



## DEFENSE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT OFFICE

# Flat Rate Per Diem for Long Term TDY Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions are provided in reference to MAP/CAP 118-13, Flat Rate Per Diem for Long Term TDY (JTR, par. 4250). The official policy change is available at: [http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/browse/Travel\\_Regulations/Regulations\\_Changes/Immediate/UTDCTD118-13\(R\).pdf](http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/browse/Travel_Regulations/Regulations_Changes/Immediate/UTDCTD118-13(R).pdf). Please note that the information provided below is subject to change without notice and will be updated as necessary.

---

### I. Frequently Asked Questions

---

**1. Does this policy apply to already approved authorizations for TDY for more than 30 days at one location that start after 1 November?**

Yes. The policy is effective for all travel beginning or amendments issued after 1 November 2014. Those authorizations with more than 30 days TDY at one location will need to be modified to include the flat rate per diem.

**2. How can an amendment to travel orders for travel that began before 1 November result in flat rate per diem in accordance with JTR, par. 4250-A2?**

Amendments only affect prospective travel dates and cannot be applied retroactively. This means that if a traveler has orders to begin traveling before 1 November 2014 (for any length of time), the new Flat Rate Per Diem policy does not apply unless the orders are amended after 1 November 2014 that extends the number of days TDY to a single location. In this case, the flat rate per diem would only apply for the period after the order is amended beginning the day after the amendment.

- *Example: Initial TDY begins prior to 1 November and is more than 30 days (Because travel begins before 1 November, the traveler is receiving full locality per diem rate).*

Travel is scheduled for 29 October to 30 November and the traveler receives lodging plus M&IE at the locality rate. The orders are then amended on 15 November to extend the trip more than 30 days to a single location. The flat per diem rate applies, but only from 16 November (the day after the amendment is issued) to 31 December (the revised end date for the TDY).

**3. How can an amendment to travel orders for travel that begins on or after 1 November result in flat rate per diem in accordance with JTR, par. 4250-A2?**

- *Example 1: Initial TDY begins 1 November and is more than 30 days at one location. (Because travel begins 1 November, the traveler is receiving 75% of the full locality per diem rate)*

Travel is scheduled for 1 November to 2 December and the traveler receives lodging plus M&IE at 75% locality rate. The orders are then amended on 15 November to

extend the trip until 31 May (over 180 days). The 55% per diem applies, but only from 16 November (the day after the amendment is issued) to 31 May (the revised end date for the TDY).

- **Example 2:** Initial travel is 20 days and begins after 1 November (traveler is receiving full locality per diem rate because travel is less than 31 days at one location)

Travel began on 5 November for 20 days and the orders are then amended on 20 November to extend the trip by 45 days to the same location. On 5 November, the traveler receives up to 100% of the actual lodging cost and 75% of the meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) based on the locality rate concerned. On 6-20 November, the traveler receives lodging plus M&IE at the full locality rate. The flat rate per diem applies beginning 21 November through the end of the TDY period.

**4. What is the policy for personnel already on orders lasting more than 30 days? Are they grandfathered in or will their per diem change as of 1 November for the remaining portion of their TDY?**

The policy is effective for all travel beginning or amendments issued after 1 November 2014. This means that the flat rate per diem does not apply to personnel already on orders unless an amendment is issued after 1 November to extend the total number of days TDY. In this case, only the full days after the orders were amended would be subject to the flat rate per diem.

**5. If the travel ends on the 30th day of TDY, does the 75% rule apply?**

No. The flat rate per diem only applies for long-term TDY lasting 31 or more days.

**6. If the travel orders started in FY14, when amending them to add the FY15 Line of Accounting (LOA), should the authorization be adjusted to 75% or 55% for days after 1 November?**

No, an administrative amendment to add a new line of accounting, correct an error, add an authorization such as a special conveyance, would have no effect on the per diem unless the amendment also extends the length of the traveler's TDY beyond 30 or 180 days.

