

## “DRAFT” Vehicle Rentals Quickguide

### AUTHORIZATIONS

According to the Federal Travel Management Policy, Section 301-10.6, if you do not travel by the method of transportation required by regulation or selected by the agency, any additional expenses you incur will be borne by you.

Authorization to rent a vehicle while traveling to an incident will be given at the time of dispatch. Travel authorization for an incident comes in the form of a resource order with a valid “O” (*overhead*) number assigned. If you are authorized to rent a vehicle enroute, you will specifically be given that authorization as a written notation on your resource order, along with an “E” (*equipment*) number from the hosting agency. It will be noted what type of vehicle you are authorized to rent (4x4, sedan, 2x4 pickup, etc.). Both the “E” number and “O” number must be referenced somewhere on the copy of the contract you sign at the rental vehicle company. A copy of the contract must be kept in the vehicle at all times.

Not obeying these rules may result in refusal of payment or reimbursement for expenses incurred for renting a vehicle. Supervisors and approving agency officials should require documentation reflecting specific authorization for renting a vehicle on incidents before approving reimbursement.

In order to help dispatch with determining who should be authorized to rental vehicle when there is a question, a list of positions that normally require regular use of a vehicle in the performance of their duties is attached. **This is an aid only and not a determining document.** Other guidelines for use by dispatch are also attached. Once an Incident Management Team is on board at an incident, they must be involved with determining who is authorized to rent a vehicle. In most cases ground support at the incident will request enough vehicles for their pool through the buying team so that single resource authorizations won't be necessary.

For casual hires (ADs), there is a spot on the hiring form that states whether you are authorized to rent a vehicle. This must be checked in addition to receiving the notification on your copy of the resource order, along with the “E” number referenced above. Because ADs normally do not have an agency travel or purchase card you should not be required to rent a vehicle if you are an AD. Other means of transportation should be provided to you, such as ground support shuttles or someone picking you up and additional necessary transportation provided to you by ground support at the incident, or by the hosting agency.

If you need a vehicle once you arrive at the incident you must obtain it through ground support at the incident. Ground support will provide you with necessary transportation from their pool.

## **USE AND RETURN OF RENTAL VEHICLES**

For everyone's protection, from the agency administrator who is ultimately responsible to the employee renting the vehicle whose credit card is being charged, it is absolutely imperative that ground support at the incident knows that you have a rental vehicle and the type of contract it is rented under. Ground support must track these vehicles closely. Something that has worked well on incidents is to put property tags on the keys to make it easier to tell at a glance which vehicle is which when there are a lot that look alike.

Individuals should take personal responsibility when using a vehicle. When you get a vehicle from ground support, do a quick inspection to check for damage each time you use it. Report anything you find to them in case they are not aware of it and for your own protection.

Equipment resource orders for vehicles need to have detailed documentation such as the VIN, color, contract number, type, make, model and license number. This is the type of information that is needed to properly document and track the vehicle. Ground Support will most often be the ones to provide this information for complete documentation on the resource order unless the buying team rented the vehicle for the incident.

If the buying team rents the vehicle for the incident, we must ensure that the vehicle gets returned to the buying team and not sent to another incident or down the road anywhere else during demobilization. Good, healthy communication with the buying team and ground support is necessary. Single resources are not to leave an incident without going through ground support.

When a vehicle is returned to a rental company, whether it is done by an individual who rented it or by the buying team, it should be filled up with fuel in order to avoid paying more for fuel than necessary at the rental company. The vehicle also needs to be cleaned inside and out and inspected. Ground support and the buying team should work together to provide the means by which to clean the vehicles.

## **CONTRACTS**

### **U.S. Government Car Rental Contract** – General Information

The U.S. Government Car Rental Agreement is negotiated for the Federal Government by the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC). This contract is available online at <http://www.mtmc.army.mil>. *Click the Passenger tab near the top of the page, and then the "Carriers and Programs" tab, then the "Car Rental Carriers" link, and finally the "Car Agreement" link to the left.* The current agreement as of March 2003 is agreement number 3.

The terms and conditions of the agreement and rates apply to all Federal employees on official travel and include unlimited free mileage, plus full loss/collision damage waiver (LDW/CDW) on the rental vehicle. If you agree to additional insurance, you will pay for

it out of your own pocket. The government generally will not reimburse you for it. Authorized drivers include the renter and the renter's fellow employees without additional charge. This means that licensed drivers working on the incident can use the vehicle within the scope of their employment – not just the person who rented it or persons named on a list to the rental company when the vehicle is rented.

Resources dispatched to a federal fire are considered federal employees under the terms of this contract. A copy of your resource order with your "O" number is considered your travel authorization and sufficient proof of "federal employment" for state, county, local and casual resources. State and local agencies need to follow their agencies rules and regulations when renting vehicles; however, in absence of conflict with their agency guidelines, rental from the federal contract is strongly suggested. This is to ensure that the vehicle may be utilized fully at the incident rather than sitting in the parking lot and being used by just the person who rented it. Vehicles that are rented under agreements that do not allow full utilization at the incident will be singled out and returned and/or replaced as quickly as possible.

