



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

Metcalf  
126878

OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

B-217355

April 22, 1985

[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

This is in response to your letter dated December 6, 1984, addressed to the Comptroller General in which you request information regarding your entitlement to be reimbursed for cost of reinstallation of a catalytic converter upon reentry of your privately owned vehicle into the United States.

Since you have not presented a specific claim, a decision of the Comptroller General is not being rendered. However, the following information may be helpful to you in understanding entitlement to reimbursement of the cost for reinstallation of a catalytic converter on your vehicle in connection with your transfer from Naples, Italy, to Boston, Massachusetts.

You indicate that you are a Department of Defense employee and state that in January 1983 you had a new American manufactured motor vehicle shipped at Government expense from the United States to you overseas as authorized by travel orders. Prior to shipment, the catalytic converter was removed to prevent contamination by leaded gasoline, unleaded gasoline being generally unavailable in your foreign assignment area.

Enclosed with your correspondence are travel orders issued May 15, 1984, in connection with your reassignment to a new position in the United States. These orders authorize shipment of a privately owned vehicle from Naples, Italy, to Boston, Massachusetts, your new duty station. You state that the same automobile previously shipped to you overseas was returned to the United States and thereafter the State of Massachusetts required that you meet Environmental Protection Agency standards through reinstalling your catalytic converter within a 30-day calendar period or as soon as possible on return of the privately owned vehicle from overseas to the United States.

You further state in essence that you do not understand the difference in requirements for reimbursement of expenses related to catalytic converters in the Comptroller General decisions ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, B-202520, January 4, 1982, and ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, 56 Comp. Gen. 53 (1976). Apparently, you also have a copy of the decision 62 Comp. Gen. 282 (1983) in which both of those decisions are discussed. The ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ case held that the cost of disconnecting a catalytic converter from an automobile prior to shipment overseas could not be reimbursed as part of allowable miscellaneous expenses under 5 U.S.C. § 5724a(b) because such removal was not required for registration of the vehicle at the new duty station or for any other purpose associated with that transfer. The primary purpose of the removal is to prevent the leaded gasoline available overseas from contaminating and destroying the effectiveness of the catalytic converter. The ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ case held that the cost of installing a pollution control device to comply with mandatory California pollution standards was proper for inclusion as a cost associated with the registration of the vehicle at the employee's new duty station for miscellaneous expense allowance purposes.

The decision at 62 Comp. Gen. 282, *supra*, makes it clear that the cost associated with the installation of catalytic converters made necessary because the vehicle involved was required to have such a device on return to the United States could be included as an allowable miscellaneous expense claim if otherwise allowable.

The allowable amount for a miscellaneous expense allowance which shall be paid without support or documentation to an employee with immediate family upon permanent change of station is \$700 or the equivalent of 2 weeks basic pay, whichever is the lesser amount. Allowances in excess of the amount authorized without support or other documentation of expenses may be authorized or approved, if supported by acceptable statements of fact and either paid bills or other acceptable evidence justifying the amounts claimed. However, the total amount of miscellaneous expenses paid may not exceed the employee's basic pay for 2 weeks if the employee has immediate family. In no instance will the maximum allowable exceed the maximum which could be paid based upon the salary of grade GS-13 at the time the employee reported for duty. Federal Travel

Regulations, para. 2-3.3 (Supp. 4, Aug. 23, 1982), incorp. by ref. 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1983). Accordingly, the amount allowed for reinstallation of your catalytic converter may be included in the total miscellaneous expense reimbursement authorized. No additional amount will be paid, however, if you cannot properly support miscellaneous expenditures in excess of \$700, if you have other miscellaneous expenses which are allowed in a total amount in excess of 2 weeks salary, or if you are unable to document the cost of reinstallation.

We trust that this will serve the purpose of your inquiry.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Edwin J. Monsma', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Edwin J. Monsma  
Assistant General Counsel