

DECISION



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

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AGC00425

FILE: B-195036

DATE: July 11, 1979

MATTER OF: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration -
Business Cards

DIGEST: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration cannot use appropriated funds to purchase business cards, since such cards are personal in nature and no specific statutory authority allows NHTSA to purchase them.

In a letter dated May 2, 1979, Mr. Lloyd of Region VIII of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) requested our opinion as to the propriety of purchasing business cards with appropriated funds. He informed us that one of the agency's employees ^{was} has extensive contact with public, Government, and business officials ^{and he} who frequently asked him to leave business cards with his name, office address, and telephone number. The employee purchased cards at his own expense and seeks reimbursement for the costs. NHTSA has so far disallowed reimbursement.

The long standing rule has been that the "cost of official calling cards constitutes a personal rather than an official expense of the employee or officer for whose use they are procured and that such costs are not chargeable under appropriated money in the absence of specific statutory authority thereof." 12 Comp. Gen. 565 (1933). The expense is considered personal in nature, even though it is incurred in connection with an employee's duties. 41 Comp. Gen. 529 (1962).

Further, under 44 U.S.C. § 1102(a) (1976), printing may not be done unless it is authorized by law and necessary to the public business. The Government Printing and Binding Regulations, issued in April 1977, paragraph 20, state that:

"Printing or engraving of calling or greeting cards is considered to be personal rather than official and shall not be done at Government expense."

Therefore, in the absence of specific statutory authority, NHTSA may not use its appropriations to procure, or to reimburse employees for their personal purchases of business cards. We find no specific statutory authorization for the printing of business cards for NHTSA. Neither do NHTSA's appropriations for 1979 contain


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such authorization. Act of August 4, 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-335, 92 Stat. 441.

Accordingly, NHTSA should continue disallowing reimbursement with appropriated funds for the costs of business cards which its employees may choose to obtain for their use, even if that use is in connection with official agency business.


Acting Comptroller General
of the United States