When you check in at the incident you will be asked to provide information regarding the method of transportation you used. This includes vehicle rental information. You must provide the "E" number of you rental vehicle. This will be double checked with the resource orders, and the rental contract will be checked by incident management personnel.

When you rent a vehicle, be sure that it is not only a participating company, but also a participating location. This information is available online at <http://www.mtmc.army.mil>. *Click the Passenger tab near the top of the page, and then the "Carriers and Programs" tab, then the "Car Rental Carriers" link to the left, and finally the "Participating Companies" link to the left.* Dispatch offices should obtain this information before incidents occur and have it available to reference when resources are dispatched.

If the vehicle is rented for one way, the car rental agency has the option to charge for miles for return and a possible drop fee. If you think that you will not be returning the vehicle to the location from which you rented it, be sure to ask about extra charges before renting it. In some cases these charges are large and in some cases there is no charge at all. Usually larger vehicle rental offices charge less because they have more resources and options to get their vehicles back to where they need to go. When available and needed, always rent from the participating company that charges the least for one-way rental feeds. When demobilization is done, costs associated with one-way rentals must be considered before demobilization orders are contrary to returning the vehicle to the point of rental.

Rental agencies at participating locations are required to accept a government credit card. If you are renting for yourself and have both a government purchase card and a government travel card you should use the government travel card. For renters without a credit card (government or personal), cash deposits may be required. Use of a federal government credit card helps to ensure that the terms of the federal contract are followed should there be any question.

If you rent the vehicle in your name it is recommended that you return it to the rental agency yourself. If the incident (incident base or expanded dispatch ground support) has a need for the vehicle, someone from the incident who is authorized to do so should go with you to the rental agency and re-rent the vehicle. You are accountable for the bill as long as the vehicle is in your name.

Insurance and damage liability are covered under the Federal rental agreement. Government renters will not be responsible for loss or damage to the vehicle in most cases (including casualty, collision, fire, upset, malicious mischief, vandalism, tire damage, falling objects, overhead damage, glass breakage, strike, civil commotion, theft and mysterious disappearance) except where gross negligence has occurred. Reference US Government Car Rental Agreement part 9b for a complete list of exceptions.

Operation of rental vehicles off paved, graded, state or professionally maintained roads or driveways will void the contract unless the rental company has agreed to this in writing beforehand. This does not preclude using a vehicle out on the fire as long as you are driving on graded roads (most dirt roads are graded). If you must drive cross country or on 4 wheel drive trails be sure to check with ground support to obtain a vehicle that is specifically authorized to be driven off road.

**Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA)** – (Advice to persons providing support or rental vehicles to the incident)

If the car rental agency will not agree to off road use under the national contract, we recommend local agencies establish an EERA with the car rental Companies. EERA should be used instead of Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA) because the terms and conditions on the EERA include clauses that are specifically for equipment rentals.

The renter needs to realize that the government is self-insured. Any damage that occurs under an EERA will require the rental agency to file a claim for damages if they wish to recover costs. The rental agency cannot automatically require payment for damage at the time of return.

Pre-use and post-use inspections must be done thoroughly at the point of rental (prior to driving the vehicle and again upon delivery back to the vendor) and documented, especially any potential damage.

Contact the agency for their rental and payment procedures.

**INCIDENT POSITIONS THAT NORMALLY REQUIRE REGULAR USE OF A VEHICLE IN PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES** – (General Guideline Only)

Division Supervisor  
Operation Section Chief  
Fire Behavior Analyst

Operation Branch Director  
Safety Officer  
Incident Commander

Deputy Incident Commander	Finance Section Chief
Logistic Section Chief	Planning Section Chief
Information Officer	Facilities Unit Leader
Comp/Claims Unit Leader	Air Operations
Situation Unit Leader	Procurement Unit Leader
Buying Team Members	

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DISPATCH OR OTHER PERSONNEL WHO MUST DETERMINE AUTHORIZATION OF RENTAL VEHICLES**

Whenever expanded dispatch is needed, so is logistical support such as ground support at expanded dispatch. Establish this support up front when expanded is set up. Provide drivers with vehicles that can run people and gear around as necessary before they are under the care of the IMT and ground support at the incident.

Rather than authorizing a lot of personnel to rent vehicles just to get to a fire, establish a shuttle service of some type to move resources from one location to another such as from the airport to ICP or wherever they need to check in and then to their duty location.

Keep good records of where resources are coming from and what type of resource they are. Don't ask an AD or non-regular federal employee to rent a vehicle if they do not have an agency credit card.

Provide a copy of the Vehicle Rental Quickguide to resources authorized to rent vehicles when they are provided a copy of their resource order and equipment ("E") number.

Ensure that the Chief of Party knows and understands the rules.

Try to arrange vehicle rentals for personnel that you are dispatching rather than allowing them to make the arrangements themselves when authorized.

Keep good records of who you have authorized to rent a vehicle. When a team first gets called in, be prepared to be able to tell the IC or LSC how many vehicles to what type of personnel have been authorized. The LSC needs to know this information in order to place a reasonable order to establish a pool of vehicle in ground support. The rental vehicle situation will influence who is requested drive to the fire.