**7. The policy says "for each full day" so does that mean that the traveler receives full per diem on day 1 (travel day)?**

On the travel day to the TDY location, the traveler receives up to 100% lodging per diem at the locality rate and 75% meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). On the date of return from the TDY location, the traveler receives 75% meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) based on the TDY locality rate.

**8. Does the policy authorize a flat rate per diem for TDY over 30 days to multiple duty locations?**

The policy only applies when a traveler is TDY to a single location for more than 30 days. If a traveler is TDY for more than 30 days but to multiple locations, the flat rate per diem only applies for locations where the traveler is TDY for more than 30 days. For example, if a traveler is TDY to two locations for a total of 46 days, but is at each location for 23 days, flat rate per diem cannot apply. However, if the traveler is TDY to location A for 31 days and TDY to location B for 15 days, then flat rate per diem would apply for the TDY period at location A and locality per diem would apply for the TDY at location B.

**9. Will local level policy dictate what is required for Authorizing Officials to approve non-flat rate per diem or is it covered in the JTR?**

The JTR states that if a traveler is unable to find suitable commercial lodging at the reduced per diem rate, they should contact their Commercial Travel Office (CTO) for assistance. If both the traveler and the CTO determine that lodging is not available at the reduced per diem rate, the Authorizing Official may then authorize actual lodging (not to exceed the locality per diem rate). The traveler will then receive M&IE at the reduced rate (75% for TDY of 31-180 days and 55% for TDY of 181+ days). Services and Agencies will institute procedures implementing the policies in the JTR.

**10. Are lodging taxes to be paid separately if it is less than the flat rate per diem?**

Lodging taxes are separate reimbursable expenses and are not included in the flat rate per diem computation (See JTR, Appendix G). The lodging tax reimbursement only applies to the amount that, when added to the lodging cost, exceeds the lodging portion of the flat rate per diem. If the lodging expense alone exceeds the lodging portion of the per diem, the traveler can only be reimbursed for the amount of the tax on the authorized lodging portion of the per diem. In many states, no tax is charged on lodging acquired for a long term (usually 30, 60, or 90 days). The traveler should ask about the tax exemption before paying any lodging taxes.

**11. Are travelers required to itemize daily lodging expenses?**

No. When authorized flat rate per diem, travelers are not required to itemize daily lodging expenses associated with a short-term rental (e.g., rent, electric, cable, phone), unless leave days are involved. On those days, a separate computation (See JTR, par. 4155-C) is required to determine the daily cost of lodging as the traveler may not be reimbursed more than they actually spent.

**12. Will DTS automatically change the per diem if the travel is over 30 days and 180 days?**

At this time, DTS does not automatically calculate the flat rate per diem based on the length of the TDY. Travelers should follow their component guidelines for how to handle in DTS.

**13. Will the traveler be reimbursed the flat rate per diem without the receipt for lodging?**

When authorized a flat rate per diem, travelers are not required to submit a lodging receipt but may be required to validate to their Approving Official that they did incur lodging costs.

**14. Does the new flat rate per diem policy mean military members cannot be mandated to stay on post?**

No, that policy still applies. The flat rate per diem does not apply when government lodging is available AND directed, when contracted government lodging is provided at no cost, or if a traveler chooses to stay in government quarters. When staying in government lodging, the traveler will be reimbursed for actual lodging costs. The flat rate M&IE still applies if Gov't meals are not available.

**15. How is this policy change being implemented for employees represented by a union?**

Before this change can be implemented for employees represented by a union, activities must

ensure that they meet all of their bargaining obligations. To facilitate the process with the unions, please contact your servicing human resources office labor relations specialist for assistance.

