

DECISION



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

FILE: B-216920

DATE: August 23, 1985

MATTER OF: George W. Lacey III - Relocation Allowances - Employee's Travel to New Duty Station

DIGEST:

Transferred employee who reported for duty at his new official station in January 1984 may not be paid for his travel expenses for a subsequent trip in July 1984 to fly his privately owned aircraft from his old to his new duty station. Employee's travel expense entitlement became fixed at the time he reported to his new post of duty in January 1984. Hence, he is entitled to payment for his own travel expenses from his old to his new duty station when he reported for duty, but not for his subsequent trip.

This decision is in response to a request by Mr. Walter G. Lobisser, Assistant Financial Manager, United States Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, Boston, Massachusetts, for an advance decision regarding the propriety of paying a reclaim travel voucher submitted by Mr. George W. Lacey III, an employee of the Customs Service. The voucher is for per diem allowances and transportation costs for Mr. Lacey's own travel incident to his change of permanent duty station from Springfield, Illinois, to Baltimore, Maryland. We hold that the voucher may not be paid.

The record shows that Mr. Lacey transferred from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, to the Customs Service in January 1984. He reported for duty at the Baltimore Office of Investigations of the Customs Service on January 22, 1984. In May 1984, he submitted a travel voucher covering the travel of his family to his new official station. Their travel took place from March 14 through March 17, 1984. Mr. Lacey did not make a claim for his own travel expenses to Baltimore at that time.

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In September 1984, Mr. Lacey submitted a travel voucher for a trip he took from Springfield to Baltimore in his privately owned aircraft on July 2, 1984. Mr. Lacey contends that he can select this trip for reimbursement since, under the Federal Travel Regulations, an employee may submit a claim for reimbursement of relocation expenses for a period up to 2 years after his transfer. Since he made numerous trips to Springfield and return to Baltimore, Mr. Lacey feels that he may claim any one of the trips as his relocation trip for purposes of payment of per diem and transportation costs.

The Customs Service contends that Mr. Lacey should claim the trip he took in January 1984, when he reported for duty at his new official station, as his relocation trip.

Section 5724, Title 5, United States Code, 1982, provides that the head of an agency, or his designee, may pay from government funds, the travel expenses of an employee transferred from one official station to another for permanent duty. The implementing regulations are found in Chapter 2, Part 2, of the Federal Travel Regulations, (September 1981) (FTR), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1984). Paragraph 2-2.1 states that per diem instead of subsistence expenses, transportation costs, and other travel expenses of the employee shall be allowed. In interpreting these statutory and regulatory provisions, we have held that when a transferred employee reports to and enters on duty at his new duty station, the change of station authorized in the travel order is accomplished and his travel expense reimbursement becomes fixed. 54 Comp. Gen. 301, 303 (1974); John W. Corwine, B-203492, December 7, 1982.

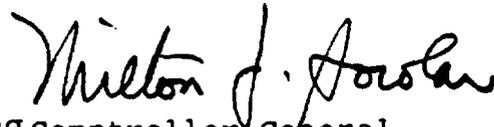
Here, Mr. Lacey reported for duty at the Baltimore Office of Investigations on January 22, 1984. His entitlement to travel expenses became fixed at that time. Any additional trips by Mr. Lacey between Springfield and Baltimore, including the claimed trip of July 2, 1984, are considered to have been made for personal reasons. Hence no per diem or transportation costs may be paid for the additional trips. Argy L. Hager, B-206354, June 8, 1982.

Mr. Lacey relies upon the 2-year period for travel allowed under the Federal Travel Regulations, but that provision does not support his claim. Paragraph 2-1.5a(2) of the FTR provides:

"Time limits for beginning travel and transportation. All travel, including that for the immediate family, and transportation, including that for household goods allowed under these regulations, shall be accomplished as soon as possible. The maximum time for beginning allowable travel and transportation shall not exceed 2 years from the effective date of the employee's transfer or appointment, * * *."

Although this provision allows up to 2 years for travel by an employee's immediate family and for transportation of household goods, it does not allow an employee to be reimbursed for his own travel to the new duty station after he has reported for duty at the new location. See the cases cited above.

Accordingly, Mr. Lacey is entitled to per diem and transportation costs for his travel from Springfield, Illinois, to Baltimore, Maryland, in January 1984 when he reported for duty at his new official station, if otherwise appropriate. However, his reclaim travel voucher for per diem and transportation costs for his trip of July 2, 1984, may not be certified for payment.



Acting Comptroller General
of the United States