

Defense Travel Dispatch

VOLUME IV, ISSUE 4

FALL 2011



The DoD Center for Travel Excellence



Inside

DTS Permission Levels and Separation of Duties Policies

DTS was designed to enforce separation of duties and related internal controls.

2

Travel Transformation Language Included in 2012 NDAA

DTMO submitted a legislative proposal to simplify existing travel provisions in title 37 of United States Code.

4

DTMO Mailbox: Airline Seat Assignments

Gain a better understanding of “last seat availability” and get tips for obtaining a preferred seating assignment.

5

Results of the DTA Questionnaire

Over 11,000 DTAs participated in the questionnaire; learn about the results.

6

Answers to Your Travel Training Questions

Awareness of training opportunities and resources can make a huge difference to an organization’s travel program.

7

A Message from the DTMO Director

As you have read in past editions of the Dispatch, DTMO has launched an effort to transform Defense Travel. As part of our approach, we are working to collect ideas from the field through focus groups, Service and Agency leadership, travelers, past feedback and several other sources. So far, we’ve received lots of good input and I encourage you to continue to send your ideas up through your lead Defense Travel Administrator (DTA) or DTS Program Management Office.

As always, if you need travel assistance, I encourage you to use the many resources available. For service-specific guidance, contact your DTA or your local help desk. These avenues can often answer your question or provide support without having to go elsewhere. You can also contact the Travel Assistance Center or visit TraX, which has links to training and a Knowledge Center where you can search hundreds of FAQs on a variety of travel topics. And, don’t forget about our website, www.defensetravel.dod.mil, where you can find a wealth of information on our programs, access a resource library, and links to helpful tools such as the travel regulations, allowance calculators, and much more.

— Pam Mitchell, Director, DTMO

About the Defense Travel Management Office

The Defense Travel Management Office was established to serve as the single focal point for commercial travel within the Department of Defense to establish strategic direction, set policy, and centrally manage commercial travel programs and station/housing allowances.

DTMO maintains central oversight for commercial travel management, travel policy and implementation, customer support and training, DoD travel charge card program management, functional oversight of the Defense Travel System, and allowance and entitlement program management.



DTS Permission Levels and Separation of Duties Policies

In an effort to help prevent fraud and error, DTS was designed to enforce separation of duties and related internal controls. The system accomplishes this through the use of a combination of permission levels, roles, and access levels that permit access to certain travel management functions, often referred to as *actions*. Additionally, the system has an added control that requires DTAs or other authorized users to be assigned a permission level in order to grant that same or lower permission level to other authorized users. Because the number of roles and related actions exceed the number of available permission levels, some permission levels provide for multiple actions, which may sometimes run counter to organizational policies about separation of duties. It is important to ensure that users have the appropriate permission and access levels, while at the same time abiding by organizational policies.

Organizational level policies should ensure that users are granted only the minimum permission levels, roles, and access needed to allow them to perform their required DTS responsibilities. Further, these policies should be reviewed on a recurring basis. Recent component-level reviews have determined that in some cases, these policies are either not in place or are not being aggressively enforced or regularly

reviewed. Not enforcing minimum permission level policies leaves the organization open to risk.

DTAs are encouraged to perform regular audits to ensure that users in their organization are only assigned the minimum permission and access levels needed to perform their DTS-related tasks. To review settings for users in an organization, run the “View Person Lists” (Basic Traveler Info List) report using the DTA Maintenance Tool. It is recommended that this report be run on a routine basis to ensure that settings are kept up-to-date. Coordinate with your Service or Agency DTS Program Office or consult your DTS Business Rules to determine how “routine basis” is defined. As a reminder, when assigning users the role of *authorizing official (AO)* or *certifying officer (CO)* (permission level 2 and assigned to a DTS routing list), ensure they have completed the required Certifying Officers Legislation (COL) training and that their appointment is documented on a DD form 577.