**16. Is flat rate per diem paid in accordance with JTR, par. 4250 optional?**

No. effective for travel that begins on or after 1 November 2014, flat rate per diem is mandatory, even if travel orders erroneously authorize lodging plus M&IE at the locality rate. The only exceptions are when the traveler and Commercial Travel Office are unable to find suitable lodging at the flat rate. Before the approving official can authorize actual lodging (not to exceed the locality per diem rate), the approving official must certify that lodging was not available at the flat rate. M&IE would still be payable at the flat rate (55% or 75% as applicable).

**17. If travel is to a government installation where government quarters and meals are directed and available, does flat rate per diem apply?**

No. If government quarters and meals are available and directed, reimbursement for lodging is limited to the cost of government quarters and M&IE is paid at the government meal rate or proportional meal rate, as applicable.

**18. If travel is to a government installation where government quarters and meals are directed and available and the dining facility is closed on weekends and holidays, does flat rate per diem apply on those days?**

No, the full meal rate would apply to those days, unless the dining facility was closed for a period of 31 days or more due to circumstances such as renovation.

**19. If government quarters and meals are provided, does flat rate per diem apply in accordance with JTR, par. 4250?**

No. If government quarters and meals are provided, such as when deployed to the CENTCOM AOR, travelers are only paid the incidental expense portion of per diem (See JTR, Chapter 4, Part F).

**20. If a traveler voluntarily uses government quarters, does flat rate per diem apply?**

If government quarters are used, the traveler is reimbursed the actual cost for government quarters. If the government meal rate (GMR) or proportional meal rate (PMR) is not appropriate, M&IE is paid at the flat per diem rate (75% or 55%, as applicable).

**21. If a traveler doesn't pay for lodging, does flat rate per diem apply?**

The traveler must incur a lodging cost in order to be reimbursed flat rate per diem for lodging. If a traveler stays with family or friends, or in lodging owned by the traveler, he/she does not receive reimbursement for lodging and M&IE is paid at the flat per diem rate (75% or 55%, as applicable).

**22. What is considered adequate/suitable quarters?**

When determining the adequacy or suitability of available quarters, the CTO/AO should consider:

- a. Must be well maintained and structurally sound (shall not pose a health, safety or fire hazard). All public lodging used by federal travelers must be approved by FEMA as meeting the requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990.

- b. Should have a private entrance (interior door) when possible and must have at least one full bathroom (with tub or shower).
- c. If required due to climate conditions, must have air conditioning or a similar cooling system and a permanently installed, adequately vented heating system.
- d. Must have adequate utility systems and services (e.g. electrical, gas, potable water, sewer, trash collection, television, and telephone as required).
- e. Must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended (ADA), if applicable.
- f. Must have adequate parking facilities within the confines of the lodging establishment.
- g. Must provide adequate hallway lighting when interior doors are available and adequate exterior lighting if exterior doors are required.
- h. Must meet local force protection requirements.
- i. Commuting costs and commuting time from the lodging establishment to the place of duty.

**23. Does Flat Rate Per Diem apply in a COCOM or JTF commander's Area of Responsibility (AOR)?**

Yes, it may. If meals and or quarters are not available or provided for more than 30/180 days, then flat rate per diem applies. If the traveler is in direct support of the COCOM or JTF Commander in a designated area of operations where an alternate per diem rate has been established and quarters and meals are provided, the traveler would be reimbursed the per diem amount established under JTR, Chapter 4, Part F.

**24. Does the OCONUS Government I.E. rate (\$3.50 per day) apply when calculating the flat rate for travelers TDY to an OCONUS location, including a government installation OCONUS?**

No, the flat rate per diem is calculated as a percentage (75% or 55% as appropriate) of the full locality per diem rate, including the locality I.E. rate.

**25. In the calculation to determine what constitutes 31 days or more, do travel days count?**

Yes, if the traveler's first day of travel results in the traveler arriving at the TDY location on the same day, that day would count. If the traveler was authorized (and used) two days to get to the TDY location, then only the date of arrival would count in the calculation to determine the duration of the TDY. Looked at another way, count how many nights are spent at the TDY location. If the traveler spends 30 or more nights at the TDY location, flat rate per diem applies.

