finance/RESERV.html

Procuring Airfare. In order for airfare to be ticketed, employees must either e-mail or fax their travel authorization to ATRAV as soon as it is approved. Airfare is automatically charged to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) CBA via the Line Office accounting shown on the approved travel authorization. ADTRAV **will not** process a ticket if the

- Travel authorization does not include the "Document History" page which is the last page of the authorization; and
- CBA Obligation number does not appear in block 8 of the travel authorization.

City-pair fares will not increase in price and are valid for an entire fiscal year. In order to avoid unnecessary transaction fees, city pair fares should only be issued three (3) business days prior to

travel, provided ADTRAV has an approved travel authorization. Employees may request that the city-pair fare be issued earlier, but no sooner than 30 days prior to travel. Since most non-refundable fares expire within 24 hours, it is critical that the approved travel authorization is received by ADTRAV within the 24-hour window. If the travel authorization is not received in time, the fare will expire and the reservation will be canceled by the airlines.

Upon making a reservation with ADTRAV, employees will receive an itinerary which will detail the arrangements that were made. Employees are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the itinerary. If an error is discovered, the employee is responsible for bringing the error to ADTRAV's attention for correction. Once the itinerary is verified, an approved travel authorization will be sent to ADTRAV in order to procure the ticket. Once ticketed, employees will receive an invoice that confirms that the ticket has been successfully purchased/ticketed. Employees are also responsible for verifying the accuracy of the invoice and bringing any errors to ADTRAV's attention. Since the invoice guarantees that the fare has been ticketed, it is important for employees to have an invoice in hand prior to departure.

Utilizing City Pair Fares and Non-Refundable Fares. As a general rule, employees traveling for the government on official travel are required to use city-pair fares where they are available. Employees who want to take advantage of non-refundable fares in order to realize a potential cost savings may do so as long as they utilize ADTRAV to book the fares and as long as their authorizing official approves its use under one of the following exceptions which must be specifically stated on their travel authorization:

- Space on a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the official mission at hand;
- The city pair fare requires the employee to travel outside of normal working hours;
- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that if used, will result in a lower total trip cost; or
- Cost effective rail service is available and is consistent with mission requirements.

Note: Non-refundable fares expire within a 24 hour window. See "Procuring Airfare" in paragraph above for more information.

Fees Assessed When Using Non-Refundable Fares. Since non-refundable fares carry certain restrictions and have specific eligibility requirements, ADTRAV requires employees to sign their itinerary acknowledging acceptance of the restrictions/penalties. For every change made after the purchase of a non-refundable fare, the airline will charge a change fee and ADTRAV will charge a transaction fee. Change fees range from $150 for domestic fares up to $300 for international fares. Because change fees can be so significant, employees and authorizing officials must know or reasonably anticipate that the employee will use the non-refundable ticket before authorizing and/or procuring it. If an employee's itinerary or schedule is likely to change, the use of a seemingly attractive fare may not be a prudent choice compared to the flexibility a fully refundable city-pair fare includes.

It's also important to note that when a change/cancelation in schedule is made for official reasons or necessitated by circumstances beyond the employee's control, the government is responsible for all costs, including fees, associated with the ticket. In these rare cases, the approving official must specifically authorize these costs. In the event of a change/cancellation

in schedule made for personal reasons, the employee is responsible for all costs, including fees, associated with the ticket.

Employees are welcome to provide feedback on ADTRAV's service by completing an on-line survey at the following address: www.adtrav.com/reztools/rezcritique.aspx

Please visit the NOAA Travel website for more information on the travel reservation process: http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/RESERV.html. Please direct any questions regarding this advisory to Rachael.S.Wivell@noaa.gov/(301) 444-2136 or Chasity.N.Donaldson@noaa.gov/(301) 444-2129.