



Office of Government-wide Policy
December 5, 2022

Federal Travel Regulation
GSA Bulletin FTR 23-04

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Emergency Travel

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin clarifies, highlights, and reminds agencies that they have the authority to reimburse emergency travel for employees on temporary duty travel (TDY) and en route relocation travel who are either incapacitated by illness or injury not due to their own misconduct.

2. What is the background of this bulletin? Statutory authority found at 5 U.S.C. 5702(b), as well as at Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) §301-30 and §§301-70.500 through .509, provide the requirements for emergency travel expense reimbursement, including under what conditions an employee may receive reimbursement for travel expenses in emergency situations, what travel expenses are allowed, and what the limitations are for payment of travel expenses.

3. What travel expenses may the agency pay if the employee is incapacitated by illness or injury while on TDY travel? Per FTR §301-30.4, an agency may pay:

a. Per diem at the location where the employee incurred or was treated for incapacitating illness or injury for a reasonable period of time (generally 14 calendar days). However, the agency may pay for a longer period.

b. Transportation and per diem expense for travel to an alternate location to receive medical treatment.

c. Transportation and per diem expense to return to the employee's official station.

d. Transportation costs of a medically necessary attendant.

4. Could an agency determine that an "incapacitating illness or injury" includes events related to childbirth? Yes. There are several types of events related to childbirth, including pregnant employees showing signs of a miscarriage, that may become life-threatening (and therefore incapacitating). See *Lucy B. Cusick*, B-223872 (Nov. 25, 1986) (finding that employee on TDY may be reimbursed for the emergency travel where medical necessity required air ambulance transportation services for herself and her infant son prematurely born during employee's TDY assignment); see also *Cindy Chapman*, B-260194 (Oct. 17, 1995) (finding that employee on TDY who underwent childbirth at the temporary duty station may be paid per diem for the period she was in

the hospital and at the temporary duty station after being discharged from the hospital for a reasonable time period while she is recovering from childbirth and “incapacitated” from performing her duty).

5. What should an employee do if they have to interrupt or discontinue their TDY travel due to an emergency situation, such as a miscarriage or other event related to childbirth? An employee should first ensure they are taking care of their personal health needs; if the situation is an emergency, please get emergency treatment. The FTR does not require medical certification prior to the employee undertaking emergency travel. Per FTR §301-30.3, the employee must contact their travel authorizing/approving official for instructions regarding travel as soon as possible.

6. What policies should agencies have in place regarding emergency travel? Agencies should review the FTR §§301-70.500 through .509, which discuss in detail what policies and procedures agencies should have in place regarding emergency travel. Agencies are encouraged to create objective internal policies and to exercise discretion when addressing emergency travel matters, including those related to miscarriage or other events related to childbirth.

In particular, agencies should be aware of the provisions in FTR §301-70.503(a) and 505, which address what costs can be reimbursed if the employee needs to go to an alternate location for medical treatment. FTR §301-70.505 differs from the way agencies typically address cost comparisons when determining travel reimbursement, in order to permit the agency to make an employee whole.

Specifically, FTR §301-70.505 states:

§301-70.505 May any travel costs be reimbursed if the employee travels to an alternate location for medical treatment?

Yes. When an employee interrupts a TDY assignment because of an incapacitating illness or injury and takes leave of absence for travel to an alternate location to obtain medical services and returns to the TDY assignment, you may reimburse certain excess travel costs provided in this section. Specifically, you may reimburse the excess (if any) of actual costs of travel from the point of interruption to the alternate location and return to the TDY assignment, over the constructive costs of round-trip travel between the official station and the alternate location. The nearest hospital or medical facility capable of treating the employee's illness or injury will not, however, be considered an alternate location.

Note to § 301-70.505: An alternate location is a destination other than the employee's official station or the point of interruption.

7. What is the effective date of this bulletin? This bulletin is applicable upon the date of signature.

8. When does this bulletin expire? This bulletin will remain in effect until explicitly canceled or superseded.

9. Whom should I contact for further information regarding this bulletin? Contact Ms. Jill Denning, Office of Government-wide Policy at 202-208-7642, or by email at travelpolicy@gsa.gov. Please cite GSA FTR Bulletin 23-04.

By delegation of the Administrator of General Services,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Krystal", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Krystal J. Brumfield
Associate Administrator
Office of Government-wide Policy