UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE	3820.1 Revision 4	8/21/14

RELOCATION ALLOWANCES FOR FSIS EMPLOYEES

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides instructions for approving relocation allowances for FSIS employees in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) and the Agriculture Travel Regulation. Relocation allowances are for reimbursable relocation expenses for travel, transportation, and subsistence to employees transferring from their former official duty station (ODS) to a new ODS. FSIS is reissuing this directive to consolidate several directives on relocation previously issued and to update criteria pertaining to discretionary allowances and entitlements.

KEY POINTS:

- *Employees are to have service agreements in place before they can receive reimbursement for any relocation expenses*
- *Relocation allowances available to employees new to the Federal Government differ from those allowances available to current FSIS employees or employees transferring from another agency*
- *FSIS does not authorize property management services and home marketing incentives*
- *When authorized, temporary quarters subsistence expenses (TQSE) are limited to 15 days. The Financial Management Division (FMD) may authorize an additional 15 days if the employee makes a written request*

II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Directive 3820.1, Revision 3, *Relocation for Transferring Employees*, 10/16/09

FSIS Directive 3820.2, Revision 1, *Determining When the Payment of Relocation Expenses to Non-Bargaining Unit Employees is in the Interest of Government*, 5/14/09

FSIS Directive 3820.3, *Payment of Relocation Allowances for In-Plant Shortage Locations*, 1/29/01

FSIS Directive 3820.4, *Payment of Relocation Expenses to the First Post of Duty (FPD) for New Employees*, 12/31/08

III. BACKGROUND

A. In accordance with Chapter 302 of the FTR, FSIS authorizes relocation payment for travel, transportation, and other subsistence expenses to new appointees assigned to their first ODS and employees transferring from their former ODS to a new ODS provided that:

1. Payment is in the best interest of the Government;

2. The new ODS is at least 50 miles from their former ODS; and

3. Change of ODS is long term or permanent.

B. FMD makes a determination not to pay the cost when relocation is not in the interest of the Government, or when it is for the personal convenience or benefit of the employee. Budget constraints do not serve as the sole basis for denying the reimbursement of relocation expenses.

C. The Office of Human Resources (OHR) issues merit promotion announcements stating that the Agency has authorized relocation expenses when the area of consideration is broader than the local commuting area. In addition, when soliciting non-status candidates for positions where the Agency is offering recruitment incentives, OHR issues announcements stating that limited "first post of duty" relocation expenses are authorized for new appointees. OHR documents exceptions in the recruitment file. After a selection is made, OHR provides FMD with an SF-52, *Request for Personnel Action*, for all positions that have been advertised with authorized relocation expenses. FMD determines whether the employee selected is eligible for relocation reimbursements.

D. Discretionary allowances (such as house hunting trips (HHT) and TQSE) are allowances that FSIS can authorize on a case-by-case basis. Entitlement allowances are statutory benefits that a relocating employee is entitled to receive in accordance with Chapter 302 of the FTR.

E. An employee is to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person exercises when travelling at his or her own expense. An employee is liable for excess costs or unauthorized expenses incurred for personal preferences or convenience, including the purchase of luxury accommodations and services or indirect travel.

F. FMD, on behalf of the FSIS Administrator, is to authorize all official travel related to reporting to a new ODS on a AD-202, *Travel Authorization/Advance*. An employee may not relocate to a new ODS until they receive a written travel authorization. An employee is to complete all relocation activities within one year from the date the employee reports to the new ODS. Upon written request, FMD may grant an additional one-year extension to complete the relocation for a total of two years, if proper justification is provided for the extension.

IV. SERVICE AGREEMENTS

A. To receive reimbursement for allowable relocation expenses, current Federal employees are to sign FSIS Form 3820.1, *Service Agreement,* and new employees are to sign FSIS Form 3820-7, *New Employee Relocation Data Form-Service Agreement*. Both forms are available on the FSIS Intranet site. An employee cannot incur expenses related to the relocation until the employee returns the signed forms to FMD. The employee must agree to remain employed with the Federal Government for a period of one year from the date they report to their new ODS. Service agreements are to be retained by FMD once received from the employee.

B. If the service agreement is violated, the employee must repay all moneys expended by FSIS for travel, transportation, and allowances connected with the transfer.

C. FSIS can waive relocation expense repayment for reasons acceptable to FSIS in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 5584, *Claims For Overpayment Of Pay And Allowances, And Of Travel, Transportation And Relocation Expenses And Allowances.* The employee can request a waiver through FMD of repayment when violation of the service agreement is for reasons beyond the employee's control and acceptable to FSIS.

V. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR REIMBURSEMENT

A. To receive reimbursement for relocation, an employee is to complete Form AD-616R, *Travel Voucher (Relocation)*, to certify that they incurred authorized relocation expenses. Falsification of information submitted on the AD-616R can result in disciplinary action by the Labor and Employee Relations Division, Office of Management. The penalty for submitting a false claim is a fine of not more than $10,000 or imprisonment for not more than 5 years.

B. With the submission of the AD-616R, an employee is to include the following, as applicable:

1. Receipts for the following expenses:

    a. Lodging;

    b. Common carrier transportation;

    c. Rental car, truck, trailer, and fuel;

    d. Incidental expenses; and

    e. Any additional receipts required to support claims.

2. Purchase agreement for the home signed by the buyers and the sellers;

3. Sales agreement for the home signed by the buyers and the sellers;

4. HUD-1, *Settlement Statement* completed at closing and signed by the buyers and sellers of the home;

5. Lease agreement signed by the property owner and tenant;

6. A completed and signed AD-424, *Employee Application for Reimbursement of Expenses Incurred Upon Sale or Purchase (or both) of Residence Upon Change of Official Station*;

7. A completed AD-569, E*xpense Record for Temporary Quarters*; and

8. A completed and signed AD-1000, *Claim for Relocation Income Tax Allowance for the Year* (for Relocation Income Tax (RIT) reimbursement).

VI. ENTITLEMENTS AND DISCRETIONARY ALLOWANCES AVAILABLE TO NEW EMPLOYEES

A. Certain relocation allowances are considered entitlements to employees new to the Federal Government when relocation allowances have been authorized. See Chapter 302 of the FTR.

B. At a minimum, new FSIS employees are entitled to the following relocation allowances:

1. Transportation allowances. The employee is entitled to transportation costs for the employee and his or her immediate family members;

2. Per Diem for the employee only. The per diem allowance provides the employee a daily amount for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) and lodging expenses during travel to the new ODS. The FTR allows a per diem allowance covering travel for the most direct route to the new ODS. The employee is responsible for any costs incurred for travel to destination points other than to the new ODS;

3. Shipment of household goods (HHG). Special approval to ship professional books, papers, and personal equipment and effects may be authorized on a case-by-case basis. HHG shipped to or from alternate locations cannot exceed the cost from the old residence to the new ODS;

4. Temporary storage of HHG. This allowance provides the employee a storage location for a limited time at the origin or destination point until the residence at the new ODS is available for occupancy; and

5. Transportation of a mobile home. New employees are eligible to move a mobile home in lieu of the transportation of HHG if the employee certifies that the mobile home is to be used as his or her primary residence at the new ODS.

C. On a case-by-case basis, FSIS may authorize the transportation of one privately owned vehicle (POV) in connection with a transfer of assignment within the Continental United States (CONUS), Alaska, Hawaii, and Non-Foreign Areas of Guam and Puerto Rico if requested by the employee on the initial AD-202. A pre-move survey will be conducted by FMD to determine whether the vehicle can be shipped. FMD notifies the employee as to whether or not the transportation of a POV is authorized.

VII. ENTITLEMENTS AVAILABLE TO CURRENT EMPLOYEES

A. Certain relocation allowances are considered entitlements to employees transferring from their former ODS to a new ODS. FSIS relocation allowance entitlement amounts and specific discretionary allowances are periodically subject to change. Specific amounts and criteria are found in Chapter 302 of the FTR.

B. At a minimum, transferring Federal employees are entitled to the following relocation allowances:

1. Transportation Allowances. The employee is entitled to transportation costs for the employee and his or her immediate family members;

2. Per Diem. The per diem allowance provides the employee and his or her immediate family members a daily amount for M&IE and lodging expenses during travel to the new ODS. The FTR only authorizes a per diem allowance covering travel for the most direct route to the NDS. The employee is responsible for any cost incurred for travel to destination points other than their former ODS or new ODS;

3. Miscellaneous Expense Allowance (MEA). The miscellaneous expense allowance is intended to help defray some of the costs incurred due to relocating such as fees for disconnecting/connecting utilities;

4. Shipment of HHG. The actual weight expense methods for shipping HHG will be authorized in accordance with Chapter 302 of the FTR. Special approval to ship professional books, papers, and personal equipment and effects may be authorized on a case-by-case basis. HHG shipped to or from alternate locations cannot exceed the cost from the old residence to the new ODS;

5. Temporary Storage of HHG. This allowance provides the employee a storage location for a limited time at the origin or destination point until the residence at the new ODS is available for occupancy;

6. Transportation of a Mobile Home. Transferring employees are eligible to move a mobile home in lieu of the transportation of HHG if the employee certifies that the employee will use the mobile home as his or her primary residence at the new ODS;

7. Real Estate Transactions and Unexpired Leases. The real estate allowance reimburses employees for customary expenses associated with selling a home at their former ODS, purchasing a new home near the new ODS, and terminating an unexpired lease at the former ODS. A listing of the residence transaction expenses that are reimbursable can be found in Chapter 302 of the FTR; and

8. Relocation Income Tax (RIT) Allowance. A RIT allowance reimburses employees for any Federal, State, and local taxes paid on that portion of their taxable income resulting from relocation expense reimbursement. This allowance is based on the taxable moving allowances shown on the employee's W-2, *Wage and Tax Statement* for the claim year in accordance with IRS Publication 531.

