UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice FI-3065

For: FSA Offices

Governmentwide Relocation Advisory Board (GRAB) Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Chapter 302, "Relocation", Changes

Approved by: Associate Administrator for Operations and Management

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1 Overview

A Background

GSA is responsible for relocation services for the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, including FSA.

In 2002, GSA created the Relocation Best Practices Committee (RBPC) consisting of Government and private industry relocation experts, to examine Government relocation policy. After benchmarking with the private sector experts, the RBPC Government policy experts created a proposed rule summarizing the work of RBPC. GSA then chartered GRAB and, on July 9, 2004, a charter was filed in Congress establishing GRAB that was governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463). GRAB's mission was to:

- review the existing policies publicized through FTR for relocation and associated reimbursements and allowances for Federal employees relocating in the continental United States (CONUS)

- on its review, recommend improvements for better management of Governmentwide relocation and provide GSA with advice about relocation best practices.

On September 21, 2005, the GSA Deputy Associate Administrator, Office Governmentwide Policy, received GRAB's report titled, "Findings and Recommendations". This report heralds GRAB's 14-month foray into the Federal Government's relocation processes and contains a total of 111 recommendations in the areas of budget data and tracking, residence transactions, relocation reimbursements, transportation and storage, and administration and management.

GSA's relocation policy experts analyzed the GRAB regulatory changes and created a proposed rule that was published in FR on August 3, 2007 (72 FR 43216). GSA then combined the RBPC and GRAB proposed rules into 1 final rule. This final rule that was published in FR on April 1, 2011 (76 FR 18326), and was effective August 1, 2011, implements many of the changes sought by both RBPC and GRAB and contains additional changes to FTR Chapter 302, "Relocation".

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2012	All FSA Offices, State Offices relay to County Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice notifies FSA employees of the clarifications, changes, and updates implemented by GSA, effective **immediately**.

Note: FSA policy will be amended to reflect the changes.

C Clarification

As of August 1, 2011, the standard CONUS rate is the operative per diem rate for calculating **actual expense** house-hunting trips. If the employee reports to their new duty station on or before July 31, 2011, and the spouse does **not** arrive until after August 1, 2011, the spouse is entitled to the locality rates based on the report date. The expenses would fall under the old rules.

D Data Systems, Reporting, and Relocation Program Management

In response to questions about a relocation management reporting system, GSA removed the due date for Agencies to report relocation data from the regulation and changed from biennial reports to annual reports. GSA suggests using an automated system, but it is **not** a mandate. GSA will work with Agencies to develop the data elements to be reported and to select the startup date for annual reporting. More information on this will be communicated in FTR Bulletins issued periodically by GSA. GSA will e-mail the FTR Bulletins to FSA's e-mail distribution list when they become available.

The mileage rate, CONUS rate, locality rate, and meals and incidental expenses are paid based on the rate in effect when the item was incurred. So, if the rates change, Agencies can pay the higher or lower rate depending on when the expense is incurred.

E Contacts

If there are questions about this notice, contact either of the following:

- Rhonda Robinson, FMD, Financial Systems and Program Delivery Center (FSPDC), Debt Management and Travel Policy Office (DMTPO), by either of the following:
  - e-mail to **rhonda.robinson@wdc.usda.gov**
  - telephone at 202-772-6030
- William Willer, Office Chief, FMD, FSPDC, DMTPO, by either of the following:
  - e-mail to **william.willer@wdc.usda.gov**
  - telephone at 202-772-6042.

2 FTR Chapter 302, "Relocation", Changes/Updates

A Domestic Partner Rule

The Domestic Partner Rule:

- is in FTR, Chapter 302, "Relocation", and the Glossary of Terms at **http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/ogp/FTR2011-02Complete.pdf** explains "Domestic Partnership" and list 9 requirements
- took effect March 3, 2011
- is not retro-active, so is only applicable to travel orders cut on or after **March 3, 2011**
- change was made to incorporate same sex domestic partners among "immediate family members" by definition
- does not allow for partner reimbursement of house-hunting trips and/or en-route travel reimbursement for the final move when the partner travels separately from the relocating employee.

Notes: The maximum amount a spouse or domestic partner may receive if he/she accompanies the employee while they are performing permanent change of station travel is 3/4 of the employee's daily per diem rate or 75 percent. This policy stipulation **cannot** be changed without legislative approval.

At this time, there is no universal guidance from OPM or GSA about criteria or protocol to verify domestic partner status.

B Limitation Changes

The timeframe allowed to complete relocations has been reduced to 1-year with a 1-year extension, from 2-years with up to a 2-year extension.

Shipping privately owned vehicles has been limited to 2 vehicles.

A 2,000 lb allowance has been incorporated for packing materials of household goods (HHG) shipments (18,000 lbs HHG + 2,000 lbs of packing materials = 20,000 lbs gross weight).

Allowance for HHG temporary storage for:

- CONUS is 60 calendar days with a possible extension of up to 90 calendar days
- outside CONUS (OCONUS) is 90 calendar days with a possible extension of 90 calendar days for moves that have an authorized origin and/or destination that is OCONUS.

2 FTR Chapter 302, “Relocation”, Changes/Updates (Continued)

B Limitation Changes (Continued)

Note: The regulations in effect at the report date would determine how many calendar days an Agency can pay for storage. If reporting:

- **before** August 1, 2011, then the employee can have 90 calendar days up-front in storage regardless of when the goods are delivered into storage
- **after** August 1, 2011, the employee can only have 60 calendar days of storage up-front, unless the goods went into storage **before** August 1, 2011, and then would still be entitled to 90 calendar days of storage.

C Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense

The temporary quarters subsistence expense lump-sum, payment option, if offered by the Agency and accepted by the employee, is calculated on the locality per diem rate at the old or new official station, or combination thereof, wherever temporary quarters will be occupied. This is based on the date payment is made/voucher date.

D Miscellaneous Expense Allowance

The miscellaneous expense allowance flat rates were increased to $650 for single employees and $1,300 for employee with family members. Actual expense amount still **cannot** exceed 1 week’s salary for single employee and 2 week’s salary for an employee with family.

E 50 Mile Rule

The following are 50 mile rule distance test examples, courtesy of the IRS web site:

Example 1: Distance from former residence to former main job = 3 miles.
Distance from former residence to new main job = 58 miles.

The employee qualifies for reimbursement or home sale, as applicable, because his/her new main job is 55 miles (58 miles - 3 miles) farther from the former residence than the old main job location.

Example 2: Distance from former residence to former main job = 3 miles.
Distance from former residence to new main job = 52 miles.

The employee does **not** qualify for reimbursement or home sale because his/her new main job is only 49 miles (52 miles - 3 miles) farther from the former residence than the old main job location.

Step	Distance Test Worksheet	Result
1	Enter number of miles from departure home to the new duty station.	59
2	Enter the number of miles from the departure home to the old duty station.	3
3	Subtract line 2 from line 1.	56
4	If line 3 is at least 50 miles then the employee meets the 50-mile rule.	