

**DECISION**

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

**FILE:** B-209250**DATE:** April 12, 1983**MATTER OF:** Albert L. Kemp, Jr.

**DIGEST:** Employee whose household goods were shipped under the actual expense method must repay Government for charge by carrier for snow removal. Since it is the employee's responsibility to provide the carrier access to his household goods and thus to see that his driveway is passable, there is no authority under applicable statute or regulations for the Government to pay for snow removal in these circumstances.

An authorized certifying officer for the Department of Health and Human Services has requested an advance decision concerning an employee's responsibility to bear the cost of snow removal charges made by a carrier in connection with the shipment of his household goods under a Government Bill of Lading (GBL). Because it is the employee's obligation to make his household goods accessible to the carrier, we hold that the employee is responsible for the cost of snow removal in these circumstances.

Mr. Albert L. Kemp, Jr. was appointed to a Senior Executive Service position with the Department of Health and Human Services in St. Louis, Missouri. He was issued travel orders authorizing shipment of his household goods from Kansas City to St. Louis under the actual expense method, and they were shipped on February 11, 1982, under GBL No. K-0964384, issued February 5, 1982. Upon arrival at Mr. Kemp's residence on February 11, the carrier determined that its trailer could not negotiate the 1/4 mile driveway to the house, and at the carrier's specific request, shuttle service was authorized by the contracting officer. In April 1982 the agency received the bill for shipment of Mr. Kemp's household goods and found it included not only additional charges for shuttle service but also a charge of \$378 for removal of snow from the driveway. An inquiry revealed this service was provided at the request of the employee's wife. The contracting officer was unaware of this request and did not authorize this service when the shuttle was approved. The certifying officer, therefore, inquires whether the cost of snow removal may be paid by the Government in connection with Mr. Kemp's transfer, or whether the employee should be billed for the snow removal charge paid to carrier upon its presentation of the GBL.

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Section 5724(a) of title 5, United States Code, grants to the President discretionary authority to prescribe regulations for the payment of travel and transportation expenses of employees transferred in the interest of the Government from one official station to another. The expenses of transporting, packing, crating, temporarily storing, draying, and unpacking household goods and personal effects not in excess of 11,000 pounds net weight are authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5724(a)(2).

Implementing regulations for transportation and temporary storage of household goods are found in the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7, November 1981), Chapter 2, Part 8. The allowable charges when an employee ships by the actual expense method are stated in FTR para. 2-8.3b(3) as follows:

"(3) Allowable charges. The actual costs of transportation of household goods within the authorized weight limits will be allowed at Government expense. Also within that weight limit the actual costs for packing, crating, unpacking, drayage incident to transportation, and necessary accessorial services shall be allowed."

In the case of household goods, accessorial charges include, but are not limited to, charges for packing or crating and unpacking, furnishing wardrobe and mattress cartons, extra pickup or delivery services such as shuttle service or multiple pickup points, hoisting and lowering charges, moving pianos, and waiting time. A-49009 and B-45107, May 17, 1957; Practices of Motor Common Carriers of Household Goods, 17 M.C.C. 467, 490 (1939). Carriers may also provide special or miscellaneous services performed at the request of a customer for which an hourly rate is charged. 49 C.F.R. 1056.3 (1980). Removal of snow from a customer's driveway falls generally within the latter category.

However, it is the responsibility of an employee to make his goods accessible to the carrier. As a part of this responsibility, it is the employee's obligation to see that his driveway is passable and that the carrier's equipment otherwise has access to his residence. If Mr. Kemp had hired a third party to clear his driveway of snow before

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the arrival of the carrier, the cost of plowing his driveway would have been significantly less and it would not be considered a reimbursable cost of transporting his household goods. The fact that this service was obtained from a carrier and billed to the Government as an additional labor charge under the GBL does not change the fact that the service was necessary to fulfill the employee's rather than the Government's obligation. Accordingly, we find no basis to authorize the payment of this expense.

The charge in the amount of \$378 for snow removal should be recovered from the employee.

*for* *Multon J. Fowler*  
Comptroller General  
of the United States