To better control the ability to assign permission levels to an AO/CO, organizations should consider identifying an

‘*accountable official control*’ DTA who would be responsible for overseeing the addition and/or deletion of AOs/COs to the necessary DTS routing lists. This DTA would be assigned a permission level 2 but on a temporary basis, would be assigned a permission level 5. Depending on the AO/CO turnover within an organization, this could



Policy

Compliance

Control

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

occur on a monthly basis (or other limited basis), as needed. Once the assignment of new AO/CO personnel is complete, the permission level 5 would be removed and the DTA's permission level would return to 2. This would ensure that DTA personnel are not routinely provided the capability to also perform the role of an AO/CO.

In some smaller organizations, it may not always be possible to separate the role of the DTA from that of an AO/CO. In these cases, higher-level organizations may request ad-hoc reports to determine any payments approved by users with a permission level 5 to ensure the payments were correct and proper.

While DTS includes many safeguards to assist with internal control management, the additional measures discussed in this article can assist organizations in precluding potential erroneous or otherwise improper payments. For more information on permission levels, roles, and access, refer to chapter 3 (section 3.3) of the DTA Users Manual.

2012 Excellence in Practice Awards Announced

The DTMO is pleased to announce its annual Excellence in Practice awards, which are designed to recognize those who have excelled in travel program management and have successfully addressed issues with exemplary professional skills, creativity, and resourcefulness. Qualifications and entry forms will be available December 15, 2011, on the DTMO website.



Connect 2012 Update

The DTMO regrets to announce the cancellation of the 2012 Connect Seminar. Although we recognize the value in hosting such an event, we know that today's environment demands that organizations be fiscally conservative, especially with travel funds. Therefore, after soliciting feedback from Service and Agency senior leadership, it was decided that this is the best decision based on the current fiscal environment.

We realize that many of you used the annual Seminars as an opportunity to learn skills to help you manage your travel programs and also as a means of staying informed about the world of Defense travel. DTMO is pleased to offer a variety of resources and virtual training opportunities that can be launched right from your desktop. Search for the right resource through the Training Resource Lookup Tool or visit the "Training" section in TraX. Resources include:

- **Distance Learning Courses** – Interactive combination of PowerPoint presentations and live demonstrations with a live instructor via Defense Connect Online. Distance learning courses give you the opportunity to ask questions and network with other DTAs through a live environment. To view the schedule of upcoming distance learning courses, go to <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Training/DLe arningSchedule.pdf>.
- **Web-based Training** – Self-paced, on-demand instruction from desktop.
- **Demonstrations** – Online simulations of DTS functions such as creating travel documents, creating a voucher, local voucher or authorization, and CBA reconciliation.

Thank you for making the past Connect Seminars a success and we look forward to holding similar events in the future.



Travel Transformation Legislative Proposal

The DTMO submitted a legislative proposal for inclusion in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to simplify existing travel provisions in title 37 of United States Code, “Consolidation and Reform of Travel and Transportation Authorities of the Uniformed Services.”

- Defines travel-related terms to provide enduring meaning and a greater understanding of entitlements and allowances
- Establishes broader travel authorities which will enable the Secretary of Defense and other administering secretaries to promulgate more flexible, less complicated travel regulations
- Includes a low-risk strategy to return old and new statutes for a period NTE 10 years; requires an Implementation Plan; incorporates internal controls; and provides for pilot program authority to provide DoD a test environment to evaluate innovative programs, policies, and procedures.

Simplification of travel provisions is the cornerstone of the DoD’s travel transformation effort. The objectives of travel transformation are to: improve cost effectiveness across the DoD; improve delivery of travel services; and attain operational excellence and organizational readiness. Statutory reform provides the basis for simplification of travel policies and regulations, which will enable transformation of the DoD travel enterprise. The legislative proposal includes the following:

Travel simplification will be incremental to demonstrate proof of principle, to synchronize policy, rules, and computation changes with systems and training, and most importantly, to preclude disruption of day-to-day travel activities and adverse impacts to mission accomplishment.

