

DECISION



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

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FILE: B-184908

DATE:

MATTER OF: George M. Lightner - Relocation Expenses -
Mobile Home

DIGEST: Transferred employee who shipped 4,280 pounds of household goods separate from mobile home because carrier moving mobile home would not accept it weighing more than manufacturer's weight, may not be reimbursed for cost of that shipment. Allowance for movement of mobile home is in lieu of allowance for shipping household goods. Cost of storing trailer and rental of post office box are not reimbursable as miscellaneous expenses. Employee may be reimbursed for \$50.38, including spouse's driver's license, as miscellaneous expenses.

This matter arises from a request for an advance decision submitted by an authorized certifying officer of the Department of Agriculture, concerning the authority for reimbursing Mr. George M. Lightner for certain expenses incurred incident to his transfer of duty station.

Under the authority of Travel Authorization 10.01.00086, September 5, 1974, Mr. Lightner, a forester with the Forest Service, was transferred from Boise, Idaho, to Petersburg, Alaska. Mr. Lightner elected to have his mobile home moved at Government expense. According to a statement in the record from Mr. Lightner, he was advised by the carrier that was to move his mobile home, that they would not move a "mobile Home weighing more than the manufactured weight, including original furnishings, but not including personal effects." He had 4,280 pounds of household goods shipped separately at a cost of \$418.58, for which he is seeking reimbursement.

Mr. Lightner is also claiming in excess of the maximum allowable miscellaneous expense allowance. Based upon his salary, he may receive \$526.81 for miscellaneous expenses. He has already been paid \$450 for expenses relating to setting up his mobile home. In addition he is claiming the following items as miscellaneous expenses:

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Storage of mobile home	\$ 96.00
Telephone installation	5.25
Driver's license (employee)	5.00
Driver's license (spouse)	5.00
Car license plates	17.00
Heat tape to prevent water pipes from freezing	11.50
Recepticle to convert dryer connection to wiring	2.63
Post Office Box rental	4.05
Mobile home registration	4.00
	<u>\$150.43</u>

The maximum amount still available for reimbursement is \$76.81. The approving official questions the propriety of reimbursement for the storage charge, post office box rental, and the spouse's driver's license. The certifying officer questions the first two items, but believes that the cost of the spouse's driver's license is reimbursable. We agree regarding the driver's license, and we will consider the other two items and the cost of shipping the household goods below.

Reimbursement of the cost of moving a mobile home incident to an employee's transfer is authorized by 5 U.S.C. § 5724(b) (1970). Eligibility is set out in paragraph 2-7.1a of the Federal Travel Regulations, FPMR 101-7. (May 1973) (FTR), which provides, in pertinent part, that:

"An employee who is entitled to transportation of his household goods under these regulations shall, in lieu of such transportation, be entitled to an allowance, as provided in this part, for the transportation of a mobile home for use as a residence. * * *"

It is clear that the payment of the cost of transporting a mobile home is in lieu of paying for the shipment of household goods. Both allowances cannot be paid for the same transfer, even if they would not, in the aggregate, exceed the maximum allowance for the shipment of household goods. 51 Comp. Gen. 27 (1971), and B-184091, November 26, 1975. Therefore, Mr. Lightner may not be reimbursed for the cost incurred in shipping the 4,280 pounds of household goods separate from his trailer.

Reimbursement of miscellaneous expenses is controlled by FTR para. 2-3.1, which provides, in pertinent part, that:

"a. Purpose for allowance. The miscellaneous expenses allowance authorized by 2-3.2 and 2-3.3 is for the purpose of defraying various contingent costs associated with discontinuing residence at one location and establishing residence at a new location in connection with an authorized or approved permanent change of station.

"b. Types of costs covered. The allowance is related to expenses that are common to living quarters, furnishings, household appliances, and to other general types of costs inherent in relocation of a place of residence. The types of costs intended to be reimbursed under the allowance include but are not limited to the following:

* * * * *

"(2) Fees for unblocking and blocking and related expenses in connection with relocating a mobile home, but not the transportation expenses allowed under 2-7.3 * * *."

Types of costs not covered under miscellaneous expenses are listed in FTR para. 2-3.1c. One pertinent exclusion is: "(11) Subsistence, transportation, or mileage expenses in excess of the amounts reimbursed as per diem or other allowances under these regulations." Finally, FTR para. 2-7.3a(3) lists those charges that are not payable as part of the cost of transporting a mobile home. That section provides that:

"Allowances shall not include costs of preparing mobile homes for movement, maintenance, repairs, storage, insurance for valuation of homes above carriers' maximum liabilities nor charges designated in the tariffs as 'Special Service.' (See 2-3 which relates to the miscellaneous expense allowance.)"

According to the record, Mr. Lightner was required to put his mobile home in storage because the only bridge leading into the

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mobile home park that could carry his mobile home was being reconstructed when he arrived in Alaska. Storage charges are excluded from the transportation allowance. We do not believe that such a charge can be included within FTR para. 2-3.1b(2) quoted above. We also believe that to reimburse Mr. Lightner for the storage charge as a miscellaneous expense would be to reimburse an expense in excess of a specific maximum allowance, which is prohibited by exclusion 11 quoted above. Therefore, Mr. Lightner may not be reimbursed for the cost of storing his mobile home.

With regard to the cost of renting a post office box, in B-163107, May 18, 1973, we held that such a rental charge was not reimbursable as a miscellaneous expense. We see no reason to depart from that holding in this case.

The vouchers submitted are being returned and may be certified for payment only in accordance with this decision, and \$50.38, since it is within the amount still available, may be allowed as miscellaneous expenses for the remaining items listed above including driver's license for spouse.

R.F. KELLER

~~Deputy~~ Comptroller General
of the United States