

DoD Civilian Permanent Duty Travel Allowances

Overview – There are a number of travel and transportation benefits DoD civilian employees may be authorized when moving from one Permanent Duty Station (PDS) to another at the direction of the agency for which they are working. These benefits may include:

- Employee and dependent transportation
- Employee and dependent per diem
- Transportation of household goods including Storage in Transit (SIT)
- Non-temporary storage (NTS) of household goods
- Miscellaneous Expense Allowance (MEA)
- Transportation and per diem for a house-hunting trip
- Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense (TQSE)
- Assistance with selling and buying a residence and lease termination

In addition, there are several special situations that affect DoD civilian employees who are assigned to an OCONUS PDS.

Am I Eligible? – Some relocation allowances must be paid to the employee. For other allowances, the DoD component has discretionary authority whether to pay or not to pay the allowance. In general, a DoD civilian employee who, in the Government's interest, transfers from one PDS to another is authorized to be paid most basic allowances. Situations in which a move is in the Government's interest include recruiting to fill a vacancy and requesting an employee to transfer due to a transfer of function, an agency career development program, and agency directed placement, or a RIF. In all cases, the agency must make a determination as to which relocation allowances will be paid and make this information known at the time of the advertisement or notification. In all cases, an employee will be required to sign and comply with the terms of a service agreement to obtain the authorized allowances.

This article is only an overview of the PCS allowances available. An employee's specific PCS allowances may not include all of the allowances described here. To determine what is actually allowable and the procedures that must follow, the employee must discuss their specific PCS allowances with the agency sponsoring the move. Please see the [Per Diem website](#) for additional information.

Employee and Dependent Transportation – Transportation for the eligible employee and dependents will be provided by the Government. For employees who are authorized to use their personal vehicles for the move, this will be in the form of a Monetary Allowance in Lieu of Transportation (MALT). MALT is a rate per mile for authorized private vehicle use during official PCS travel. The MALT rate is ordinarily adjusted on January 1 of each year. The current MALT rate can be found in the [PCS travel table](#). The total amount of MALT payable depends on the official distance for which the rate per mile may be paid under the circumstances of the PCS move.

In general, up to two private vehicles may be used per household comprised of an employee and dependents. Only the employee incurring the vehicle expenses may be paid MALT. Parking fees, ferry fares, and bridge, road and tunnel tolls are reimbursable in addition to the MALT. Though not included in the transportation benefit, a traveler may be eligible to submit a claim for repairs to a private vehicle used for official travel, using Service procedures under “The Claims Act” (31 USC §3721).

Employee and Dependent Per Diem – An eligible employee on PCS travel is always authorized a per diem allowance during travel, some of which may be taxable. The per diem allowance consists of an amount for lodging limited to a maximum allowance and a flat rate allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). The Standard CONUS per diem rate is used for all CONUS locations when PDT is involved. The maximum per diem rate applies to OCONUS travel. These [per diem rates](#) are adjusted annually.

Per diem is payable on each day of actual travel not to exceed the authorized travel time. Authorized travel time is found by dividing the official mileage between permanent duty stations by 350 miles per day.

With a few exceptions the employee’s dependents are also authorized per diem at a reduced rate. The employee’s spouse and other dependents age 12 and older may be paid 75% of the amount of per diem due the employee. The per diem for dependents under the age of 12 is 50% of the amount due the employee.

The actual per diem payment is computed using the “lodgings plus” method. Under this method, the employee’s per diem is computed using the actual lodging costs incurred during the PCS move plus the flat rate M&IE allowance for each day of actual travel. The per diem payment cannot exceed the maximum allowable per diem times the number of authorized travel days.

Transportation and Storage for Household Goods – Employees are generally authorized the movement of their household goods at government expense from one PDS to the next. This includes:

- Packing, crating, unpacking, uncrating, drayage, and hauling (as necessary).
- Special technical servicing to prepare household appliances for safe transport and use at destination (but not connecting or disconnecting those appliances).
- Use of special rigging and equipment for heavy or delicate articles and handling.
- Storage in Transit (SIT) for the household goods for 90 days while awaiting final delivery. An additional 90 days may be authorized in special circumstances.

Non-Temporary Storage (NTS) is long term storage of household goods. NTS may be authorized in place of household goods transportation when the employee is relocating to an isolated CONUS duty station or an OCONUS duty station subject to administrative shipment limitations.

The maximum weight allowance for all civilian household goods shipments is 18,000 pounds for each employee. Employees moving to some OCONUS locations may be further limited to an

administrative maximum of 4,500 pounds, and may also be eligible for a separate shipment of consumables.

A portion of the household goods weight allowance may be transported as Unaccompanied Baggage (UB). UB consists of small items of personal property (e.g., linens and appliances but not beds or tables). These are the items that may be required to set up housekeeping at the new duty station while waiting for the arrival of the primary household goods shipment. The employee may transport UB of up to 350 pounds per person for the employee, the spouse and each dependent 12 years of age and older and up to 175 pounds per person for each dependents under the age of 12.