- Consolidates and simplifies travel authorities into a new chapter 8, “Travel and Transportation Allowances”

The proposal was included in the House NDAA Bill (H.R. 1540) and a similar provision was also included in the Senate Armed Services Committee Bill (S. 1253). If both the House and Senate approve the proposal, the legislation will be enacted in the FY 2012 NDAA.

Prior to the establishment of DTMO, DoD had several desperate, stove-piped programs that governed travel programs, policy, regulations, and directives but no single office ensured all actions taken with regard to commercial travel were consistent. In response, senior leadership directed the Under Secretary of Personnel and Readiness to consolidate, reorganize and centrally manage travel. In February 2006, DTMO was established to serve as the central focal point.

DoD Instruction Formally Establishes DTMO

In September 2011, DoD Instruction 5154.31, “Commercial Travel Management” was published, which formally designates the DTMO as the central focal point for commercial travel within the Department. This DoD-level policy officially assigns DTMO the responsibility for commercial travel management, travel policy and implementation, travel card program management, customer support and training, functional oversight of DTS, and allowance and entitlement program management.

DTMO MAILBOX:

Airline Seat Assignments



QUESTION: *What is “last seat availability?”*

Last seat availability is a significant benefit of booking a GSA City Pair flight. Airlines participating in the GSA City Pair program allow government travelers to purchase the last coach class seat available for the government contracted fare. Last seat availability does not equate to having a specific seat assignment; i.e., a specific seat number. When permitted by the airlines, travelers may obtain a specific seat assignment via DTS, an airline website or by contacting the airline directly.

To ensure flight reservations are accurate, travelers should review the email itinerary/confirmation provided by the CTO, obtain a specific seat assignments whenever possible and arrive at the airport early.

QUESTION: *Why is it that when I try to book a seat on a preferred flight there isn't a single aisle seat but there are plenty of middle seats? Is it true that DTS gets cheaper tickets by booking only middle seats?*

While the DTS reservation module provides DoD travelers with the ability to view and reserve commercial travel, it does not control airline seating. Commercial airlines control the airline inventory and seating that appears in DTS. The Government does not receive discounts for limiting the seats offered to DoD travelers.

Due to the limited supply and high demand of flight inventory, it is often difficult to obtain advance seat assignments. Specific seat assignments are available on a first come, first served basis and an airline can provide confirmed reservations without providing a specific seat assignment. Most airlines block a percentage of seats for pre-assignment, which typically includes the bulkhead (1st and 2nd row in coach), exit row, and in some cases the aisles and windows toward the front of the cabin. In most cases, this block is held for high-level frequent flyers, handicapped travelers, unaccompanied minors, and full-fare customers. To obtain a preferred seat assignment, see our tips in the highlight box.

Tips for Obtaining a Preferred Seat Assignment

- **Book reservations as far in advance as possible.** The earlier you book, the more likely preferred seats will be available.
- **When allowed by the airline, select seat assignments in DTS.** Do not use the default aisle/window, click on a specific seat, if available. If you use the default and no windows/aisles are available, DTS will automatically assign you a middle seat if it is available.
- **Review the email itinerary received by the CTO** to ensure seats selected in DTS were confirmed.
- If advance seats are not available, **check seat availability via airline website or contact airline directly.**
- **Enroll in frequent flyer programs.** Status on 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 (those seats reserved for high-level frequent fliers, handicapped people, etc.), as early as 24 hours in advance of scheduled departure.
- **Arrive at the airport early.** The airline may release pre-assigned seats if travelers are late to check-in. Also, fellow travelers may have changed their seat assignments since you last checked seating options, so better seats may be available.

