

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

September 20, 2018

Federal Travel Regulation
GSA Bulletin FTR 18-09

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Calculating Actual Expense Reimbursement

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin clarifies that two methods are available for calculating actual expense reimbursement per Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) §§ 301-11.300 to 306.

2. What is the background of this bulletin? The FTR allows agencies to reimburse employees up to 300 percent (%) of the applicable maximum per diem rate under various circumstances including, but not limited to, when lodging and/or meals are not available within the prescribed allowances for a given temporary duty (TDY) location, and when a TDY location is subject to a Presidentially-Declared Disaster and the agency has issued a blanket actual expense authorization for the location. Although not directly stated, the FTR allows for two methods of calculating actual expense reimbursement. This bulletin describes the two methods agencies may use when calculating actual expense.

3. What is a per diem allowance? Per FTR § 300-3.1, the per diem allowance (also referred to as subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses of lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance consists of two elements — a maximum lodging expense allowance and a flat M&IE allowance. A per diem allowance will be paid for official travel except when reimbursement of actual subsistence expenses is warranted per FTR § 301-11.300.

4. What subsistence expenses are covered by actual expense? Actual expense reimbursement is allowed for the same subsistence expenses covered by the per diem allowance (i.e., lodging and M&IE). The maximum subsistence allowance an agency may authorize is 300% (rounded to the next higher dollar) of the applicable maximum per diem rate per FTR § 301-11.303. (Note: Agencies may authorize a lesser amount as established by agency policy.)

5. How does my agency calculate actual expense reimbursement? There are two ways an agency may calculate actual expense reimbursement.

a. Full itemization. This method requires the traveler to itemize all subsistence costs on the travel voucher. Subsistence costs are itemized daily to indicate the amount spent for lodging, each meal, and other allowable subsistence expenses (identified by type and amount for each expense). All expenses must be charged to the calendar day the expense was incurred. Receipts for each expense costing more than \$75 must be

provided to support the charge on the travel voucher. When the actual subsistence expenses incurred during any one day are less than the daily rate authorized, the traveler will be reimbursed only for the lesser amount. Under this method, the maximum daily lodging allowance and the daily M&IE are each multiplied separately by 300% (rounded up to the next higher dollar) so that the daily lodging and daily M&IE are capped at their respective multiplier amounts within the 300% ceiling. For example, actual expense-full itemization using a daily per diem rate of \$149 (\$94 for lodging and \$55 for M&IE) would be calculated as follows:

Daily Lodging:	\$94 x 3 =	\$282
Daily M&IE:	\$55 x 3 =	<u>\$165</u>
Maximum Actual Expense (combined lodging and M&IE)		\$447

b. No itemization. This method allows a traveler to apply the maximum amount possible to the lodging portion of their subsistence expense while remaining within the 300% ceiling. It requires the traveler to itemize lodging cost only. The M&IE allowance is payable without itemization of meals or receipts and is limited to the daily locality M&IE per diem (or a lesser amount as authorized), regardless of actual meal expenses. Under this method, the total per diem rate (lodging and M&IE combined) is multiplied by 300% (rounded to the next whole dollar) and then the locality M&IE rate is subtracted out. For example, actual expense-no itemization using a daily per diem rate of \$149 (\$94 for lodging and \$55 for M&IE) would be calculated as follows:

Total Daily Per Diem:	\$149 x 3 =	\$447
Minus Daily Locality M&IE:		<u>\$55</u>
Maximum for Lodging:		\$392

c. Comparison. A comparison of the subsistence amounts that may be paid using the actual expense method with full itemization versus no itemization indicates that the no itemization method may permit Federal employees to find lodging at a higher rate in an emergency situation while remaining within the bounds of the current actual expense ceiling (see below).

Method	M&IE	+	Lodging	=	Total
Actual expense-full itemization	\$165		\$282		\$447
Actual expense-no itemization	\$ 55		\$392		\$447

6. How may my agency identify the method of actual expense reimbursement authorized? The amount and reimbursement method authorized for each calendar day must be stated on the travel authorization or communicated and approved in a written addendum such as an e-mail to the travel authorization for other than a single trip authorization. A best practice should be used with the following guidelines:

a. Full itemization. The travel authorization or written addendum should show the maximum actual expense reimbursement authorized and provide a justification for it. It should also include a statement that a full itemization of all expenses by the traveler is required.

b. No itemization. The travel authorization or written addendum should show the M&IE rate for the TDY location and the maximum lodging amount and provide a justification for the actual expenses. It should also include a statement "No itemization of meals and incidental expenses is required. No receipts for meals are required."

7. What is the effective date of this bulletin? This bulletin is effective upon the date of publication.

8. When does this bulletin expire? This bulletin will remain in effect until explicitly cancelled or superseded.

9. Whom should I call for further information? For clarification of content, please contact Mr. Cy Greenidge, Office of Government-wide Policy, Office of Asset and Transportation Management at 202-219-2349 or by e-mail at travelpolicy@gsa.gov. Please cite GSA FTR Bulletin 18-09.

By delegation of the Administrator of General Services,



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