



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer  
Finance Office

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA and BIS Employees

FROM: Kim Darling *Kim Darling*  
Acting Director Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 12-1  
Guidance on Actual Expenses

**Effective Date.** June 15, 2012

**Purpose.** The purpose of this advisory is to provide guidance on the proper way to authorize actual expenses for lodging.

**Background.** Employees performing official temporary duty (TDY) travel are normally authorized per diem based on the locality of their TDY location. However, under unusual circumstances where the locality per diem rate is insufficient, employees may be authorized actual expenses under one of the conditions outlined in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR).

**Policy Change.** This advisory:

- 1) Eliminates the authorization of actual expenses for any and all future meals and incidental expenses (M&IE).
- 2) Requires one of the following conditions to be specifically approved on the travel authorization or post approved on the travel voucher whenever actual expense for lodging is authorized:
  - Lodging procured at a prearranged place such as a hotel where a meeting, conference or training session is held;
  - Local costs have escalated due to special or unforeseen events and lodging within the locality per diem rate cannot be obtained nearby; or
  - Mission necessity which requires the traveler to procure superior lodging accommodations.

- 3) All Line Office Chief Financial Officers (CFOs)/Staff Office Directors will review quarterly reports on actual subsistence usage for dollars spent, as well as proper justifications used. In addition, NOAA's Office of the Chief, Financial Officer (OCFO) will participate in these quarterly reviews.

**NOTE: Personal preference or convenience is never a condition for which actual expense can be authorized.**

**Maximum Reimbursement.** While actual expense reimbursement for lodging may be authorized up to 300 percent of the locality per diem rate, the authorized amount must be limited to the minimum amount required to cover the employee's anticipated lodging expenses. Employees are reimbursed based on actual lodging expenses incurred, not to exceed the maximum percentage authorized.

**Delegation Level.** The Chief Operating Officers; (i.e., Headquarters and Regional Office Directors) are the only individuals authorized to approve actual expense travel as cited in the NOAA Travel Handbook, Chapter 301-1.26:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/documents/TR.301-1.doc>. **This delegation cannot be redelegated.**

Please visit the Federal, Department and NOAA Travel Regulations, Chapter 301-11 for more information on actual expenses:

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/TR.html>. Please direct any questions regarding this advisory to [Rachael.S.Wivell@noaa.gov](mailto:Rachael.S.Wivell@noaa.gov)/(301) 444-2136 or [Chasity.N.Donaldson@noaa.gov](mailto:Chasity.N.Donaldson@noaa.gov)/(301) 444-2129.