



Countdown to Travel Post As Approved...

We remain on target for the implementation of Post As Approved (PAA) scheduled for implementation October 24, 2011. Once deployed, PAA will post most Travel Vouchers (TVs) to the Core Financial System (CFS) as “Approved” for payment and paper submissions to your servicing Finance Office (FO) will not be required. Exceptions to this rule are:

1. TVs Selected for Audit
2. Non-Routing TVs for:
 - a. Excepted Employees (certain bargaining unit employees)
 - b. Invitational Travelers

TVs meeting one of the exceptions above will continue to post to CFS as “Unapproved” and require hard copy submission to your servicing FO for payment.

The look and feel of Integrated Travel Manager (ITM) 9.0 remains unchanged; however, there are enhancements the User will notice while processing travel documents. Additionally, changing the way in which NOAA posts TVs to CFS requires changes to existing travel record policies. While the formal policy distribution will occur in a separate communication, this document addresses the highlights of the system enhancements and travel record policy changes.

System Enhancements

Pre-Audits

Based on policy/business requirements and to aid in the detection and prevention of commonly identified document preparation errors, several new pre-audits were added to ITM 9.0. These pre-audits will minimize risks associated with posting vouchers as approved for payment in CFS:

- Document Name
- Class Code
- Lodging/Hotel Tax
- Laundry Expenses
- Miscellaneous Expenses
- Ad-Hoc Expenses

Document Name

NOAA has a standard naming convention for travel document names.

Travel Authorizations (TAs) and TVs should be saved using the TA# as the Document Name (i.e., 2FKAS0001). Reference the NOAA Travel Regulations (NTR) 301-2.1(p) - (r).

Extended TDY TVs: When naming an extended TDY TV (the second and subsequent vouchers), the TA# should be followed by a hyphen and a sequential number (i.e., 2AJAS0001-1)

Reclaims: When naming a Reclaim voucher, the TA# should be followed by a hyphen, the letter "R" and a sequential number (i.e., 2AN2S0001-R1)

If the document name does not follow the naming convention, the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer will need to delete the document and create a new one. Therefore, if unsure whether the document name is proper, Preparers may choose to run the pre-audits before adding expenses to any travel document.

Class Code

When ticketed transportation is selected as an expense, the Class code (located in the Expense Details – Ticketed Transportation Details tab) is now a required field on travel documents. If the field is blank or contains an invalid code, the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer will be forced to enter a valid value in the Class code field for the claimed expense.

Premium Class travel requires the submission of a CD-334 to the NOAA Travel Policy Office for review. When the Class code contains a premium class code value, the pre-audit will WARN the Preparer the CD-334 is required. The Preparer may continue completing the travel document.

Note: The Class code is a single alpha character located on the traveler's itinerary received from the Travel Management Center (TMC).

Lodging/Hotel Tax

For foreign areas¹, lodging taxes have not been removed from foreign per diem rates. When preparing a travel document involving travel to a foreign area, Lodging/Hotel Tax is not permitted as a separate expense. When Lodging/Hotel Tax is claimed on the foreign portion of a trip, the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer will need to remove the expense and combine it with the Lodging cost.

¹ Foreign areas as defined in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) 300-3.1 include any area, including the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, situated both outside CONUS and the non-foreign areas.

For further information regarding Lodging Tax please reference the FTR §301-11.27.

Laundry Expenses

For foreign and non-foreign areas², laundry and/or dry cleaning expenses are included as part of the incidental portion of the M&IE. When preparing a travel document involving travel to a foreign or non-foreign area, laundry and/or dry cleaning is not permitted as a separate expense.

For domestic trips laundry and/or dry cleaning is permitted provided the traveler incurred four (4) or more consecutive nights of **official** travel.

Mixed trips between foreign/non-foreign and domestic locations only allow laundry and/or dry cleaning expense for the domestic portion of the trip provided the domestic portion of the travel is four (4) or more consecutive nights.

When laundry expenses are claimed on any foreign/non-foreign portion of a trip or a domestic trip less than four (4) consecutive nights the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer must remove the expense from the voucher.

For further information regarding Laundry Expenses please reference the FTR §301-11.31.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Miscellaneous expense remains permissible on TAs and Reclaims; however, it will no longer be permissible on a TV or Local Voucher (LV). To ensure actual miscellaneous expenses are reviewed and properly claimed, the Preparer must remove the miscellaneous expense carried over from the TA and add the actual expense description. When the Preparer includes a miscellaneous expense on a TDY voucher or LV the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer will need to select an expense from the drop down menu or Ad-Hoc the expense as needed.