In any case, the total amount of household goods and consumables that may be transported or stored at government expense cannot exceed 18,000 pounds. Note that charges for excess weight and unauthorized services are the responsibility of the employee.

Transportation of a Personal Vehicle – Eligible employees may be authorized to transport of one or more personal vehicles. Transportation at Government expense is limited to the cost for a vehicle having a gross shipping size of not more than 20 measurement tons (800 cubic feet, equivalent to 6'x 7' x 19 ') - enough to ship a large SUV. A traveler who ships a larger personal vehicle is financially responsible for all costs resulting from the excess vehicle size.

An employee who is moving to an OCONUS location may be authorized to transport only one vehicle at government expense, when it is in the Government's interest and is consistent with local policies at the OCONUS permanent duty station. When overseas transport of a vehicle is authorized, the employee may be reimbursed, subject to a maximum, for the driving to deliver the vehicle to the loading port/vehicle processing center for shipment and for driving from the unloading port/vehicle processing center upon arrival.

In certain limited circumstances, employees moving from one CONUS permanent duty station to another may be authorized to transport their vehicles at Government expense. This is limited to situations where the agency has determined that it is more advantageous and cost effective for the Government to transport the personal vehicles to the new permanent duty station at Government expense, and to pay for transportation of the employee and immediate family by commercial means, than to have the employee and immediate family drive one or more personal vehicles to the new permanent duty station.

Transportation of a Mobile Home – An employee authorized household goods transportation at Government expense may choose to move a mobile home in lieu of household goods transportation within the 48 contiguous states or between one of the 48 contiguous states and Alaska. The mobile home must be in good condition, ready to transport, and used as the employee's primary residence at the new permanent duty station. This benefit is limited to the Government's cost of transporting 18,000 pounds of household goods to the new permanent duty station including 90 days of SIT.

Miscellaneous Expense Allowance (MEA) -- The purpose of MEA is to reimburse various residence-relocation related expenses associated with an authorized PCS residence relocation

that are not otherwise reimbursed – sort of a ‘catchall’. However, new employees moving to their first permanent duty station are not authorized MEA except when heading overseas from the CONUS.

The MEA minimum payment does not require the employee to itemize the expenses and is paid at a flat rate:

- Employees without dependents: the lesser of \$500 or the equivalent of 1 week's basic compensation;
- Employees with dependents: the lesser of \$1,000 or the equivalent of 2 week's basic compensation; or
- Employees with dependents, but whose dependents and household goods are not relocated: the lesser of \$500 or the equivalent of 1 week's basic compensation. If the dependents and household goods are later transported to the new permanent duty station the employee is authorized the difference between the amount initially received and the “with dependents” rate.

The maximum MEA can be paid if the employee submits an itemized claim. The total MEA amount cannot exceed the employee's basic salary rate of:

- 1 week if the employee is without dependents, or
- 2 weeks if the employee has dependents who were relocated.

Temporary Quarters Subsistence Expense (TQSE) – TQSE is a discretionary, not mandatory, allowance intended to partially reimburse an employee for reasonable subsistence expenses (expenses of lodging, food, and other necessities) incurred while an employee and dependents occupy temporary lodging incident to a PCS. This means that the agency determines if TQSE is necessary and the method of its payment.

TQSE can be paid as an actual expense reimbursement (TQSE (AE)) based on the Standard CONUS per diem rate and “lodgings plus” computation for up to 120 days, or as fixed amount payment (TQSE (F)) based on the new permanent duty station maximum per diem rate for up to 30 days. TQSE for dependents is at a reduced rate. TQSE(F), if offered to the employee, may be accepted or the employee may elect TQSE(AE).

TQSE must be authorized before temporary lodging is occupied and may not be approved after the fact for any days that have passed. Extensions up to the maximum time limits may be approved. Once the employee elects a TQSE payment method and that method is approved by the agency, the employee may not change the payment method once any portion of the travel authorization (including a house-hunting trip) has been executed.

TQSE will only be authorized when the new PDS is in the CONUS or non-foreign OCONUS permanent duty station. TQSE may be denied or reduced if the employee takes a house-hunting trip.

House Hunting Trip (HHT) – At the discretion of the new employer, the employee and their spouse may be authorized to go on a house hunting trip if the agency agrees that a HHT is necessary and only after the employee has accepted a permanent transfer within the CONUS or a non-foreign OCONUS area. The employee is in travel status during the authorized absence for a HHT. If children accompany the family on the HHT, their expenses are not reimbursed.

