

DOCUMENT RESUME

02001 - [A1322279]

[Expenses of Househunting Trip]. B-188051. May 4, 1977. 2 pp.

Decision re: David A. Stark; by Paul G. Dembling (for Aimer B. Staats, Comptroller General).

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation: Compensation (305).

Contact: Office of the General Counsel: Civilian Personnel.

Budget Function: General Government: Central Personnel Management (805).

Organization Concerned: Forest Service.

Authority: F.T.R., para. 2.4 2. B-188106 (1977). B-182503 (1975).

Orris C. Huet, Department of Agriculture Certifying Officer, requested a decision regarding payment for additional househunting expenses for a Forest Service employee who was erroneously authorized a car rental. The employee may only be reimbursed for the cost of normal transportation to and from the airport and place of lodging. (BRS)

02007

DECISION



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

CARLAN
CIV. Pers

FILE: 3-188051

DATE: May 4, 1977

MATTER OF: David A. Stark - Expenses of househunting trip

DIGEST: Transferred employee who was erroneously authorized car rental for use during househunting trip may be reimbursed only for constructive cost of normal transportation to and from airport since FTR para. 2-4.2 prohibits reimbursement of cost of local transportation during househunting trip except for normal cost of transportation between depots, airports, etc. and place of lodging.

This action is in response to a letter dated November 11, 1976, from Ms. Orris C. Huet, Authorized Certifying Officer, U. S. Department of Agriculture, requesting a decision on the propriety of certifying for payment a reclaim voucher submitted in favor of Mr. David A. Stark, an employee of the Forest Service, for additional reimbursement of househunting expenses incurred incident to his official transfer from Norwood, Colorado, to Custer, South Dakota.

By travel order dated March 19, 1976, Mr. Stark and his wife were authorized travel from Norwood to Custer. The order states that on March 17, 1976, the Administrative Staff Officer "granted verbal approval for a round trip of employee and spouse via commercial airline and rental auto at above per diem rates to seek permanent residence at new official station, prior to permanent transfer."

Mr. Stark and his wife performed the travel in accordance with the travel order and submitted a voucher for reimbursement of expenses incurred while on their househunting trip. Mr. Stark's claim for the one-week car rental fee was partially disallowed since the Federal Travel Regulations prohibit reimbursement during househunting trips "for expenses of local transportation in the locality of the new official station, except that normal costs of transportation between depots, airports, etc., and place of lodging shall be allowed." FTR para. 2-4.2. Mr. Stark was reimbursed \$56.89 to cover the cost of transportation by rental car between the airport and his place of lodging.

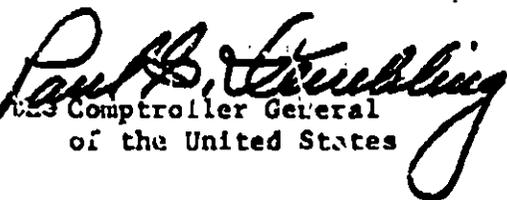
B-188051

The Forest Service has submitted a reclaim voucher in the amount of \$38.69 representing the disallowed portion of Mr. Stark's claim for the rental car fee on the grounds that it is not a claim for local transportation but a necessary cost of transportation to and from the airport since there was no place to return the rental car in Custer.

The travel regulations prohibit the use of a rental vehicle at Government expense for local transportation during a house-hunting trip. FIR para. 2-4.2; Matter of Charles O. Dougherty, B-186106, March 3, 1977; Matter of J. P. Clark, B-182503, January 16, 1975. Moreover, the regulations specifically limit reimbursement of the cost of local transportation to the normal costs of transportation between the place of lodging and depots, airport, etc. Rental vehicles are not normally utilized for transportation to and from an airport, but are generally used as a means of local transportation after arrival at the place of lodging. Therefore, the authorization of a rental vehicle was in error whether it was authorized as a means of local transportation during Mr. Stark's visit or as a means of transportation to and from the airport.

Since the authorization was issued in contravention of the Federal Travel Regulations, which may not be waived or modified, there is no authority for paying the rental car expenses, even though they were erroneously authorized and incurred. Dougherty. However, since Mr. Stark is entitled to reimbursement for the cost of transportation to and from the airport, he may be paid the constructive cost of the normal cost of such transportation. See Dougherty.

The voucher may not be certified for payment.


Paul B. Stuchling
Comptroller General
of the United States