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**DECISION**



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

**FILE: B-188702**

**DATE: MAY 18 1978**

**MATTER OF: Henry J. Schroder - Funeral Travel**

**DIGEST:** U.S. Customs employee in Houston was authorized travel day on Monday to attend training in Bethesda, Maryland, but departed on prior Saturday for his own convenience. Employee was notified of death of family member on Monday. Employee may be reimbursed for travel to point of abandonment of official duty. Return travel was personal travel and at expense of employee. Employee should be charged annual leave after abandonment of duty. See cited decisions.

By a letter dated March 25, 1977, Richard F. Byrd, an authorized certifying officer with the U.S. Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, requests an advance decision regarding the funeral travel and leave entitlement of Mr. Henry J. Schroder, an employee of the Customs Service in Houston, Texas.

The record shows that Mr. Schroder was scheduled to attend a course in Written Communications for Auditors in Bethesda, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., from August 10-13, 1976. Monday, August 9, 1976, was an authorized travel day. For his own convenience Mr. Schroder departed Houston on Saturday, August 7, 1976, leaving his home at 6:30 a.m. On Monday, August 9 Mr. Schroder was notified at his hotel in Bethesda of a death in his immediate family and was authorized emergency leave from August 10-13, 1976, to attend the funeral. Mr. Schroder exchanged the return portion of his airline ticket from Washington to Houston which was originally purchased with a Government Travel Request (GTR) for a ticket from Washington D.C., to Quincy, Illinois, to Houston, Texas. Mr. Schroder paid the additional cost from personal funds.

In light of the above facts the certifying officer asks the following questions:

- "(1) Is the Government obligated to pay all or part of the round trip ticket, purchased with a GTR from Houston to Bethesda and return?, and

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"(2) Should Mr. Schroder be charged annual leave for Monday, August 9, 1976."

Additionally, the certifying officer included a voucher from the employee in the amount of \$17.50 covering transportation from the employee's residence to the airport in Houston (\$6.25), limousine service from the airport in Washington to a hotel (\$4.50), and actual subsistence expense in Washington on August 9, 1976 (\$6.75).

With regard to the first question we have held in our decisions that an employee is entitled to travel expenses, including per diem, up to the point he abandons his official duty. See 32 Comp. Gen. 571 (1953); 23 id. 237 (1943). Since Mr. Schroder was required to be in Washington on Monday when he was notified of the death in his immediate family in order to perform temporary duty the following day, his premature departure does not affect his travel expenses entitlement. Accordingly, only the cost of the return portion of the airline ticket, purchased with GTR, should be recovered from the employee. Question 1 is so answered.

With regard to the second question the employee should be charged annual leave after the time he abandoned his official duty. Question 2 is answered accordingly.

With regard to the expenses claimed on the voucher in the amount of \$17.50 for travel to and from the airports in Houston and Washington and for subsistence, since these expenses were incurred prior to the time the employee abandoned his official duty station, they are allowable. Accordingly, the voucher may be certified for payment, if otherwise proper.

~~SECRET~~  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States