

**DECISION**

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

*Handwritten:* 23596

**FILE:** B-207967

**DATE:** November 16, 1982

**MATTER OF:** Guy T. Easter - Reimbursement For Shipment  
and Storage of Utility Trailer

**DIGEST:** Employee who was transferred to a new duty station claims reimbursement for the cost of transporting a bicycle trailer to his new residence and for temporary storage of the trailer prior to shipment. The costs of transporting and storing a bicycle trailer are reimbursable by the Government since such a trailer may properly be categorized as a "household good" as defined in paragraph 2-1.4h of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR). Moreover, the FTR does not specifically prohibit the shipment of a bicycle trailer as a household good.

This decision is in response to a request from Mr. Larry C. Greer, Acting Regional Finance Officer with the Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of the Interior, in Denver, Colorado, concerning the propriety of reimbursing Mr. Guy T. Easter for the cost of moving and storing a utility trailer incident to his transfer. The issue presented is whether a bicycle trailer is included in the definition of "household goods" and therefore eligible to be transported at Government expense. For the reasons stated below, a bicycle trailer may be considered a household good as that term is defined in the applicable regulations. Therefore, the voucher submitted by Mr. Easter may be certified for payment if otherwise correct.

Mr. Easter, an employee of the Bureau of Reclamation, was transferred from Walla Walla, Washington, to Guernsey, Wyoming, effective March 11, 1982. Mr. Easter was authorized relocation expenses, including the cost of transporting his household goods from his home in Milton-Freewater, Oregon, to his new duty station in Guernsey. Mr. Easter arranged to have his household goods shipped to Guernsey by a commercial carrier on March 5, 1982. Among those household goods was a 3 foot

by 3 foot trailer weighing 720 pounds, which has been alternately referred to as a "utility" trailer (by the Bureau of Reclamation) and a "bicycle" trailer (by Mr. Easter).

In processing Mr. Easter's travel and transportation voucher, the Bureau of Reclamation determined that the trailer in question was not a "household good" as defined by the Federal Travel Regulations, FPMR 101-7 (September 1981)(FTR), paragraph 2-1.4h. Therefore, the Bureau concluded that Mr. Easter should not have been reimbursed for the cost of transporting his trailer. Since Mr. Easter received a travel advance, the Bureau issued a Bill for Collection in the amount of \$302.51 in an effort to recoup the cost of transporting the trailer.

Instead of paying the Bureau as directed on May 28, 1982, Mr. Easter submitted a reclaim voucher requesting that the Government reconsider its disallowance of the rejected portion of his claim. Mr. Easter's appeal was based on his classification of the trailer as a bicycle trailer, and his belief that "bicycles are a part of household goods and a bicycle trailer, the purpose of which is to haul the bicycles, should be covered under household goods."

Prior to making its determination, the Bureau has asked this Office to rule on the propriety of paying Mr. Easter's claim. We conclude that the reclaim voucher submitted by Mr. Easter may be certified for payment.

Section 5724 of Title 5, United States Code (1976) provides that an employee permanently transferred from one official duty station to another in the Government's interest is entitled to transportation (including temporary storage) of his household goods and personal effects at Government expense, or reimbursement therefor, subject to such conditions and limitations as the head of the agency concerned may prescribe. Some uncertainty has arisen concerning the types of goods for which transportation is authorized under section 5724, since the provision itself contains no definition of the term "household goods."

In an effort to clarify this matter, the General Services Administration provided a definition of "household goods" in the regulation it promulgated as part of the Federal Travel Regulations in order to implement section 5724. Paragraph 2-1.4h of the FTR defines household goods as personal property which may be transported legally in interstate commerce and which belongs to an employee and his immediate family at the time of shipment. Specifically, the provision states that the term "household goods" "includes household furnishings, equipment and appliances, furniture, clothing, books, and similar property. It does not include \* \* \* such items as automobiles, station wagons, motorcycles and similar motor vehicles, airplanes, mobile homes, camper trailers, boats, birds, pets, livestock, cordwood [or] building materials \* \* \*."

In this case, Mr. Easter states that his trailer should not be categorized along with cars, boats, mobile homes and camper trailers (and thus, should not be excluded from the category of "household goods") since it is not motorized and by law does not require a license plate. (The agency disputes the latter claim, stating that a trailer license is indeed required in Wyoming.) Mr. Easter further maintains that since he uses his trailer to haul bicycles, which should be classified as "household goods" for recreational purposes, the trailer should be viewed as a "household good" as well. We agree.

We have previously stated that "household goods and personal effects" are general terms, not lending themselves to precise definition. The terms vary in scope depending upon the context in which they are used. It has been our view, however, that in ordinary and usual usage, they refer to particular kinds of personal property associated with the home and person. As generally understood, the term "household goods" refers to furniture and furnishings or equipment used in and about a place of residence for the comfort and accommodation of the members of a family. 53 Comp. Gen. 159 (1973); 52 Comp. Gen. 479 (1973).

We have held that certain items in the nature of personal recreation equipment may come within the definition of household goods. See Henry L. Dupray,

B-191724, March 29, 1979, in which we allowed reimbursement for the shipment of an employee's portable swimming pool. Notwithstanding the lack of preciseness of the term, however, we note that various items which may be used by employees for recreational purposes, such as boats, airplanes, motorcycles and camper trailers, are specifically excluded from the scope of "household goods" under paragraph 2-1.4h of the FTR. See 44 Comp. Gen. 65 (1964). In this regard, we note that the applicable regulations contain no specific language which would prohibit shipment of a bicycle or utility trailer as a household good.

Although we have not issued a decision specifically addressing the transportation of bicycles, we believe that bicycles owned by an employee are the type of personal property so closely associated with his home and person as to come within the scope of the term "household goods." Furthermore, we believe that a trailer used by an employee to haul personal recreational equipment such as bicycles may also be defined as a household good, since the purpose of such a trailer is to facilitate the employee's use of his recreational equipment. The fact that a trailer may or may not be licensed is not necessarily relevant to such a determination. Rather, in categorizing an item, we must look primarily to the character of that particular good. In this case, we have found a sufficient connection between the employee's trailer and his residence and family to justify classification of the trailer as a "household good." In this regard, see also our decision B-154294, June 26, 1964, in which we allowed reimbursement for the shipment of an employee's luggage trailer.

Although Mr. Easter was authorized transportation of 11,000 pounds of household goods in connection with his transfer, he actually shipped only 5,860 pounds of furnishings to Guernsey, including the trailer in question. Since Mr. Easter's furnishings were thus well under the 11,000 pound limit, we have no objection to reimbursing him for shipment of the 720 pound bicycle trailer.

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Accordingly, the voucher submitted by Mr. Easter  
may be certified for payment if otherwise correct.

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