



Comptroller General
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

258250

Decision

Matter of: Robert Dilldine
File: B-256946
Date: June 20, 1994

DIGEST

An agency's failure to comply with requirement in the Federal Property Management Regulations to make a cost comparison before household goods were shipped does not automatically entitle an employee to reimbursement at the commuted rate, absent specific authorization to ship household goods by that method. Employee's reimbursement may not exceed his actual expenses.

DECISION

This decision is in response to a request for an advance decision concerning reimbursement for expenses incurred by Robert Dilldine, an employee of the Indian Health Service, for the movement of his household goods pursuant to a permanent change of station.¹ Mr. Dilldine has requested reimbursement under the commuted rate method.² He may be reimbursed only for his actual expenses.

Mr. Dilldine was transferred from Bismarck, North Dakota, to Aberdeen, South Dakota, by travel authorization dated November 30, 1993. He was authorized to ship 8,000 pounds of household goods at an estimated cost of \$3,352. Since Mr. Dilldine had indicated that he planned to move himself, his travel order was annotated to the effect that his reimbursement was limited to the actual expenses of a self-move, not to exceed the cost to ship the household goods by a government bill of lading.

¹The request was submitted by Ron Cornelius, Accounting Officer, Indian Health Service, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

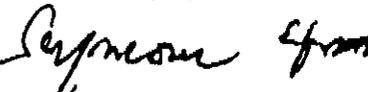
²Under the commuted rate system, the employee makes his/her own arrangements for transporting household goods and is reimbursed in accordance with schedules published by the General Services Administration. 41 C.F.R. § 302-8.3(a) (1) (1993).

Mr. Dilldine moved his household goods himself by rental truck and has requested reimbursement at the full commuted rate. The agency has denied his claim for commuted rate reimbursement since he was not authorized shipment at the commuted rate. Mr. Dilldine states that he chose the commuted rate and moved himself because he had the right to do so based on Federal Travel Regulations and Departmental Travel Regulations.

When authorizing an employee to move at government expense, an agency is required to obtain a cost comparison between the commuted rate system and the government bill of lading (GBL) method to determine which will result in less cost to the government. Federal Property Management Regulations (FPMR), 41 C.F.R. § 101-40.203-4 (1993). When the General Services Administration (GSA) furnishes a cost comparison between the GBL method and the commuted rate system, the employing agency makes the final determination as to the method of shipment to be authorized. FPMR, 41 C.F.R. §§ 101-40.200, 101-40.203-2(a) (1993). The regulation is clear that it is the responsibility of the employing agency to determine the method of shipment based on a cost comparison. The employee is not given the option to choose the method of shipment that best suits him. See, Kit L. Cline and Gary W. Clark, B-256126, May 4, 1994.

An agency official has advised us that a cost study was not done prior to the shipment. However, Mr. Dilldine was not authorized commuted rate. Absent specific authorization, the lack of a cost study does not automatically entitle an employee to reimbursement at the commuted rate. Rather, the employee is entitled to reimbursement not to exceed his actual expenses. John S. Phillips, 62 Comp. Gen. 375 (1983). See also, James F. Trusely III, B-219076.2, Dec. 22, 1989; Donald F. Daly, B-209873, July 6, 1983.

Accordingly, the agency has properly reimbursed Mr. Dilldine his actual expenses. His claim for additional reimbursement is denied.


Robert P. Murphy
Acting General Counsel