

PART 301-52–CLAIMING REIMBURSEMENT

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301-52.30 How will I process my travel voucher?

You **must** use Integrated Travel Manager (ITM) to process your travel voucher **within 5 working days upon completion of travel, or every 30 days for employees on extended temporary duty (TDY) travel.**

301-52.31 Who has the authority to approve travel vouchers?

Electronic and hard copy travel vouchers are legally binding documents and may be approved by the employee’s approving official provided that the travel authorization has been authorized by the authorizing official from the funding office.

Note: Post-approved expenses on the travel voucher must be authorized by the authorizing official from the funding office in the remarks section of the travel voucher.

301-52.32 What is a “complete travel voucher package”?

A “complete travel voucher package” consists of the approved travel voucher, receipts, and any other necessary documents to support the claim.

301-52.33 How do I submit my travel voucher to the Finance Office for payment?

Excepted employees and invitational travelers (non-routing) will process their travel vouchers in ITM, but will not electronically route and approve them in ITM. Once the voucher has been created in ITM, a photocopy of the approved travel voucher with ink signatures, along with copies of receipts and any other necessary documentation, i.e., a “complete travel voucher package” must be submitted to the Finance Office for payment. **Please note that a hard copy submission of the travel voucher is always required for excepted and invitational travelers, regardless of whether the voucher is selected for audit or not.**

All other employees (routing) must use ITM to electronically route and approve travel vouchers to the Finance Office for payment and will no longer submit any hard copy travel voucher documentation to the Finance Office unless selected for audit. Please note, that travel vouchers properly approved and submitted to the Finance Office in ITM will generate a “Document History” page, stamped “signed” and “approved”, which completely replaces the ink signature requirement on hard copy travel vouchers.

301-52.34 What are the record retention guidelines for travel vouchers?

The traveler, travel document preparer, and the Approving Official are designated as the “Document Retention Officials” for travel documents, unless otherwise authorized by NOAA’s Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Document Retention Officials will be responsible for ensuring that the travel documents they prepare or approve are retained in accordance with the federal record retention requirements, NOAA retention requirements, as well as the requirements in this section.

301-52.35 What documentation is submitted to The Finance Office whenever a travel voucher is selected for audit prior to payment?

Whenever a travel voucher is selected for audit prior to payment, **a photocopy version of the “complete travel voucher package” must be submitted to the Finance Office** within 3 business days of approval in ITM. The Document Retention Official must retain the original version of the “complete travel voucher package” in accordance with record retention guidelines established by the office funding the travel.

301-52.36 What are the responsibilities of Document Retention Officials?

Document Retention Officials will serve as the Finance Office points of contact and will be required to submit photocopies of “complete travel packages” to The Finance Office on an “as needed” basis for purposes to include but not limited to:

- Random audit sampling related to annual DOC Financial Statement (FS) audits;
- Congressional, Departmental and/or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audits; and
- Record retention compliance.

Requests for photocopied versions of “complete travel voucher packages” must be submitted within 5 business days of the request or within a reasonable timeframe if the records were transferred to the Federal Records Center (FRC). In addition, the Document Retention Officials must also retain the original version of the “complete travel voucher package” in accordance with record retention guidelines established by the office funding the travel.

301-52.37 How many years do Document Retention Officials have to retain the original “complete travel voucher packages”?

NOAA Record Management Schedule 403-15 requires that travel files be maintained for 6 years and 3 months after the period covering the account. Upon expiration of the record retention date, 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. See NOAA Record Management Schedule 403-15:

http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/audit/records_management/schedules/cha_pter_400_finance.pdf

301-52.38 What are the receipt retention requirements for travel vouchers?

You can either retain a hardcopy version of the original receipts with the “complete travel voucher package” or you can electronically scan the original receipts as long as they:

- Are easily accessible for audits;
- Can be easily matched to the traveler and their travel voucher and submitted as a “complete travel voucher package” when required by the Finance Office;
- Have a file back-up process in place that safeguards records and ensures that NOAA policies regarding PII and sensitive data are followed; and
- Are retained within the retention requirements in 301-52.37.

301-52.39 What is a proper travel voucher?

A proper travel voucher must meet the requirements in *FTR, Chapter 301-52 and DOC Travel Handbook, 301-52.101* and be submitted in the format described in this section.

301-52.40 Who is responsible for determining if a travel voucher is proper?

Both the approving official and the Finance Office are responsible for determining if a travel voucher is proper.

301-52.41 What happens when an approving official deems my travel voucher improper?

When your travel voucher is not proper, your approving official must return the travel voucher to you with an explanation on how to make it proper. Once it's been corrected, you will need to resubmit your travel voucher to your approving official for approval. Your latest signature date is the date the Finance Office will use for purposes of calculating interest, in cases where interest may be due.

301-52.42 What happens when the Finance Office deems my travel voucher improper?

If your travel voucher is not proper, the Finance Office will notify you via e-mail within 24 hours of disallowing any unauthorized expense(s) and reimburse you for expenses that were properly authorized. You may submit a reclaim voucher for any expenses previously disallowed as long as the reclaim properly authorizes such expenses.

301-52.43 Within how many calendar days after I submit a proper travel voucher must NOAA reimburse my allowable expenses?

For excepted employees or invitational travelers, NOAA must reimburse you within 30 calendar days of the ink signature date on your hard copy travel voucher, and if that's missing, the "received date stamp" will be used by the Finance Office instead.

For all other employees, NOAA must reimburse you within 30 calendar days of your latest electronic signature date which appears in the "Document History" field of your electronic travel voucher.

NOTE: The Finance Office will return your travel voucher to you if both your signature and date are missing. In those cases, your latest signature date will be the date the Finance Office uses for purposes of calculating interest, in cases where interest may be due.

301-52.44 When does an approving official resolve or document disagreement with the claimant's signature date or any other travel voucher information which will affect the payment of interest?

An approving official must resolve or document disagreement with the claimant's signature date, and annotate any other travel voucher information which will affect the payment of interest **prior** to submission of the travel voucher to the servicing Finance Office.

301-52.45 How will interest be paid on a travel voucher reimbursement?

When interest is due, the Finance Office must pay interest using the prevailing Prompt Payment Act interest rate, beginning on the 31st day after the electronic signature date on your electronic voucher. If you are an excepted employee or invitational traveler, the Finance Office will use the ink signature date on your hard copy travel voucher to reimburse you any interest due. Your servicing Finance Office will issue one payment for both the travel voucher reimbursement and interest.