**26. Will the 1 April 2015 computation change affect travel documents already created?**

Yes. Travel documents should be amended to comply with the new computations (no rounding) for travel on or after 1 April 2015.

**27. What if a traveler has not started travel yet, but their document has already been approved for travel on or after April 1?**

The document should be amended with the new computations (no rounding) for travel on or after 1 April 2015.

**28. If a traveler is already on travel that began or was amended on or after 1 November 2014, do they need to amend their travel document?**

Yes. Even if the traveler is currently on travel that began or was amended on or after 1 November 2014, their travel document must be amended to reflect the new computation (no rounding) for all days on or after 1 April 2015.

**29. If a traveler is already on travel that began prior to 1 November 2014 and no amendment has been issued to extend the travel for 31 days or more, do they need to amend their travel document due to the 1 April 2015 change?**

No. The flat rate per diem does not apply to a traveler in this circumstance. Unless the traveler's orders are amended to extend the duration of travel for 31 days or more beyond the date of the amendment, then no flat rate per diem is applicable. If the traveler's orders were amended to extend the travel for 31 days or more beyond the date of amendment, then the per diem rate at the 75/55% rates would be applicable with no rounding effect for dates on or after 1 April 2015.

**30. If a traveler is TDY to one location for 40 days and authorized the 75% reduced flat rate, what happens to the per diem if the traveler is unexpectedly returned to the PDS after 20 days? Does the traveler receive 100% since the TDY was only for 20 days?**

No, the 75% flat reduced rate applies. Per diem may not be increased or decreased after the fact and the original TDY order length was over 30 days. If the travel is curtailed and the lodging establishment charges an early check out fee, it is a reimbursable expense (JTR, par 2830 – Non-refundable Room Deposits).

**31. If a traveler is ordered TDY to one location for 31 days or more and performs multiple concurrent TDY trips to other locations (whether lodging is retained at the original location or not), does the flat rate per diem still apply for the original location the traveler was ordered to initially?**

Yes, the flat rate per diem would still apply at the original location upon return.

**Example 1:** The traveler is on orders for 90 days to Location A, with interim trips to Locations B and C. Entitlements to Locations B and C are based on the number of consecutive days at each location; however, the traveler is limited to 75% while at Location A. The traveler receives up 100% per diem while at Locations B and C, but only 75% while at Location A. Dual lodging at Location A may be paid as a reimbursable expense.

Reimbursement for this type of travel is based on the following entitlements:

<b>Days</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Entitlement</b>
1-35	A	75%
36-40	B	100%
41-60	A	75%
61-75	C	100%
76-90	A	75%

**Example 2:** The traveler is on orders for 90 days to Location A, and under reduced flat rate per diem of 75%. After arrival, the traveler is informed of travel to other locations (B, C, D, & E) with returns to the

original location. Entitlements to Locations B, C, D, or E are based on the number of consecutive days at each location; however, the traveler is always limited to 75% while at Location A. The traveler receives up to 100% per diem while at Locations B, C, D and E, but only 75% while at Location A. If the traveler retains lodging at Location A, dual lodging may be paid as a reimbursable expense.

Reimbursement for this type of travel is based on the following entitlements:

<u>Days</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Entitlement</u>
1-20	A	75%
21-25	B	100%
26-40	A	75%
41-45	C	100%
46-60	A	75%
61-71	D	100%
72-75	E	100%
76-90	A	75%

NOTE: Because the original orders were for a period greater than 30 days at Location A, the entitlement at Location A is always 75%, regardless of the actual number of days at this location.

**32. How do you count days when the traveler crosses the International Date Line (IDL)?**

The traveler needs to count the actual days at the TDY location. That is, count the day of arrival and day of departure, using the day/time zone for the TDY location. Looked at another way, count how many nights are spent at the TDY location. If the traveler spends 30 or more nights at the TDY location, flat rate per diem applies.

