



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

September 15, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Employees

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

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 15-2
Guidance on FedRooms

Effective Date: October 1, 2014

Purpose. The purpose of this bulletin is to provide updated Department of Commerce (DOC) travel policy on new lodging requirements. Effective immediately, employees traveling on official temporary duty (TDY) travel must utilize General Services Administration's (GSA's) FedRooms when and where available. Additionally, this bulletin reiterates the mandatory requirement for all employees to utilize our Travel Management Service (TMS) provider, ADTRAV, US Travel in Alaska, and Panda Travel in Hawaii, when making ALL travel arrangements (including air, lodging, rental car, and common carrier reservations). Furthermore, the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) §301-11.11 states, employees "must make lodging reservations through their agency's TMS and when selecting a commercial lodging facility, first consideration must be given to government lodging agreement programs such as FedRooms."

Background. FedRooms are FEMA certified hotels, managed by General Services Administration (GSA) and offered at or below GSA prescribed per diem rates. FedRoom rates include value-added amenities unavailable through other government programs or websites which, will help reduce travel costs for government agencies. By requiring the use of FedRooms, DOC will promote spending efficiency by reducing per diem costs and ensuring our employees are lodging in safe accommodations.

Note: The main difference between the two rates is that government rates are set by the hotel and are not managed by the Federal government which, often times can mean that the rates offered are not within GSA's prescribed per diem rates.

The following are some of the benefits FedRooms offer government employees:

- Nearly 12,000 hotels in 2,500+ cities around the world
- Rates are always at or below per diem
- 4 pm day of arrival cancellation policy
- No early departure fees
- No advance lodging or deposit fees
- FEMA certified

- No minimum stay and no resort or booking fees
- Participating hotels: Hilton, Fairmont, Sheraton, W Hotels, Westin, Holiday Inns, Crown Plaza – 90+ hotel chains

Policy. Employees must utilize FedRooms lodging properties whenever they are traveling on official government business unless they fall under one of the following exceptions which must be specifically stated on the travel authorization whenever FedRoom properties are either not available, or are available, and not being used:

1. Lodging procured at a prearranged place such as a hotel where a meeting, conference, or training is being held; or
2. Special security-related mission requirements; or
3. FedRooms property is not within walking distance of mass public transportation or of the location where the temporary duty will be performed (does not apply if the employee is authorized a rental car; however, commuting to a FedRooms property is not justification for authorizing a rental car); or
4. The total cost of alternate lodging is more cost effective. (If using this exception, a cost comparison must be prepared as part of the travel authorization); or
5. FedRooms are not available at the TDY location.

Employees must ensure that the exception indicates either:

- how the use of a FedRooms property would impact the traveler in performing their mission in an effective or efficient manner; or
- the unusual circumstances at the temporary duty location preventing the traveler from using FedRooms; or
- the increased cost of using a FedRooms property; or
- the distance to the closest FedRooms property from the TDY location.

When traveling on official government business, first priority consideration must always be given to FedRooms and second priority consideration must be given to hotels that offer government rates within GSA's prescribed per diem rates. Note: FedRooms properties must be used, regardless of whether or not they offer reward points, or other benefits. Personal preference or convenience is never a condition for which an exception to the use of a FedRooms can be authorized.

Monitoring/Reporting. To ensure compliance with this policy, ADTRAV will provide management reports to the Department on the use and non-use of FedRooms lodging which will also be reported to OMB.

Please visit NOAA's 'Lodging' site

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~finance/LODGING.html>, as well as Department of Commerce (DOC's) Bulletin on the requirement to use FedRooms

http://www.osec.doc.gov/oas/Documents/OCS/Travel%20Bulletins/6_12.pdf.

Please direct any questions regarding this advisory to Rachael.S.Wivell@noaa.gov/(301) 444-2136 or Chasity.N.Grimm@noaa.gov/(301) 444-2129.