VIII. DISCRETIONARY ALLOWANCES AVAILABLE TO CURRENT EMPLOYEEES

A. Transportation of a POV. FSIS pays to transport one POV in connection with a transfer of assignment within the CONUS and Alaska, Hawaii, and non-foreign areas of Guam and Puerto Rico, if requested by the employee on the initial AD-202. FMD is to conduct a pre-move survey to determine whether the vehicle can be shipped. FMD notifies the employee as to whether or not the transportation of a POV is authorized.

B. House Hunting Trip (HHT). The HHT facilitates an employee's move from the former ODS to the new ODS and lowers the overall cost for the relocation by reducing or eliminating the need for a temporary quarters (TQ) stay. The employee remains in a duty status during the HHT to focus on locating a suitable permanent residence at the new ODS.

1. The FTR requires that the distance from the former ODS to the new ODS must be 75 miles or greater. The employee must have written authorization before the start of the HHT. In addition, the following limitations apply:

    a. There can be only one round trip for the employee and spouse;

    b. When the employee and spouse travel separately, subsistence and transportation cannot exceed the cost incurred if the employee and spouse had traveled together;

    c. The HHT may be authorized for no more than 10 calendar days;

    d. The employee is to complete the HHT and return to the former ODS before reporting for duty at the new ODS;

    e. The travel is limited to the vicinity of the NDS; and

    f. The HHT cannot be authorized when a temporary duty assignment is changed to the new ODS.

2. The Agency offers two reimbursement methods for determining an HHT allowance. An employee can select either the fixed rate method or the actual expense method of reimbursement. An employee is to make their selection before the HHT begins. The following applies:

    a. The Fixed Rate Method: The amount is based on the following calculation, plus actual transportation expenses:

        i. An employee and his or her spouse traveling together can receive the local per diem rate multiplied by 6.25; or

ii. An employee or his or her spouse traveling separately can receive the local per diem rate multiplied by 5.00.

b. Actual Expense Method: The actual expense method uses the standard CONUS per diem rates of the new ODS to cover expenses for lodging and M&IE. The actual expense method requires the employee to itemize all expenses on a daily basis. The employee is to submit receipts for all expenses. The following applies:

i. An employee can receive the full (100 percent) of the standard CONUS per diem rate; or

ii. An employee's spouse can receive three quarters (75 percent) of the standard CONUS per diem rate.

C. TQSE. The TQSE allowance provides a transferring employee and his or her immediate family members with lodging and subsistence expenses for a limited time. An employee is to make every effort to minimize the number of days in TQ by taking occupancy of the new residence on or about the time of reporting to the new ODS.

1. FMD will authorize 15 days in TQ. FMD may authorize an additional 15 days if the employee makes a written request to FMD stating why additional time is needed. Additional limitations on TQSE allowances include the following:

    a. TQ stays are to be no less than a whole day;

    b. Local transportation expenses cannot be reimbursed at the new ODS; and

    c. TQ can be interrupted only while traveling from the former ODS to the new ODS or while performing temporary duty travel away from the new ODS.

2. To be eligible for a TQSE allowance, an employee's former ODS and the new ODS is to be within the United States and is 50 miles or more apart (as measured by map distance) using a usually traveled surface route. The employee and family members are to have permanently vacated the residence at the former ODS to be eligible to receive a TQSE allowance.

3. The Agency offers two reimbursement methods for the TQ allowance. An employee can select either the fixed rate or the actual expense method of reimbursement. An employee is required to make their selection before entering the TQ.

    a. Fixed Rate Method: The fixed rate method provides the employee and family a flat authorized amount to cover expenses for lodging and M&IE. If the TQ expenses are less than the amount authorized, the employee can retain the surplus amount. The employee is not required to submit receipts to justify lodging and M&IE; or

    b. Actual Expense Method: The actual expense method uses the standard CONUS per diem to cover expenses for lodging and M&IE. The actual expense method requires the employee to itemize all expenses on a daily basis on an AD-569 and submit receipts for all expenses. The actual expense amount is based on the per diem rates used for the en route occupants.

D. FSIS will not authorize payment for any additional discretionary allowances that are listed in the FTR.

IX. QUESTIONS

Refer questions to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Financial Management Division at 301-344-0483.

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development