In addition to determining if a HHT is necessary, the agency also determines how subsistence and travel expenses will be paid. Usually the subsistence allowance will be computed using the “lodging plus” method described earlier, although the employee may be offered a fixed amount instead. Travel expenses to and from the new PDS will be reimbursed, as will be reasonable expenses for local transportation at the new PDS. It is important to remember that a Government-funded HHT may not exceed 10 days in duration.

Relocation Income Tax (RIT) Allowance -- The RIT allowance reimburses an eligible transferred employee for substantially all of the additional Federal, State, and local income taxes incurred by the employee (or by an employee and spouse if a joint tax return is filed) as a result of reimbursement, or payment, of certain travel and transportation expenses and relocation allowances that are not excludible from gross income for Federal income tax purposes.

The amount of the RIT allowance payment is calculated using the procedures in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) Part 302-17, and can be found at there [website](#).

Real Estate Transaction And Unexpired Lease Expense Allowances -- An eligible employee is authorized reimbursement for certain expenses incurred in conjunction with the sale of a residence or the settlement of an unexpired lease involving the residence or the lot on which a mobile home used as a residence at the old PDS. The employee may also be reimbursed for certain expenses involving the purchase (including construction) of a residence at the new PDS.

Total reimbursements may not exceed: 10 percent of the actual sale price of the residence at the old PDS, and 5 percent of the purchase price of a residence at the new PDS.

To be eligible for this reimbursement the following requirements must be met before expense reimbursement is authorized by the agency:

- A PCS is authorized and approved and, in general, the both the old and new PDS are located in the CONUS or a non-foreign OCONUS areas;
- The dwelling at the old PDS is the employee's actual residence when informed that transfer to a new PDS was definite;
- The settlement dates for the sale (or lease termination) and purchase are not later than 2 years after the employee's transfer effective; The residence (which may be a mobile home and/or the lot on which that mobile home is located or is to be located) is the one from which the employee regularly commutes to and from work on a daily basis.

An employee who has completed an agreed upon tour of duty at a foreign PDS and is transferred to a new CONUS/non-foreign OCONUS PDS (other than the one from which transferred when

assigned to the foreign PDS) is authorized reimbursement of real estate transaction and unexpired lease expense.

Under rare, extenuating circumstances the employee may request that the 2 year time limit be extended to no more than 4 years after the effective transfer date.

The following are examples of expenses that are reimbursable under this allowance:

- Broker's Fees or Real Estate Commission for services in selling the old residence
- Other Advertising and Selling Expenses including customary costs of appraisal
- Legal and Related Costs (other than litigation costs)
- Miscellaneous Reimbursable Items:
 - FHA or VA fee for a loan application;
 - Loan origination fees and similar charges such as loan assumption fees and loan transfer fees;
 - Cost of preparing credit reports;
 - Mortgage and transfer taxes;
 - State revenue stamps;
 - Other fees and charges similar in nature to those listed above
 - Charge for prepayment of a mortgage or other security instrument ICW the sale of a residence at the old PDS
 - Mortgage title insurance policy paid for by an employee on a residence purchased by the employee for the protection of, and required by, the lender;
 - Owner's title insurance policy, provided it is a prerequisite to financing or the transfer of property;
 - Expenses ICW construction of a residence, that are comparable to expenses reimbursable ICW the purchase of an existing residence;
 - Expenses ICW environmental testing and property inspection fees when required by Federal, State, or Local law; or by a lender as a precondition to sale or purchase; and
 - Environmental protection fee if required as a mortgage condition.

Relocation and Property Management Services – The DoD component, at its discretion, may offer the employee relocation or property management services in conjunction with their authorized move.

Relocation Services are provided through a Government contract and include:

- Home sale programs (up to \$750,000 home value);
- Home finding assistance;
- Home marketing assistance; and
- Mortgage finding assistance.

The Home Sale Program is one of the biggest benefits here. In this program a relocation company (under contract with DoD) purchases a transferred employee's residence at fair market (appraised) value, then independently markets, and sells the residence. Associated with the

Home Sale program is the Home Marketing Incentive Payment which may be made to a transferred employee to encourage the employee to independently and aggressively market the employee's residence and find a buyer. This employee home sale activity significantly reduces the fees and expenses the DoD component must pay to a relocation services company and effectively lowers the relocation program cost. The Home Marketing Incentive Payment allows the transferred employee to share in the cost savings.

Alternatively, Property Management (PM) services may be offered to assist an employee manage a residence at the old PDS as a rental property. PM services include:

- Obtaining a tenant;
- Negotiating the lease;
- Inspecting the property regularly;
- Managing repairs and maintenance;
- Enforcing lease terms;
- Collecting the rent;
- Paying the mortgage and other carrying expenses from rental proceeds and/or the employee's escrow funds;
- Accounting for the transactions and providing periodic reports to the employee; and;
- Similar services.

If an employee is eligible for the real estate transaction allowance described above the employee is probably eligible for either Relocation Services or Property Management Services.