

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To provide Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures for the reimbursement of employee travel expenses through electronic funds transfer (EFT).
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This Handbook describes Departmentwide guidelines for implementing travel reimbursement through EFT.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Operations (047F).
4. **RELATED BULLETIN:** OFM Bulletin 96.GC1.1, New Requirements for All Federal Payments.
5. **RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 4003, Travel Reimbursement; and VA Directive 4112, Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer Participation Policy.
6. **RELATED HANDBOOK:** There is no separate Handbook, but the Appendix to VA Directive 4112 contains implementing guidelines.
7. **RESCISSION:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Nada D. Harris
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Information Resources Management

D. Mark Catlett
Acting Assistant Secretary for Management

Distribution:

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

1. **PURPOSE.** This handbook prescribes travel reimbursement procedures in accordance with the policy set forth in VA Directive 4003.
2. **SCOPE.** These procedures apply to all VA employees requesting reimbursement(s) relating to Temporary Duty (TDY) travel and to Permanent Change of Station (PCS) travel. The Handbook refers to these VA employees as travelers.
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

a. The Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Operations (047F) has the overall responsibility for implementing the procedures set forth in this Handbook.

b. Each Administration and Staff Office will notify travelers of electronic funds transfer (EFT) travel reimbursement procedures and process waiver requests received from travelers.

c. Travel card coordinators will remind travelers about EFT travel reimbursement at the time travelers apply for or renew their Government-issued travel card.

d. Fiscal/Finance Activity

(1) The Fiscal/Finance activity will provide guidance and assistance to travelers in completing the proper form to establish EFT travel reimbursement (see paragraph 4).

(2) The Fiscal/Finance activity will provide the traveler with his/her Vendor Code (see paragraph 5).

(3) For PCS travel, the Fiscal/Finance activity *at the gaining station* is responsible for the establishment of the traveler's EFT Vendor Code (see paragraph 5), unless it has already been established. The traveler should be advised not to close out his/her old bank account until a new one is opened at the new place of residence. All PCS vouchers will be forwarded to the Finance Services Center in Austin, TX, for processing.

(4) The Fiscal/Finance activity will ensure that all travel reimbursement payments are issued by EFT, unless the traveler has requested a waiver (see paragraph 7).

(5) The Fiscal/Finance activity will forward written waiver requests for travelers from the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Veterans Health Administration, and the National Cemetery System to the respective Administration's Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The Fiscal/Finance activity will forward waiver requests for all other travelers to the Department's CFO (see paragraph 7).

(6) The Fiscal/Finance activity, in conjunction with that activity's CFO or Deputy CFO, will ensure compliance with the requirements of 31 CFR Part 208, VA Directive 4003 and the procedures in this Handbook.

e. Travelers

(1) Every traveler will provide their Fiscal/Finance activity with EFT information to designate the bank or financial institution for travel reimbursement (see paragraph 4).

(2) If a traveler changes the bank or financial institution designated for EFT travel reimbursement, the traveler will notify the Fiscal/Finance activity by completing the appropriate form (see paragraph 4).

(3) A traveler who does not currently receive his/her wage and salary payments by Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer (DD/EFT) may submit a written waiver request from EFT travel reimbursement (see paragraph 7).

4. FORMS

a. A traveler may obtain copies of relevant forms and receive assistance from the Fiscal/Finance activity.

b. A traveler normally designates the same bank or financial institution for EFT travel reimbursement that the traveler designates for payroll DD/EFT. To designate the same bank or financial institution, the traveler will complete one of the following:

(1) Complete *Treasury Form 1199, Direct Deposit Sign-Up*

(Note: Treasury Form 2231, FASTSTART Direct Deposit, can not be used for establishing EFT travel reimbursement. Form 2231 lacks some of the necessary information for VA Financial Management System (FMS) processing.); or

(2) Complete Standard Form 3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form.

c. A traveler may designate a different bank or financial institution for EFT travel reimbursement, separate from the one the traveler uses for wage and salary payment via DD/EFT, by completing Standard Form 3881.

d. Instructions for submitting an EFT travel reimbursement waiver request are included in paragraph 7.