Ad-Hoc Expenses

When entering an Ad-Hoc expense, Preparers are required to select an expense category associated with the claimed expense. Ad-Hoc expenses are only permitted when the following expense categories are associated with them:

- a. Other Travel
- b. Other Non-Travel
- c. Transport

² Non-Foreign areas as defined in FTR 300-3.1 include the States of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands and the territories and possessions of the United States (excludes the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands).

When the Preparer uses an expense category other than the allowable categories the pre-audit will FAIL and the Preparer will need to select one of the allowable Ad-Hoc expense categories listed above.

Certification Statement

An additional paragraph related to submission of vouchers will appear in the Certification Statement when the voucher is electronically signed in ITM 9.0. A sample of the Certification Statement appears below.

FRAUDULENT CLAIM —

Falsification of an item in an expense account works a forfeiture of the claim (28 U.S.C. 2514) and may result in a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than 5 years or both (18 U.S.C. 287; id. 1001).

CLAIMANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE ACCEPTANCE:

I certify that this voucher is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that payment or credit has not been received by me. I hereby assign to the United States any right I may have against any parties in connection, with reimbursable transportation charges described above, purchased under cash payment procedures (41 CFR Part 301-10). I verify that I have all receipts necessary to support the claims in this voucher. Any exceptions are noted in the comments section.

****IMPORTANT NOTICE****

****Hard copy vouchers are only required by Finance when Selected for Audit and/or pertain to an Excepted/Invitational Traveler.** Email notification will be sent to the Preparer, Traveler and Approving Official from Travel.Reimbursements@noaa.gov within 24 hours of electronic approval should voucher submission be required. If you receive notification indicating the hard copy voucher is required, a photo-copy of the complete travel package should be sent to your servicing Finance Office within three (3) days of electronic approval. **DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS.** Retain original documents in the field according to the travel record retention policy and procedures set forth by your Line Office. Vouchers requiring hard copy submission will not be approved for payment in the Core Financial System until the hard copy voucher is received in Finance accordingly.

On Screen Messaging

Approving Officials will receive an on screen message upon stamping vouchers approved.

For vouchers expected to post as **approved** for payment in CFS (routing documents - not selected for audit), the Approving Official will receive the following message:

POST AS APPROVED - This voucher is EXPECTED TO POST into the Core Financial System as approved for payment. Hard copy documentation is not required by the Finance Office at this time. Original documents must be retained in the field according to the record retention policy and procedures set forth by your Line Office.

For vouchers expected to post as **unapproved** for payment in CFS, one of three messages will appear, depending on the scenario:

1. Routing vouchers – Selected for Audit

SELECTED FOR AUDIT – Please forward a complete hard copy of the voucher and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly.

2. Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) – Selected for Audit

SELECTED FOR AUDIT/INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED – Please forward a complete hard copy of the voucher with an ink signature and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly.

3. Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) – NOT Selected for Audit

INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED – Please forward a complete hard copy of the voucher with an ink signature and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly.

Document Stamping

Two (2) new document stamps are applicable when approving vouchers, “SELECTED FOR AUDIT” and “INK SIGNATURE REQD.” These stamps will appear in the document history *before* the “APPROVED” and “DATA LINK” stamps.

Routing vouchers will only receive the “SELECTED FOR AUDIT” stamp when the document is selected for audit and interfaced to CFS as unapproved for payment.

Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) will always receive the “INK SIGNATURE REQD” stamp and may also receive the “SELECTED FOR AUDIT” if the document was selected for audit. All Non-Routing vouchers will interface to CFS as unapproved for payment.

E-mail Messaging

As a follow-up to the on screen messaging at the time of voucher approval in ITM, an e-mail (indicating a complete travel package³ must be sent to the FO before payment approval) will be sent for unapproved vouchers during the data link process to CFS. The e-mails will have the following attributes:

Sender: travel.reimbursements@noaa.gov (this is a DO NOT REPLY e-mail address)

Recipients: To: Preparer of the voucher

Cc: Traveler associated with the voucher*
Approving Official of the voucher

*When the Preparer and the Traveler are the same person, only the Approving Official will receive a carbon copy of the e-mail.