Results from the DTA Questionnaire



In June, DTMO issued a questionnaire to all Defense Travel Administrators (DTAs) in an effort to gain insight into the current travel training environment. Over 11,000 DTAs responded, providing valuable information that will be used to improve training across the Department. Some key findings include:

- **84% of DTAs received initial DTA training.** Many respondents also provided positive comments regarding training provided at their site and Service/Agency headquarters.
- **29% of AOs have not received initial Certifying Officer Legislation (COL) training and 41% have not received annual COL refresher training.** DTAs, who are responsible for overseeing and retaining AO training documentation, indicated that there is room for improvement for authorizing official (AO) training, especially with annual refresher training.

This may be attributed to the majority of respondents being unaware of the new annual refresher training requirement. As of August 2010, the DoD Financial Management Regulation (DoDFMR), Volume 5, Chapter 33, requires that all AOs complete both initial and annual training. To satisfy this requirement, DTMO offers a web-based course, *Training for Accountable Officials and Certifying Officers*, which is available in two versions: initial and annual refresher. For more information, visit the Training Resource Lookup Tool on the DTMO website (www.defensetravel.dod.mil) or visit TraX to launch the course. It is recommended that you check with your local command about approved training options for your site before taking this training.

- **Unnecessary DTS permission levels (PL) may be assigned to personnel.** Many respondents acknowledged that while they are only travel preparers or AOs, they have PLs 5 and 6. LDTAs are encouraged to perform regular audits of their users' permission levels to ensure that users are only assigned the minimum permission levels necessary for their position (*see our article - Permission Levels and Separation of Duties*).
- **High interest in receiving classroom training.** Each Service maintains oversight of its own classroom training, which may be offered at a local site by a DTA or help desk, at a higher headquarters level, or by a subject matter expert. DTAs should check with their LDTA for additional information about the travel training options offered within their Service. DTMO maintains responsibility for Agency and Joint Command classroom training, which is offered on a quarterly basis. Check with your LDTA for the latest DTMO classroom training.
- **DTA interest in offering classroom training for their personnel.** Many DTAs indicated that they were interested in beginning or modifying their existing classroom training program at their site. To get started, DTMO offers instructor materials on a variety of topics that can be customized to fit your training needs. For additional information and a full list of materials, visit the travel training section of the DTMO website (www.defensetravel.dod.mil).

DTMO is committed to providing travel training resources to help DoD travel personnel better perform their jobs. Your feedback, both positive and negative, will help us re-evaluate and refine Defense travel training. Questionnaire results have been shared with your Service/Agency DTS Program Offices to improve intra-Service/Agency training and compliance levels. We would like to thank all of those who participated in the questionnaire.

Answers to Your Travel Training Questions

Awareness of training opportunities and resources can make a huge difference to an organization's travel program. Clearly outlining expected or required training is the first step toward building a holistic environment to support an organization's travel program. In recent Dispatch publications, we highlighted available travel training resources; in this issue, we feature frequently asked questions that are related to travel training.

Q Where can I view a list of all the DTMO training resources available?

To find descriptions of and links to all DTMO training resources, use the Resource Lookup Tool at: <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/training.cfm#lookup>. Use the drop-down lists to limit your search or leave them blank to view all 300 available resources.

Q What training is recommended to use DTS?

Your organization, Service, or Agency determines what training is required for each DTS role. Check with your Lead Defense Travel Administrator to understand the training plan and opportunities available for your role. Training may be available as classroom, desk side, or eLearning (distance learning, web-based modules, or narrated demonstrations) formats.

Q What training is required for Certifying Officer Legislation?

Training requirements are outlined in an information paper located at: http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/Training/Training_for_Accountable_Officials.pdf. This information paper also includes recommendations for topics an Authorizing Official should be knowledgeable on; however, your organization, Service, or Agency determines what training is required.

Q Which training results in certificate?

Participants will receive a certificate for successfully completing any web-based training class or attending a distance learning class offered in TraX. You may access/print

your certificate by clicking on the **My Completed** tab in TraX. A certificate is available immediately upon a successful completion of the web-based training. For the distance learning classes, you will be issued a certificate within two weeks of attending the course.