5. PROCESSING TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

a. FMS uses a Vendor Code to identify each traveler in the system. When FMS processes a travel document for reimbursement, FMS uses the Vendor Code to provide Treasury with the instructions on where to send the payment. The Vendor Code references information about the bank or financial institution, as designated by the traveler on the EFT travel reimbursement form (see paragraph 4). If the traveler has a waiver from EFT travel reimbursement, the Vendor Code references information for mailing the payment to the traveler (see paragraph 7).

b. The traveler will assist in expediting travel reimbursement payments by including the Vendor Code when submitting a travel authorization, travel voucher, or related document (hereafter referred to as travel documents). The Fiscal/Finance activity can provide the traveler with his/her Vendor Code.

(1) When submitting travel documents in hard copy for manual processing, the traveler will include the Vendor Code within the travel document, preferably in the upper margin when there is no specific document entry line for the Vendor Code.

(2) When submitting travel documents electronically for processing by an automated travel system, the traveler should learn whether the system or the traveler will enter the Vendor Code. Some travel systems, such as PerDiemAzing, are set up to automatically enter the Vendor Code for the traveler as part of travel document processing.

c. The target for processing TDY travel reimbursement is a combined total of four business days, counting from the time the traveler's Fiscal/Finance activity receives the travel document.

(1) A travel document for reimbursement will be processed into FMS within two business days after being received in the traveler's Fiscal/Finance activity.

(2) Following processing in FMS, Treasury requires two business days: either to transmit the travel reimbursement to the traveler's financial institution for deposit (see paragraph 4); or to mail the travel reimbursement check to the traveler (see paragraph 7).

d. Due to the complexity of the PCS voucher, the target for processing reimbursement for PCS is generally a combined total of seven business days, counting from the time the Finance Services Center receives the PCS voucher.

(1) A PCS voucher for reimbursement will be processed into FMS within five business days after being received at the Finance Services Center.

(2) Following processing in FMS, Treasury requires two business days: either to transmit the travel reimbursement to the traveler's financial institution for deposit (see paragraph 4); or to mail the travel reimbursement check to the traveler (see paragraph 7).

6. PAYMENT INQUIRY LINE

a. The Finance Services Center in Austin, TX, operates a Payment Inquiry Line for travelers to learn when they will receive their reimbursement for TDY travel and for PCS travel.

b. The Payment Inquiry Line provides travelers with the payment date, payment amount, and the tracer or check number of their travel reimbursement.

(1) For travelers receiving travel reimbursement through EFT, the payment date is the date that Treasury transmitted the travel reimbursement payment to the traveler's financial institution for deposit (see paragraph 4). The tracer number allows for an audit trail of this electronic funds transfer.

(2) For travelers with a waiver from travel reimbursement through EFT, the payment date is the date that Treasury printed the travel reimbursement check for mailing to the traveler (see paragraph 7).

c. The Payment Inquiry Line is available Monday-Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Standard Time (CST).

d. The Payment Inquiry Line is an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System that is accessed as follows:

(1) Travelers may telephone the Payment Inquiry Line at: (512) 389-5380.

(2) Travelers will be asked to provide their nine-digit Travel Authorization Number in order to identify the specific travel event receiving the reimbursement payment. *(The Travel Authorization Number appears on the traveler's approved travel authorization document. The Travel Authorization Number begins with the traveler's three-digit station number.)*

7. WAIVERS

a. The waiver procedures for VA's EFT travel reimbursement policy apply until December 31, 1998 (see paragraph 7.f).

b. The waiver procedures are the same as the guidelines for obtaining a waiver under VA Directive 4112, DD/EFT Participation Policy. Those guidelines are repeated here as they apply to EFT for travel reimbursement.

c. The Fiscal/Finance activity will provide, should travelers request, instructions on submitting written requests for waiver of the Department's EFT travel reimbursement policy. Specifically, the request must:

(1) be addressed to the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs;

(2) include the traveler's name, Social Security Number, and duty station; and

(3) include a certification statement such as: "I certify that I do not have an account with a financial institution or an authorized payment agent that could be used for EFT payment."

d. The Fiscal/Finance activity will forward the written request for waiver to the Administration or Department CFO and verify that the request has been received.

e. The Fiscal/Finance activity will accept the receipt verification as acceptance and approval of said waiver.

f. VA's authority to provide a waiver from EFT travel reimbursement is valid only through 12-31-98. Effective 01-01-99, all reimbursement payments must be made via EFT with waivers available only from the Department of the Treasury.

8. Monitoring Adherence. The Office of the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Financial Operations (047F) and the traveler's Fiscal/Finance activity, in conjunction with that activity's CFO or Deputy CFO, will ensure compliance with the requirements of 31 CFR Part 208, VA Directive 4003 and the procedures in this Handbook.