



REEMPLOYED ANNUITANT CADRE NEWSLETTER

MAY 2014

Be Prepared

Recent headlines remind us that tornado season has already started and hurricane season is just around the corner. Please be ready in case you are asked to deploy. No one will be considered for assignment if his/her CAC and/or medical clearance are expired or about to expire. Most disaster response work requires your medical clearance be valid for 60 days from the first date of work. If you don't get a new clearance as soon as you are reminded you automatically exclude yourself from consideration for these assignments.

Access to Your Email Account

We count on being able to contact you at the email address you provided us for various program notifications. It is up to you to keep your email address current and accessible to us. We will not fill out registration information to by-pass any restrictions you have placed on your account. It is up to you to be sure we can contact you via email.

Protecting Your Privacy

We are very careful to protect your personal information especially your Social Security Number. Please assist us in this. DO NOT include your social security number on documents you send to us like your travel voucher and resume. Likewise, do not ever send us medical information, including copies of the questionnaire you send to the contract doctors to update your medical clearance.

Keeping Up Your Contact Information

I know we say this often but some of you are still not getting the message. It is vitally important that we be able to contact you. We need your current home address, email and phone numbers. If any of this changes, please contact us at ceco-c-rao-ms@usace.army.mil to update right away. Several times a month we have to search high and low to find some of you because you have not kept this information current.

Medical Clearance

It is very important that you read and follow the instructions for completing your medical questionnaire. No matter how many times we say it some of you persist in sending copies of your completed questionnaires to my staff. As I have explained in other newsletters we make every effort to protect this information in accordance with HIPPA and privacy laws. For this reason sensitive medical information is reviewed only by our contract medical doctors. You put us in a very serious predicament when you send medical information to our electronic files. Please stop doing this. The instructions on the form are very clear that the information is to be sent to the contract medical doctors only.

Change in Reimbursement Policy

There is a change relating to what can be reimbursed when a traveler chooses to drive POV when the POV reimbursement cost is not the most advantageous to the Government. It was effective December 1, 2013.

What it boils down to is if you have tolls, parking, ferries, etc. cost in addition to POV mileage, you cannot be paid for these costs if driving a POV is not the most advantageous to the Government. If you are driving a GOV or a POV that has been determined to be the most advantageous to the government (based on a cost comparison), you can be reimbursed for these costs.

Government Travel Card

You may receive a government travel card as part of your employment. This is a privilege, not an entitlement. You are authorized to use it in conjunction with approved TDY only. If you use it for other expenses, even if you pay it off on time, your card will be cancelled and you will not be issued another one while you are in this program. Likewise, you must pay off valid charges on time to keep your government travel card. Use of the travel cards is audited and the results are reported to me.

When a government credit card purchasing limit is increased, it is typically increased for 30 days. Since you should file vouchers every 14 days, you should not be exceeding the authorized purchasing limit once the first voucher is reimbursed. After you file the first voucher you should not have a need for more than the original authorized card limit. Do not tie your credit card up allowing rental cars or lodging costs to be put on hold on your cards for an extended time. Requests for an increase should be sent to Vickie.K.McArthur@usace.army.mil

Travel Vouchers

When you are using the electronic travel voucher form the electronic signature only works if you are using a USACE computer with your CAC card. The electronic signature block will not work on your personal computer. If you are using a non USACE computer you can fill the form out on line but will have to manually sign the voucher.

Travel Tips – Airline Reservations (this article was taken from a DOD Newsletter and is reprinted here for your information)

Did you know that an airline could provide confirmed reservations without providing specific seat assignments? Whenever possible and if you want a seat assignment, make sure you are booked and ticketed with a seat assignment prior to leaving your home or duty station.

- **Book reservations as far in advance as possible.** The earlier you book, the more likely preferred seats will be available.
- **Review the email itinerary received by our contract travel agency** to ensure that an aisle or window seat was confirmed.
- If you can't confirm an aisle or window seat, **check seat availability via airline website or contact the airline directly.**
- **Enroll in frequent flyer programs.** Status in frequent flyer programs often gives travelers better seating options.
- **If available, check in on-line the night before your flight.** Many airlines open blocked seating as early as 24 hours in advance of scheduled departure.
- **Arrive at the airport early.** The airline may release pre-assigned and preferred seats the day of the flight, which would allow you to select a seat at no additional cost. Also, fellow travelers may have changed their seat assignments since you last checked seating options, so better seats may be available. Some airlines may also sell preferred seats for a small upgrade fee when you check your baggage. If you chose to take the upgrade, you are responsible for the additional cost (not reimbursable under the JTR).

Be aware of the 72-Hour Auto Cancel Policy.

Last year, the airlines instituted a policy that requires all travel authorizations that include air travel (international and domestic) be approved and ticketed at least 72 hours in advance of the scheduled flight departure to avoid airline reservations from being cancelled. If you are making travel plans WITHIN 72 hours of departure, ensure your authorization is approved and tickets issued within 24 hours of creation to avoid cancellation. If making plans WITHIN 24 hours of departure, authorizations must be approved and ticketed at least 6 hours prior to flight departure time to avoid cancellation.

It is important to note that while a reservation may exist, it is not purchased (known as "ticketed") until the Authorizing Official (AO) approves the travel authorization and the Commercial Travel Office (CTO) tickets the reservation. This means that if a travel authorization is not approved at least 72 hours in advance of travel, you could arrive at the airport without a ticket or a reservation in the airline's system.

If airline reservations are cancelled, you will be notified via email or phone by your Commercial Travel Office and should follow your normal ticketing process to rebook the flight. Travelers are not advised to rebook at the airline counter because counter

agents are often not familiar with GSA's City Pair Program and may book you on a full priced fare at a much higher cost.

Tips for Avoiding Cancellations

- Take your travel itinerary with you to the airport because it provides contact information for your Commercial Travel Office, as well as, reservation details to help you rebook.
- Monitor the status of travel documents ensure that travel authorizations are approved.

Change in Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Options

Currently, enrollees in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program may choose between self-only coverage and self and family coverage. Family coverage rates are substantially more expensive and don't vary by how many additional persons are insured. A self-plus-one coverage option will be available in the health insurance program for federal employees and retirees in 2016, according to the Office of Personnel Management. A budget law passed in December approved making a self-plus-one option available to enrollees as soon as 2015. However, a spokesperson said that OPM "expects to implement the self-plus-one option for the 2016 plan year."

Please do not reply to this email but contact the staff person listed on your contact sheet for specialized items.

Thank you for all you do. We don't have any new pictures of RA's at work to share this month.

Timothy D. Alderman
Program Manager