Subject: SUBMIT TRAVEL VOUCHER TO FINANCE (Routing vouchers)

SUBMIT TRAVEL VOUCHER WITH INK SIGNATURE TO FINANCE
(Non-Routing vouchers)

The e-mail text will include the Travel Voucher # and the Traveler Name. There are three variations to the remaining text depending on the scenario requiring submission of a **photo-copy** of the voucher and related receipts to the appropriate servicing finance branch:

1. SELECTED FOR AUDIT (Routing vouchers)

SELECTED FOR AUDIT – As the preparer of this voucher, please forward a complete hard copy of the voucher and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS. Retain original documents in the Field according to the policy and procedures set forth by your Line Office.

This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly:

EOB TRAVEL
20020 Century Boulevard
Germantown, MD 20874

OR

WOB FINANCE
7600 Sand Point Way, NE
Building 1
Seattle, WA 98115-6349

³ A complete travel package is defined as an approved Travel Voucher, all associated receipts and any other necessary documents to support the claim.

2. SELECTED FOR AUDIT/INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED (Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) Selected For Audit)

SELECTED FOR AUDIT/INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED – This Voucher was selected for audit and is for a NWSEO Bargaining Unit or Invitational Traveler which requires an ink signature.

As the preparer of this voucher, please forward a copy of the voucher with an ink signature and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS. Retain original documents in the Field according to the policy and procedures set forth by your Line Office.

This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly:

EOB TRAVEL
20020 Century Boulevard
Germantown, MD 20874

OR

WOB FINANCE
7600 Sand Point Way, NE
Building 1
Seattle, WA 98115-6349

3. INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED (Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) NOT Selected for Audit)

INK SIGNATURE REQUIRED – This Voucher is for a NWSEO Bargaining Unit or Invitational Traveler which requires an ink signature.

As the preparer of this voucher, please forward a copy of the voucher with an ink signature and related receipts to the appropriate Finance Branch (EOB or WOB) within 3 days of approval in ITM. DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS. Retain original documents in the Field according to the policy and procedures set forth by your Line Office.

This Voucher will not be approved for payment until the documentation is received in finance accordingly:

EOB TRAVEL
20020 Century Boulevard
Germantown, MD 20874

OR

WOB FINANCE
7600 Sand Point Way, NE
Building 1
Seattle, WA 98115-6349

Note: The e-mail is sent to the Preparer with a copy to the Traveler and Approving Official by design. This provides a means of all parties being properly informed; however, the **FO should only receive one (1) copy of the complete travel package³**. *It is recommended the Preparer submit the required documentation to Finance.*

Travel Record Policy Changes

Formal travel signature and record retention policy changes are forthcoming as we near the implementation of PAA. All Travelers, Preparers, and Approving Officials are expected to follow these changes to ensure compliance with NOAA, DOC, and Federal Regulations. It is important to become familiar with the policy changes – please be on the lookout and read through the documents once distributed. In the meantime, here are some key highlights:

Ink Signatures

Routing vouchers will no longer require ink signatures. Similar to the changes in November 2009 related to Travel Authorizations, electronically routed vouchers will no longer require an ink signature on the hard copy voucher.

Non-Routing vouchers (Excepted and Invitational) must continue to obtain ink signatures on the hard copy voucher; however, the originals will remain in the field with a photo-copy of the signed voucher sent to Finance.

Submission to Finance

With the implementation of PAA, travel documentation is no longer required to be submitted to the FO unless:

Pre-payment

1. A Routing Voucher is Selected for Audit
2. The Voucher is Non-Routing (Excepted or Invitational)

Post-Payment

1. Required due to various internal/external financial audits
2. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests
3. Congressional data calls, etc.

Regardless of the reason for submission to Finance, *all originals should remain in the field.*

Only send photo-copies of documents to Finance.

Travel Record Retention

Original travel records are to be retained in the field. Travelers, Preparers, and Approving Officials are responsible for retaining a complete travel package³ for the 6 year 3 month federal requirement and as set forth in the NOAA Travel Record Retention Policy as implemented by each Line/Staff Office. These files must be shredded to safeguard against unauthorized disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) contained in the records. However, if these records are subject to an on-going investigation or pending litigation, then they cannot be destroyed until the litigation hold is lifted by General Counsel even if the retention period for these records has expired.