



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20549

Decision

Matter of: Calvin T. Farmer

File: B-252723

Date: August 17, 1993

DIGEST

The National Park Service required an employee to move from his private residence to government-owned quarters as a condition of employment in another position. The employee's claim for limited relocation expenses may be allowed since the relocation was clearly required as a condition of his new position, notwithstanding that the transfer occurred within the boundaries of a national park. See Gregory Stiles, B-230365, July 25, 1988.

DECISION

The National Park Service (NPS)¹ asks whether a claim for relocation expenses by its employee, Mr. Calvin T. Farmer, may be paid on the basis of our decision in Gregory Stiles, B-230365, July 25, 1988. For the following reasons, we allow his claim.

Mr. Farmer, a park ranger in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, applied for a position through a vacancy announcement under the Merit Promotion Program. He was selected from a register of qualified applicants, promoted to a higher grade position with different duties, and was required to occupy government housing as a condition of employment in his new position. The distance between his old and new offices is less than 1 mile. Both offices are in the Southern District of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but are in different subdistricts. Mr. Farmer moved into the government quarters on May 4, 1990.

¹Submitted by Edward L. Davis, Associate Director, Budget and Administration, Assistant to the Director for Human Resources, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC. Ref: F5023 (309).

The NPS paid for the shipment of Mr. Farmer's household goods because of the required occupancy condition.² The NPS also issued a travel authorization for miscellaneous expenses and mileage, and Mr. Farmer filed a voucher for relocation expenses in the amount of \$700.19. His claim was denied since there was no change of official station. However, the NPS now believes that the claim could be allowed on the basis of our decision in Gregory Stiles, B-230365, July 25, 1988.³

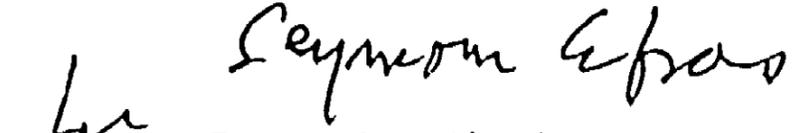
In Gregory Stiles, we held that the NPS may reimburse an employee for relocation expenses incident to a relocation from government-required quarters in Shenandoah National Park, to a privately-owned residence in the local community even though his transfer of duty stations occurred within park boundaries and the net increase in commuting distance was less than 10 miles. We did so because the employee's relocation was required by his change of official station since he had to vacate his government quarters.

In the instant case, the claimed relocation expenses are incident to a mandatory relocation from a privately-owned residence to government quarters. Although less than 1 mile apart and within park boundaries, the office where Mr. Farmer works in his new position is separate from the office where he worked in his old position. Those offices are also managed by different supervisors, and the duties of Mr. Farmer's new position are different from his old position. The primary factor is that he was required to relocate to take the new position. Therefore, Mr. Farmer necessarily incurred expenses in connection with the relocation. In all essential aspects, we thus believe that our decision in Gregory Stiles, B-230365, July 25, 1988, is applicable to the instant case.

²An employee may be reimbursed the cost of moving his household goods into or out of government quarters locally, not as an authorized change of duty station or relocation expense, but as an administrative cost of operating an installation, in circumstances where occupancy of the quarters is an agency requirement. See Gordon E. Warrington, 68 Comp. Gen. 324 (1989).

³Mr. Farmer's relocation expenses claim consists of \$700 in miscellaneous expenses under 41 C.F.R. § 302-3.3(a) (2) (1992) and \$0.19 for mileage under 41 C.F.R. § 302-2.1 (1992).

Accordingly, Mr. Farmer's claim is granted.


James F. Hinchman
General Counsel