



United States Department of the Interior



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

April 6, 1993

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 93-3 (451)

SUBJECT: Providing Light Refreshments for Award Ceremonies

Purpose. The purpose of this issuance is to clarify the Department's policy regarding the purchase of light refreshments for awards ceremonies using appropriated funds.

Authority. 5 U.S.C. 4503; 5 U.S.C. 5403; Federal Personnel Manual 451; Comptroller General Decision B-223319, dated July 21, 1986 (65 Comp.Gen. 508); Comptroller General Decision B223895, dated June 30, 1987 (66 Comp. Gen 536).

Introduction. In accordance with Title 5, the head of an agency may pay a cash award to, and incur necessary expenses for the honorary recognition of, an employee who by his suggestion, invention, superior accomplishment, or other personal effort contributes to the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of Government operations or achieves a significant reduction in paperwork; or performs a special act or service in the public interest in connection with or related to his official employment. The head of the agency determines what constitutes "necessary expenses" for the honorary recognition of employees.

It has been determined that necessary expenses may include the cost of light refreshments for a reception in connection with a ceremony honoring Federal employees, and that the payment for such light refreshments may be made from appropriated funds.

Policy. It has been the general policy of the Department to authorize bureaus and offices to pay the necessary expenses of light refreshments to provide for a reception at which co-workers and friends may congratulate honor awards recipients.

This policy is not intended to be limited to only bureau or office headquarters ceremonies and ceremonies where only Departmental Honor Awards are presented. It does include ceremonies in field activities where any honorary recognition through the incentive awards program is given to employees, and where the reception would materially enhance the effectiveness of the ceremony.

INQUIRIES: Ann Meroney, Division of Employee Relations
MS 5203 MIB, Telephone (202) 208-5284

Light refreshments may include coffee, tea, punch, cookies, cakes, doughnuts, chips, and similar snack items. Appropriated funds may not be used to purchase meals, nor may they be used to purchase alcoholic beverages.

The cost of light refreshments in connection with an awards ceremony may not exceed a total of \$500 or \$2.00 per person, whichever is less.

Approval. In accordance with 370 DM 451, bureaus and offices are authorized to incur necessary expenses for the recognition of employees. Bureau and office heads are encouraged to delegate authority to field activities to approve appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments for a reception in connection with an awards ceremony.

Acting *Pat Hastings*
Director of Personnel