



Comptroller General
of the United States

122796

Washington, D.C. 20548

Decision

Matter of: Ray R. Schuler

File: B-255997

Date: June 3, 1994

DIGEST

A transferred employee was authorized to move his household goods under a government bill of lading (GBL). He chose to move himself, and, although directed by the agency to do so, did not obtain weight certificates. The agency denied his claim due to the lack of weight certificates. The lack of a weight certificate does not affect the employee's reimbursement for moving his own goods when the GBL method is authorized so long as the evidence indicates that he actually incurred the expenses incident to the move and his total actual expenses do not exceed what the government estimates it would have paid to move the estimated weight of the goods by commercial carrier under a GBL.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a request for an advance decision concerning reimbursement for expenses incurred by Mr. Ray R. Schuler, an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS), for the movement of his household goods pursuant to a permanent change of station. For the reasons that follow, Mr. Schuler may be reimbursed.

Mr. Schuler was transferred from Renton, Washington, to Olympia, Washington, by travel authorization dated June 10, 1993. He was authorized to ship 6,000 pounds of household goods by the actual expense method (government bill of lading) (GBL)² at an estimated cost of \$1,847.62. The

¹The request was submitted by Sandra S. Williams, an Authorized Certifying Officer, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Finance and Management, National Finance Center, reference: FSD-1 RJP.

²Under the GBL method, the government, not the employee, is the shipper and the government pays the carrier the applicable transportation charges. 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-2(a) (1993).

travel authorization also states that shipment of household goods is "based on actual weight receipts."

Mr. Schuler chose to move his own household goods and rented a moving van on three separate occasions between July 17, and August 21, 1993, and has claimed \$295.26 plus \$8.84 for mileage. He did not obtain weight certificates, but he did submit receipts for the truck rentals. The agency disallowed Mr. Schuler's claim since, due to the lack of weight certificates, neither a General Services Administration (GSA) cost comparison, nor the total weight of the goods transported could be determined. The agency concludes that it has no point of reference to determine if Mr. Schuler exceeded his authorized weight allowance. Thus, the agency questions whether it should reimburse Mr. Schuler the actual expenses he incurred on the three separate truck rentals, or just pay for a one-time trip rental.

Mr. Schuler argues that, under the guidance issued by the Soil Conservation Service for transfer allowances and relocation information, SCS-FNM-38, there is no requirement for weight certificates under the GBL method when an employee moves his household goods himself by rental truck.

We agree with Mr. Schuler's reading of the Soil Conservation Service's guidance. The SCS Transfer Allowances and Relocation booklet in section IV does not require a weight certificate except under the Commuted Rate method. The guidance under the Actual Expenses (GBL) method states that payment is limited to actual expenses (e.g., truck rental, packing materials, gasoline, etc.), not to exceed the amount established for shipment under a GBL.

This guidance is consistent with regulations of the General Services Administration (GSA). Under GSA's Centralized Household Goods Traffic Management Program when an agency determines that an employee's household goods shall be moved under the GBL method and the employee chooses to move the goods himself, he is entitled to be reimbursed the actual expenses he incurs for such items as truck rental, gasoline, and tolls, not to exceed what it would have cost the government to move the goods by the lowest cost commercial carrier under a GBL. 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-2(d) (1993); Kit L. Cline and Gary W. Clark, B-256126, May 4, 1994; Allan C. Harris and Lance S. Mamiya, B-246581, Apr. 9, 1992; Faustino W. Lopez, B-232600, Aug. 3, 1989.

Applying the regulation to Mr. Schuler's case, we find that the evidence available supports the conclusion that he actually incurred the expenses claimed for using the rental

vehicles to move his household goods.³ Since the amount he has claimed of \$295.26 is less than the estimated amount of \$1,847.62, as determined by the agency to move the goods by commercial carrier under a GBL, he may be reimbursed the total amount of his actual expenses.

As to the mileage charge of \$8.48, if it relates to the use of Mr. Schuler's privately owned vehicle in traveling to his new duty station, it is allowable. However, if it relates to the rental truck, it should be disallowed. See Mark A. Smith, B-228813, Sept. 14, 1988.

/s/ Seymour Efros
for Robert P. Murphy
Acting General Counsel

³See, George M. Karmis, B-250002, Aug. 26, 1993, where an employee's claim was supported only by a receipt for a cash payment signed by a friend. We denied the claim as too doubtful in view of a lack of a certified weight certificate or other valid receipts. The Karmis decision is distinguishable from the present case since Mr. Schuler has furnished receipts for the truck rentals.

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