

00797

DECISION



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

FILE: B-186452

DATE: DEC 22 1976

MATTER OF: Arlo Landolt - Reimbursement for Transportation
and Storage of Household Goods - Evidence of
Weight.

DIGEST: Employee who transported his household
goods by rental vehicle furnished list
of items with corresponding weights ob-
tained by weighing them on bathroom
scale. Method of weighing affords basis
for concluding that weight obtained
reasonably approximates actual weight
and, in view of small size of shipment
(902 pounds), error would be de minimis.
Employee may be reimbursed actual expenses
of transportation and storage to extent
they do not exceed amounts reimbursable
under commuted rate system. However,
cost of cardboard wardrobes used for
transportation are not reimbursable
since they became employee's property.

This action is in response to a request from Leon R. Thomas,
an authorized certifying officer of the National Science Founda-
tion (NSF), for an advance decision concerning the propriety of
payment of the claim of Dr. Arlo Landolt for reimbursement for
the expense of transporting his household goods incident to a
transfer.

The record shows that, incident to a transfer from Baton
Rouge, Louisiana, to Washington, D.C., Dr. Landolt transported
his own household goods in a rental vehicle. He did not obtain
proper weight certification but has furnished a list of the items
transported together with their respective weights obtained by
weighing the items on a bathroom scale. The total weight of house-
hold goods on the list is 902 pounds. Dr. Landolt is claiming
\$156.48, consisting of the actual expense of the truck rental
(\$126.34), purchase of two cardboard wardrobes (\$9.54), and 10
days temporary storage (\$20.60). Mr. Thomas questions the suf-
ficiency of Dr. Landolt's list of items and weights for the pur-
pose of reimbursement. He also asks whether Dr. Landolt may be
reimbursed on a commuted rate basis or for the actual expense of
the rental vehicle.

D-186452

Reimbursement under the commuted rate system to employees of the expense of transportation of their household goods incident to a transfer is governed by the provisions of part 2-8 of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), FPMR 101-7 (May 1973). Paragraph 2-8.3a(3) of the FTR sets forth the documentation required to establish entitlement under the commuted rate system. While a strict reading of this regulation would indicate that only weight certificates attesting to the actual weight of the goods transported, or in lieu thereof, a constructive weight established in accordance with FTR para. 2-7.2b(4), would be sufficient to support reimbursement, we previously have held that estimated weights may provide a basis for reimbursement on other than a commuted rate basis. In this connection we stated the following in 38 Comp. Gen. 554, 555 (1959):

"When, however, as here, the evidence available affords a basis for concluding that the actual weight of the goods shipped reasonably approximates the estimated weight, the employee may be reimbursed for his actual expenses to the extent they do not exceed the amount which would have been payable for such estimated weight at the applicable commuted rates."

See also 48 Comp. Gen. 115 (1968); and B-181334, March 29, 1975.

We are of the opinion that Dr. Landolt's list of items and weights provides adequate evidence that the weight of household goods actually transported reasonably approximates the weight obtained by using a non-certificated scale. We note particularly that the weights are for individual items and are reasonable for the items claimed. Moreover, since the total weight is only 902 pounds, we are of the view that any probable error in weight would be de minimis.

In view of the foregoing, the voucher, which is returned, may be certified for payment upon determination by the certifying officer that the amounts claimed for vehicle rental and storage do not exceed the amounts that would be payable under the commuted rate system for transportation and storage of household goods. The cost of the cardboard wardrobes may not be reimbursed

B-186452

since they became the property of Dr. Landolt and may be used by him. B-169107, April 21, 1971, and B-144518, December 13, 1960.

R. F. KELLER
Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States