**33. If a traveler is ordered TDY to one location, but is not expected to physically be at that location for any one period of 31 days or more, should the traveler receive the flat rate per diem?**

If the cost of paying Lodgings-Plus per diem while at that location is less than flat rate per diem (including for M&IE) plus dual lodging, then the AO may authorize Lodgings-Plus per diem at the original location. In this case, the traveler's orders must state that the traveler is expected to be on one or more TDY missions away from the original duty location for a large part of the ordered TDY duration and paying Lodgings-Plus per diem is less than paying flat rate. This could apply to an air crew ordered to an installation merely to begin flying multiple missions away from the original TDY location such that a large portion of the TDY duration is spent away from the original TDY location. This would also apply to a traveler who is ordered to an installation where it is known that the traveler will be at that location for a short period (less than 31 days) before being forward deployed for the majority of the ordered TDY duration. An example would be a traveler sent to CENTCOM at MacDill AFB, FL for 180 days when it is known that after two weeks at MacDill AFB, the traveler would be sent TDY to Afghanistan for most of the remainder of the TDY and only returned to MacDill AFB for the last week. Dual lodging may not be authorized in this case.

**34. How would an Authorizing Official determine if the flat rate is more advantageous for a specific TDY assignment when the traveler is not expected to be physically at that location for 31 days or more?**

In the case of a traveler ordered to Washington, DC for 70 days with a known concurrent TDY requirement that will be at Norfolk, VA, the AO would have to determine costs based on the time that is anticipated at each TDY location. Note that the TDY locations and the anticipated time periods at each location should be stated in the authorization prior to travel.

**Example 1.** The traveler is being ordered to Washington, DC for 70 days with a known concurrent TDY at Norfolk, VA for 20 days as stated in the orders. The itinerary places the traveler in Washington, DC for 20 days, Norfolk, VA for 20 days, and the remainder of the TDY period in Washington, DC. The per diem rate for Washington, DC is \$179 for lodging and \$69 for M&IE. The flat rate per diem is \$134.25/\$51.75. The per diem rate for Norfolk, VA is \$89 for lodging and \$51 for M&IE.

*Chart 1 - The traveler is authorized the flat rate of per diem at the initial TDY location.*

Dates	Location	Lodging	M&IE	Dual Lodging	Total
1 June	Washington, DC	\$134.25	\$69 x75% = \$51.75	0	\$186.00
2 – 20 June (19)		\$134.25 x 19 = \$2,550.75	\$51.75 x 19 = \$983.25	0	\$3,534.00
21 June – 10 July (20)	Norfolk, VA	\$89 x 20 = \$1,780	\$51 x 20 = \$1,020	\$134.25 x 20 = \$2,685	\$5,485.00
11 July – 8 Aug (29)	Washington, DC	\$134.25 x 29 = \$3,893.25	\$51.75 x 29 = \$1,500.75	0	\$5,394.00
9 Aug		0	\$69 x75%) \$51.75		\$51.75
Total					\$14,650.75

*Chart 2 – The traveler is authorized Lodging Plus.*

Dates	Location	Lodging	M&IE	Dual Lodging	Total
1 June	Washington, DC	\$179	\$69 x75% = \$51.75	0	\$230.75
2 – 20 June (19)		\$179 x 19 = \$3,401	\$69 x 19 = \$1,311	0	\$4,712.00
21 June – 10 July (20)	Norfolk, VA	\$89 x 20 = \$1780	\$51 x 20 = \$1,020	0	\$2,800.00
11 July – 8 Aug (29)	Washington, DC	\$179 x 29 = \$5,191	\$69 x 29 = \$2,001	0	\$7,192.00
9 Aug		0	\$69 x75%) \$51.75		\$51.75
Total					\$14,986.50

In this example, it would be more advantageous to the Government for the AO to authorize the flat rate per diem for Washington, DC and incur the dual lodging costs, rather than authorize lodging plus at all location for the entire TDY period.