

11,004 PL II

**DECISION**



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

FILE: B-195226

DATE: August 10, 1979

MATTER OF: George E. Townsend - Travel expenses

*personnel  
names*

**DIGEST:** An employee authorized to use taxicabs for official business while on travel status may not be reimbursed for taxicab fares incurred to travel between his motel and restaurants, since restaurant facility was available at his motel, although for personal preference he chose not to use it. The reimbursement for taxicab fares in such a case is not authorized by the applicable regulation which allows the cost of travel to restaurants when a restaurant is unavailable at the temporary duty site.

Mr. George E. Townsend, an employee of the International Communication Agency, Department of State, requests reconsideration of his claim denied by our Claims Division on April 17, 1979. The claim is for reimbursement of taxicab fares ~~he incurred to travel between his temporary lodgings and restaurants for meals~~ while on a temporary duty assignment. Because the expenditures were not necessary, as restaurant facilities were available at his temporary lodging, the claim may not be paid.

*DLG-00613*

From October 24 to November 12, 1977, Mr. Townsend was on a temporary duty assignment to attend a training seminar at Redwood City, California. He stayed at a motel which had a restaurant on the facility. While lunch was available at the training seminar, Mr. Townsend had to secure breakfast and dinner at a restaurant. Because he deemed the meals "quite expensive" at the motel restaurant and because he had avoided this restaurant (it was part of a national chain) for 10 years due to "bad food," Mr. Townsend used taxicabs to travel to other restaurants.

Mr. Townsend's "Authorization of Official Travel" of October 4, 1977, stated that he was "authorized the use of taxicabs for official purposes." After completion of the travel, his travel orders were amended on February 13, 1978, to grant special approval for the use of taxicabs not to exceed \$6 per trip to travel between the motel and the "nearest restaurant." The amendment was done on the basis of Department of State's Foreign Affairs Manual, Volume 6, Sections 123 and 141r

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(6 FAM §§ 123, 141r) which respectively provide that travel expenses may be approved after travel commences when there are unusual circumstances making advance approval impracticable and that travel expenses to procure meals at the "nearest available place" are authorized when meals are unavailable at the temporary duty station.

We find that Mr. Townsend has failed to set forth sufficient justification for his avoidance of the restaurant at his lodging site. He alleges that the travel to other restaurants was necessary because the motel restaurant was expensive, the food was unsatisfactorily prepared, and because he had avoided this restaurant chain for 10 years. We deem these reasons insufficient justification. The restaurants in question have a national reputation for being moderate in their cost of meals, and what may have been his experience 10 years ago with other restaurants in this national chain cannot be attributed to this specific restaurant within the chain. Therefore, Mr. Townsend's travel to other restaurants appears to have been done as a matter of personal preference, and not necessity for which he could receive reimbursement. See Arthur L. Hebert and David R. Brindle, B-190657, May 19, 1978.

Since, as indicated above, a suitable restaurant was available at the employee's motel, the amendment to his travel order approving use of taxicab "for the purpose of procuring meals between motel and nearest restaurant" does not constitute a basis for favorable action.

Accordingly, we sustain our Claims Division's denial of this claim.

  
Acting Comptroller General  
of the United States