

**DECISION**

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

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SEP 17 1976

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FILE: B-186331

DATE:

MATTER OF: Allen R. Lancaster - Claim for Environmental  
Pay - Evidence to Support

DIGEST: In absence of official records, claim of Air Force employee for environmental pay for handling explosives may be paid under best available evidence rule to the extent that work schedules and flight schedules involving explosives substantiate employee's claim. See decisions cited.

Major C. T. Woolsey, Chief of the Accounting and Finance Division, Headquarters Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center (AFLC), Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, requests an advance decision as to the propriety of certifying for payment the voucher of Mr. Allen R. Lancaster representing environmental pay. Mr. Lancaster is one of several employees who have filed claims with the Accounting and Finance Division for environmental pay. The employees' eligibility for environmental pay is not at issue. However, due to a misunderstanding of applicable regulations, Air Force supervisory personnel did not maintain records of the time periods during which the employees were entitled to environmental pay.

Mr. Lancaster's claim in the amount of \$215.04 covers the period from April 15, 1973, through April 20, 1974. The claims of other employees cover periods of 100 to 276 days. Environmental pay for employees was authorized by subchapter S8-7 of Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 532-1, as the employees handled Class A and B explosives aboard aircraft and participated in the onloading and offloading of said explosives.

In the absence of official records documenting the times at which environmental pay was authorized, Major Woolsey inquires as to whether the claims may be paid based on the employees' own estimates of the number of hours worked or whether the Air Force should make its own estimate based on available records. The records in the instant case are the work schedules of the employees and the average number of flights per month carrying explosives which occurred during the employees' hours of duty.

The rule with regard to evidence in support of claims is that in the absence of official records payment may be made on

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the basis of the most accurate estimate possible after consideration of all available records. Thus, we have held that in cases where it is known that over a period of time employees have performed duty for which they are entitled to additional pay and doubt exists only as to the particular days or hours on which qualifying work was performed, payment may be based on the most reasonable estimate after consideration of all available records. 50 Comp. Gen. 767 (1971); B-180206, July 16, 1974; B-170182, December 26, 1973.

Since the work schedules and the average number of qualifying flights per month during the scheduled hours of duty are the only records available as to the entitlement to environmental pay, we believe they may be properly used to substantiate the employees' claims. In this regard the Air Force should make its own estimate of the qualifying hours worked based on the work schedules and number of flights per month. To the extent that this estimate substantiates an employee's claim, payment may be made based on his claim. To the extent that this estimate does not substantiate the employee's claim, payment should be made for that portion of the claim which is substantiated. In a situation where the work schedule indicates that an employee performed qualifying work for a period not claimed by him, he would be entitled to environmental pay for the period indicated by the work schedule. The degree to which the work schedules substantiate the employees' claims for environmental pay is a factual determination which must be made on an individual basis after consideration of all available data.

Accordingly, the voucher may be certified for payment in accordance with the above guidelines.

R. F. KELLER

Deputy] Comptroller General  
of the United States