

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## *Travel during a Government Shutdown*

### **1 TDY Travel Question**

- 1.1 What if I am funded by permanent funding or carryover funding and my function is continued in the case of a shutdown? Can I travel?

Yes. You can continue your travel if your salary and the travel expenses are funded by a non-lapsing appropriation.

- 1.2 What if I am an essential employee? Can I travel?

You may continue to travel if the purpose of the travel is to perform your essential duties, such as protection of life and property. If the purpose of your travel is not for such essential duties, you must return home before a lapse in appropriations, if possible.

- 1.3 What if I am traveling on Reimbursable/No Year Money? Do I still have to return home?

If your salary is paid from a lapsing appropriation but your travel is being paid from a non-lapsing appropriation, you will still be expected to return home unless your travel is for an essential activity that is authorized to continue notwithstanding a lapse of appropriations. Your supervisor will direct you to make arrangements with the Department TMC, SATO, to return back to your official duty station prior to a lapse in appropriations, if possible.

- 1.4 What if my travel is being paid by a non-Federal source? Do I still have to return home?

If your salary is paid from a lapsing appropriation but your travel is being paid from a non-lapsing appropriation, you will still be expected to return home unless your travel is for an essential activity that is authorized to continue notwithstanding a lapse of appropriations. Your supervisor will direct you to make arrangements with the Department TMC, SATO, to return back to your official duty station prior to a lapse in appropriations, if possible.

- 1.5 Am I allowed to stay at my TDY location for a day or so, in case the shutdown is resolved quickly and it would cost more in airfare for me to return?

No. It is a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act to work when there is no appropriated funding available. By remaining on TDY you are acting in an official capacity. You must return immediately if the Federal Government is shutdown. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

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## *Travel during a Government Shutdown*

- 1.6 Will I still be paid per diem if my travel day is the Saturday after a lapse in appropriations?

No. Travel expenses may not be paid for periods of time that are not covered by appropriated funding. You should return to your official duty station no later than the lapse in appropriations. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

- 1.7 What if I already purchased a non-refundable ticket for the week of the shutdown? Should I just document the cancellation on my charge card statement? How do I re-book the unused portion in the future?

If your purchase of non-refundable airfare was approved by your supervisor on your authorization you would have to cancel the ticket as you would not be able to travel during a Government shutdown. On your charge card statement, you would show that the trip was cancelled due to the Government shutdown, detail the dates of the work stoppage, and the dates of your official trip. There will be a \$150 change fee charge that will be applied to your Government charge card for canceling the ticket. The same explanation should be furnished for this charge as well. If you are making travel arrangements during any future continuing resolutions, you should use fully refundable fares.

You may use the voucher that will be issued to you for future TDY travel by working with the airline to book the travel or working with SATO to book the travel.

- 1.8 If I am on TDY and the Government shuts down, will I be immediately returned home, or can I continue to receive per diem during the shutdown?

You must immediately return home. You may not receive per diem during a Government shutdown. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

- 1.9 Do I need to be categorized as an "essential employee" in order to continue to receive per diem during the shutdown?

Non-essential employees on official travel may not travel during a Government shutdown. They should return to their official duty station as they may not be compensated without a continuing resolution or an appropriation in place.

Essential employees who must travel in order to perform their essential duties may do so if approved by their supervisor.

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## *Travel during a Government Shutdown*

- 1.10 If the Government shuts down and I cannot leave for TDY but I have already ticketed my travel, will I be refunded for airline tickets and lodging?

All official travel reservations for non-essential personnel should be cancelled if a Government shutdown is announced. If purchased airline tickets were refundable tickets the airfare will be refunded in full.

Travelers should contact either SATO or the lodging establishment immediately to cancel their lodging reservations if there is a Government shutdown.

- 1.11 For conferences and foreign travel previously approved by the Department, will they be cancelled or curtailed by the Department if they are during the shutdown period?

Travelers attending conferences and performing foreign travel should be directed to return to their official duty station immediately in the event of a Government shutdown. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

- 1.12 Are non-employee invitational travelers by definition "non-essential personnel" or can the bureau designate them essential personnel if, for example, they are leading a seminar?

It is highly unlikely that any invitational travelers will be deemed "essential." Any such determination will be made on a case-by-case basis as far ahead of the appropriations lapse as possible. All non-essential travelers should be directed to return to their official duty station or residence in the event of a Government shutdown. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

- 1.13 Do I have to come home on the next available flight on Friday if a shutdown is announced?

In case of a lapse of funding you must make arrangements to return as soon as possible. Return travel arrangements should be made directly with SATO or the ticketed airline.

- 1.14 What if the next available flight is Saturday? Will I get paid for my travel time (i.e. salary) on Saturday?

No salary or comp time can be earned during a lapse of appropriations for non-essential employees. All travel should be made in the days leading up to the event of a Government shutdown. Any travel made afterwards is not eligible for salary compensation.

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## *Travel during a Government Shutdown*

### 1.15 If I am on extended TDY, what shall I do in the event of a Government shutdown?

You should make all arrangements to return to your official duty station before a lapse in appropriations.

### 1.16 Should I be arranging official travel for dates after a potential lapse in appropriations?

You should delay making arrangements for official travel after a potential lapse in appropriations. Airline flight reservations should be reserved using the fully refundable General Services Administration's Contract City Pair fare. Lodging should be reserved using the GSA Fedrooms rates as they allow for same day cancellation.

### 1.17 Can we continue to make travel reservations?

You should avoid making travel reservations during this time. If a continuing resolution or an appropriation is passed you may then book travel as needed. If you are making travel arrangements during any future continuing resolutions, you should use fully refundable fares.

### 1.18 What if I am traveling or supervise someone who has traveled to a remote area without access to communications equipment? What are employees who are in this type of travel situation to do?

Every effort should be made to contact these individuals as practicality allows. Messages should be left at predetermined locations indicating that the individual should cease travel if they are designated as non-essential personnel.

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## *Travel during a Government Shutdown*

### **2 PCS Questions**

#### **2.1 Could an employee perform en route travel during a shutdown?**

No, an employee will not be able to perform en route travel during a Government shutdown as the traveler would not be eligible for reimbursement of hours during an official en route trip.

#### **2.2 Would employees currently in Temporary Quarters still be entitled to per diem?**

If you are currently in TQ at either your old duty station or your new duty station you will be eligible for per diem if your relocation expenses are already obligated, as normally is the case.

#### **2.3 Can an employee's household goods be picked up and/or delivered during this time?**

Yes, they may be picked up or delivered. Relocation services would have been funded prior at the time of authorization. The pick up or delivery of household goods is not dependent upon the employee being compensated for time as employees are not eligible for reimbursement of hours while they oversee the packing and unpacking of their household goods.

#### **2.4 If the Government shuts down during my PCS move, does anything (like househunting trip, en route travel, and temporary quarters) get curtailed? Can I be kicked out of temporary quarters?**

Employees who are authorized relocation expenses must delay any en route travel or house hunting trips until there is appropriated funding available to reimburse them for their hours during their trips.

Employees are eligible for Temporary Quarters reimbursement as the payment of Temporary Quarters is not contingent upon the employee being paid for hours worked.