Q Can the narrated demonstrations be accessed outside of TraX?

Yes. While the "launch" buttons are within TraX, anyone may view a demonstration outside of TraX. Within TraX, launch the demonstration and note the URL at the top of your browser. Email the URL to other users or post it on your organization's website.

Q Does DTMO offer any training materials that I can customize to conduct training at my site?

Yes. DTMO offers PowerPoint presentations and leader guides for almost every travel-related topic that can be customized for site training. Also available are tri-folds and quick reference guides that you can distribute to your personnel. For additional information and a full listing of these materials, visit the Training section of the DTMO website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/training.

Q I didn't receive a certificate after successfully completing a web-based training class. What do I do now?

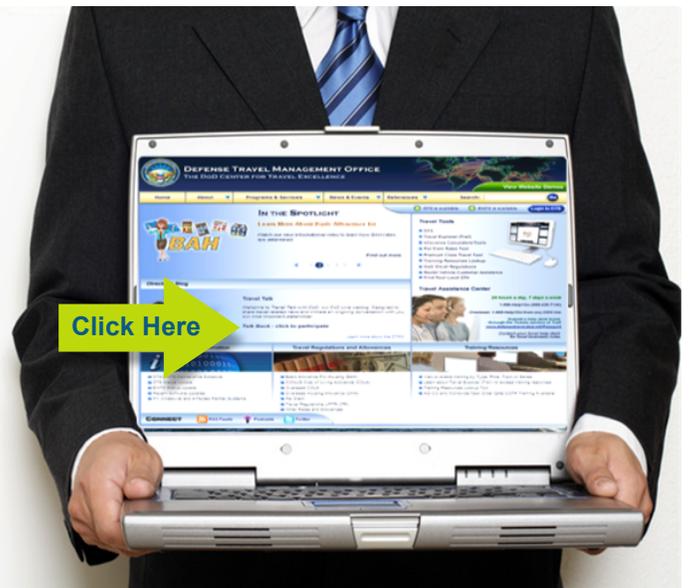
If you didn't receive your certificate, there is no need to re-take the class. Just submit a help ticket to the TAC and once we have verified your completion, we will input your certificate into TraX where you can access it under the **My Completed** tab.

Importance of Cancelling Airline Reservations in DTS



When a travel document that contains airline reservations is created in DTS, and is neither approved by an Authorizing Official (AO) nor cancelled by the traveler, DTS will

continue to hold the airline reservation until the departure of the flight. Failure to approve the authorization or cancel the reservation may result in the airlines' inability to resell the reserved seat(s) and may prevent other travelers from obtaining reservations. Remind AOs about the importance of timely approval of documents to facilitate ticketing of the reservations three business days prior to travel. Additionally, travelers should be reminded about the importance of cancelling reservations at the earliest opportunity once it is determined that the trip will not occur.



Have You Seen Our Blog?

Here's what we've been
talking about:

- **Constructed Travel Worksheet**
- **Rental Car Insurance**
- **Travel Orders**
- **Receipts** . . .and more!

www.defensetravel.dod.mil

Did you Know . . .



TraX provides access to the Defense Table of Distances (DTOD). Users can calculate mileage between two locations, look up current mileage rates, and even get driving directions. After logging in to TraX, use one of these methods to access these features:

- From the left side of the TraX homepage, click on "Mileage"
- From the Trip Calculator, click on "Quick Tools" (on the right), then click on "Mileage"
- From an estimate in the Trip Calculator, add a mileage expense

About the Defense Travel Dispatch

The Defense Travel Dispatch is a quarterly publication issued by the Defense Travel Management Office, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness).

The reproduction of the Dispatch is permissible for official use only.

To subscribe or to view previous editions, visit www.defensetravel.dod.mil

Volume IV, Issue 4 – Fall 2011