

PROCEDURES FOR OTHER THAN COACH-CLASS (PREMIUM-CLASS) ACCOMMODATIONS

.01 REFERENCE AUTHORITY.

- a. Federal Travel Regulations (FTR). 5 U.S.C. 5707, 40 U.S.C. 121(c); 49 U.S.C. 40118.
- b. Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-126, "Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft." Revised May 22, 1992.
- c. Federal Travel Regulation, Chapter 301 – Temp Duty (TDY) Allowances, Part 301-10.123.
- d. Department of Commerce Travel Policy Handbook, October 2016

.02 PURPOSE.

The Federal Travel Regulations requires government travelers when making official travel arrangements to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. This section describes the procedures for authorization and approval of other than coach-class (Premium-Class) accommodations for official travel when requested by an employee with a disability or special need.

.03 AIRLINE ACCOMMODATIONS.

- a. **Coach-class.** The basic class of accommodation by airlines that is normally the lowest fare offered regardless of airline terminology used. For reference purposes only, coach-class may also be referred to by airlines as “tourist class,” “economy class,” or as “single class” when the airline offers only one class of accommodations to all travelers.
- b. **Other than coach-class.** Any class of airline accommodations above coach-class, e.g., first-class or business-class.
 - 1) First-class. The highest class of accommodation offered by the airlines in terms of cost and amenities. This is generally termed “first-class” by airlines and reservation systems.
 - 2) Business-class. A class of accommodation offered by airlines that is higher than coach and lower than first-class, in both cost and amenities. This class of accommodation is generally referred to as “business, business elite, business first, world business, connoisseur, or envoy” depending on the airline.

.04 TRAIN ACCOMMODATIONS.

- a. **Coach-class.** The basic class of accommodations offered by a rail carrier to passengers that includes a level of service available to all passengers regardless of the fare paid. Coach-

APPENDIX B

class includes reserved coach accommodations as well as slumber coach accommodations when overnight train travel is involved.

- b. **Slumber coach.** Includes slumber coach accommodations on trains offering such accommodations, or the lowest level of sleeping accommodations available on a train that does not offer slumber coach accommodations.
- c. **Other than coach-class.** Any class of accommodations above coach, e.g., first-class or business-class.
 - 1) First-class. Includes bedrooms, roomettes, club service, parlor car accommodations or other premium accommodations.
 - 2) Business-class. A class of extra fare train service that is offered above coach class, but is lower than first-class, as described above.

.05 RENTAL CAR ACCOMMODATIONS.

For rental cars, the traveler must use the least expensive compact car available unless an exception for another class of vehicle is approved to accommodate a medical disability or other special need.

.06 MEDICAL CERTIFICATION.

- a. The FTR requires the requestor to obtain a medical certification when the use of other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel is necessary to accommodate a medical disability or other special need. In addition, when requesting other than coach-class travel as a reasonable accommodation, the requestor must follow the procedures outlined in Section 6 of this DAO.
- b. Disability. The need for other than coach-class travel for a disability must be certified annually in a written statement by a competent medical authority. However, if the disability is a lifelong (permanent) condition, then a one-time certification statement of the disability is required. In order to comply with this regulatory requirement for medical certification, the requestor must provide the Bureau RAC the following medical documentation in support of the request:
 - 1) A written statement by a competent medical authority stating that a special accommodation is necessary (**must state the requestor's medical condition/impairment, associated functional limitations, and explain the need for the requested accommodation**);
 - 2) An approximate duration of the special accommodation; and
 - 3) A recommendation as to the suitable class of transportation accommodation based on the disability.

APPENDIX B

c. Other special needs. The FTR defines special needs as a physical characteristics of a traveler not necessarily defined under disability. Such physical characteristics could include, but are not limited to, the weight or height of the traveler. If the special need is obvious and not a disability, the requestor's supervisor/manager may approve the request, without the assistance of the RAC. However, if the requestor's need is not obvious and supporting documentation is needed, the requestor should submit the documentation to the Bureau RAC who will review it and confirm the need for the request. Special needs must be certified annually in writing. However, if the special need is a lifelong (permanent) condition, then a one-time certification statement is required. Consult your Bureau RAC for assistance.

d. If the disability is not obvious, the requestor does not have a record of a permanent disability, and the medical documentation does not explicitly state the period of time the premium-class accommodation is required, then the requestor is required to submit a certification annually. This re-submission is necessary to ensure that there is a continued need for the requested accommodation and to maintain up-to-date authorization records. Authorizations that have exceeded the expiration date should not be considered valid and must be recertified.

e. After the RAC has reviewed the requestor's medical documentation and confirmed the person has a covered disability or other special needs, and requires the requested accommodation, the RAC will provide a written statement to the requestor and his/her supervisor. The statement will certify that the requestor meets the requirements for other than coach-class travel in accordance with the FTR and DAO 215-10. The written statement should also specify if the disability or special need is life-long (permanent), and therefore, does not required annual certification. The requestor must submit this statement, along with a Form CD 334, Request for Approval of Other Than Coach-Class Accommodations, when requesting authorization for government travel. For more information on travel authorization requirements, refer to the DOC Travel Policy Handbook, your Bureau's Travel guidance, or your Bureau's Travel POC.

.07 ADDITIONAL TRAVEL EXPENSES.

The Department may also authorize payment for other travel related expenses deemed necessary to accommodate an employee with a disability or special need, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Specialized transportation to, from, and/or at the TDY duty location;
- b. Specialized services provided by a common carrier to accommodate your special need;
- c. Costs for handling your baggage that are a direct result of your special need; and
- d. Renting and/or transporting a wheelchair.

Any additional travel expenses deemed necessary accommodations for the traveler with a disability should be identified in the medical certification statement provided by the RAC.

.08 SERVICES OF AN ATTENDANT.

If the requestor is approved for other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel and requires the services of an attendant (i.e. PAS Provider) en route to accommodate their special need, the attendant may also use other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel. The requestor must include the request for premium-class travel for their attendant with their initial request for premium-class travel accommodations. For details on PAS providers, see Appendix B.

.09 TIMEFRAME.

Authorization for the use of other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel and other travel expenses, must be made in advance of the actual travel date, unless extenuating circumstances or emergency situations make advance authorization impossible. The requestor should submit a request for other than coach-class (Premium) travel as a reasonable accommodation to their supervisor and RAC at least 30 calendar days prior to the actual travel date. This will allow the RAC sufficient time to prepare the medical certification statement. If advance certification cannot be obtained, the employee must obtain written approval from the deciding official at the earliest possible time. Without specific approval, travelers will be held responsible for all additional costs resulting from the use of other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel accommodations minus the difference of the cost of coach-class accommodations.

.10 APPROVAL/DENIAL DECISIONS.

Procedures for approval or denial of a request for other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel to accommodate a disability are the same as for other reasonable accommodation requests. Deciding officials must consult with the RAC and OGC prior to denying a request for reasonable accommodations. See Section 8 of this Order.

.11 RECORDKEEPING.

For tracking and record keeping purposes, the Bureau RAC will maintain a copy of the employee's written request for other than coach-class travel (Premium-Class), supporting medical documentation, certification statement, and the authorization/approval for other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel accommodations.

oval for other than coach-class (Premium-Class) travel accommodations.