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DECISION



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

FILE: B-197648

DATE: July 22, 1980

MATTER OF: Benjamin C. Ross -- Temporary
Quarters Subsistence Expenses]

[CLAIM for

DIGEST: Employee seeks reimbursement for subsistence expenses while occupying temporary quarters in home of friends incident to change of permanent duty station. Claim for lodging expenses may not be paid since no information was furnished that friends incurred additional expense to furnish employee lodging. Claim for reimbursement of food expenses may be paid if employee submits additional information as to where meals were obtained and certifying officer determines that amount is reasonable under circumstances.

This advance decision is in reply to a request by Judith B. Czarsty, a certifying officer of the General Accounting Office (GAO), for a determination of the proper amount that Benjamin C. Ross, an employee of the GAO, may be reimbursed for temporary quarters subsistence expenses (TQSE).

Mr. Ross was transferred from Washington, D.C., to Chicago, Illinois, and resided with friends in Chicago from October 31, 1977, to November 15, 1977. Mr. Ross certifies that he paid \$226.50 toward the rent during his stay. He submitted a travel voucher on October 16, 1979, in which he attached his TQSE claim for expenses incurred for 10 days from October 31, 1977, to November 9, 1977. Mr. Ross claimed \$22.65 a day for lodging expenses and \$3.60 a day for meals. The total claim was \$262.50 which was the maximum allowable under the travel regulation. See Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) para. 2-5.4c (FPMR 101-7) May 1973. The certifying officer disallowed the claim based on two decisions of our Office, 52 Comp. Gen. 78 (1972) and Carl E. Williams, B-187419, June 1, 1977. They require lodging expenses with friends to be reasonable and related to the actual cost of providing lodgings to the employee. We note that those decisions involve lodgings with relatives. However, the principles stated therein have been applied to lodgings with friends. See Guy H. Carr, B-193130, May 3, 1979.

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Mr. Ross resubmitted his TQSE claim on a voucher dated November 11, 1979. This time instead of dividing the \$226.50 he paid towards rent by 10 days, he divided that total by 14 days and he claimed that he spent \$16.18 a day on lodging. In that claim Mr. Ross also recomputed his meal expenses and he claimed \$120.70 for meals during the same 10-day period that he had claimed \$36 on his previous voucher. Mr. Ross claimed on the second voucher that his meal and lodging expenses were \$283.82. The certifying officer asks for our assistance in determining what amount Mr. Ross may be reimbursed for TQSE during the period in question.

We have held that where an employee seeks reimbursement for temporary quarters occupied at the home of a friend or relative, his claim may not be paid where the employee has not furnished information as to whether the friend or relative incurred additional expenses to furnish the employee lodgings. Guy H. Carr, supra. The burden is on the employee to supply necessary information supporting a claim and it is not sufficient to show merely that the amount claimed is less than commercial rates or the maximum allowable. Richard W. Metzler, B-191673, December 5, 1978.

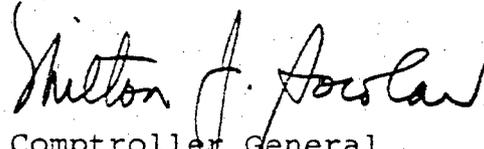
In Mr. Ross' case, he has furnished the amount paid to his friends for lodging. However, he has not furnished information concerning his friends' additional expenses--whether they performed extra work or hired extra help to clean the home, etc. Accordingly the claim for lodging expenses may not be paid on the basis of the present record.

The next issue involves Mr. Ross' entitlement for reimbursement for food costs. The employing agency must apply the test of whether the food costs were reasonable and the evaluation of reasonableness must be made on the facts of each case. Carl E. Williams, supra. The fact that Mr. Ross only claimed \$3.60 a day for food in his first voucher should not influence the decision on the reasonableness of his restated claim because it appears that Mr. Ross mistakenly claimed that amount in the belief that he would be reimbursed for total lodging costs claimed and then could receive only \$3.60 a day for food.

In order to determine the reasonableness of the claim for reimbursement of food expenses Mr. Ross should be requested to furnish information as to whether the amounts claimed represent meals purchased in restaurants, at his friends' home, or

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a combination of both. The determination may then be made on the basis of statistics and other information gathered by Government agencies regarding such costs in the Chicago area. See Jesse A. Burks, 56 Comp. Gen. 604 (1977).

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Milton J. Fowler".

For the Comptroller General
of the United States