

Article 26

Travel and Per Diem

A. Travel or any extension thereof will, to the maximum extent possible, be authorized or ordered in advance in sufficient time for the employee to have in his or her possession a travel advance prior to starting such travel.

B. The Service agrees to make every effort to avoid requiring employees to perform continuous automobile travel for more than eight hours in any work day or to travel on assigned days off.

C. The sole purpose of a travel advance is to provide the employee with funds to sustain himself or herself when performing official travel. Travel will be authorized to the maximum extent possible in sufficient time for the employee to have in his or her possession a travel advance. The travel advance shall be returned promptly upon cancellation or indefinite postponement of the travel for which the advance was made.

D. It will be the responsibility of a traveler to submit a travel voucher in accord with Section E of this article, and to return any excess of the travel advance over reimbursable travel expenses concurrently with the voucher.

E. Travelers are required to submit travel vouchers within five (5) work days after completion of travel or each thirty (30) days, whichever occurs first, exclusive of full days on emergency work assignments, leave, or union related duties. In no event will more than seven (7) calendar days be excluded for union related duties.

F. When an employee has not submitted a travel voucher within the above time limits, the employee's immediate supervisor shall discuss the matter with the employee in order to ascertain why the voucher has not been completed. Absent the exceptions noted above or other good and sufficient cause, the supervisor will direct the employee to submit a voucher in not less than four (4) calendar days after the required discussion with the employee takes place.

Preparation and submission of vouchers shall not be delayed for lack of sufficient receipts. A reclaim or supplemental voucher shall be submitted when the traveler has obtained the necessary receipts not available when the initial voucher was filed.

G. If a dispute exists as to the propriety of an expense claimed on a voucher, any excess of a travel advance over the undisputed portion of the claim will be collected from the employee or withheld from the employee=s salary pending resolution.

H. If an employee is not reimbursed for properly claimed expenses within twenty (20) work days after filing his or her travel voucher, he or she may request, through supervisory channels, that the processing of the voucher be expedited. If an employee=s Government credit card account becomes delinquent because the Service failed to process a voucher in a timely manner, the Service will expedite the processing of the voucher and will contact the credit card contractor and explain that the employee is not at fault.

I. Absent emergency circumstances, supervisors will allow sufficient time during regularly scheduled tours of duty for preparation of travel vouchers.

J. The recovery of outstanding cash travel advances shall be accomplished in accordance with the provisions of Appendix V.

K. No disciplinary action may be taken for failure to submit a travel voucher or repay a travel advance until all procedures of this Article have been exhausted and the employee has been notified in writing that failure to comply may result in disciplinary action. However, disciplinary action may be taken for insubordination if an employee fails to respond to direction by his or her supervisor, in accordance with Section F of this agreement, to prepare and submit a travel voucher.

L. Disputes over the interpretation and application of this Article may be presented under the grievance procedure in Article 32 of the Agreement.

M. Disputes over what expenses are reimbursable may only be grieved or appealed by presenting such claim in the following steps: (1) An appeal will be sent to the appropriate Administrative Center Finance Director. (2) If the employee has not received a determination within thirty days, or the employee is dissatisfied with the decision of the Administrative Center Finance Director, the employee may then submit the claim (no specific format) to the: Claims Group, Financial and General Management Studies Division, U.S. General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, NW, Washington, DC.

N. The Service agrees that for operational details requiring advance planning, as much advance notice as possible will be given to employees selected for the detail.

O. Except for training courses, details away from the normal duty station will not exceed 35 calendar days, unless the employee volunteers for a longer period.