



DECISION

**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548**

FILE: B-195609

DATE: December 5, 1979

MATTER OF: Gloria Dale Lewis - [Actual Subsistence Expenses for Noncommercial Lodgings]

DIGEST: Employee who performed temporary duty travel to high-rate geographical areas may not be reimbursed \$34 and \$25 amounts paid to friends for lodgings in their homes or \$16 paid for meals in friends' homes. Amounts claimed, which appear to be designed to assure employee's recovery at or near the maximum rate of actual subsistence expenses allowable, are unreasonable and are not supported by information to indicate that any portion of the amounts claimed bears any relation to additional expenses incurred by the employee's hosts.

This decision is in response to a request by Dolores T. Hodges, (an authorized certifying officer for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, ^{resides} for a ruling with respect to the per diem entitlement of Gloria Dale Lewis. Ms. Lewis has submitted vouchers reclaiming the amounts of \$82 and \$304 paid to friends for lodgings and meals while on temporary duty in Seattle, Washington, and Washington, D.C., respectively. We find that the amounts in question were properly disallowed by the certifying officer as unreasonable and not supported by adequate documentation.

While on temporary duty in Seattle, Ms. Lewis lodged in the home of friends on May 4 and 5, 1979. She has claimed \$25 as a cost of lodgings for each of those 2 days, as well as \$16 for meals paid to those friends on May 5 and 6, 1979. In support of her claim, she has submitted a receipt for the total of \$82 signed by her hostess. During the period of her assignment to Washington, D.C., she stayed in the home of a friend from May 16 to 24, 1979. For that period she has reclaimed the amount of \$34 per day as a cost of lodgings and has supported that claim by the submission of a receipt for \$304 from her hostess.

The employee believes she is entitled to reimbursement for the amounts paid to friends for lodgings and meals, because they are reasonable in terms of the cost of commercial lodgings. She

She paid \$34 and \$25 to friends for lodgings in their homes and \$16 for meals, & she maintained that the amounts were reasonable when compared to the cost of commercial lodgings.
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points out that for the first 3 days of her temporary duty assignment in Washington, D.C., she paid \$47.50 per night for commercial lodgings, and adds that she determined that \$25 per night was reasonable for the Seattle area. While in Seattle from April 29 to May 10, 1979, she paid from \$24.24 to \$28.62 for commercial lodgings.

In 55 Comp. Gen. 856 (1976) we held that an employee may not be paid per diem under the lodgings-plus system based on payment of \$14 per night for lodgings at the home of his son's neighbor, absent information showing that the \$14 amount reflected additional expenses incurred by the host as a result of the employee's stay. That decision applies equally to an employee's receipt of actual subsistence expenses for travel to a high-rate geographical area. See Jack O. Padrick, B-189317, November 23, 1977, and Betty L. McCrory, B-193382, February 16, 1979. It is premised on the following language from our holding in 52 Comp. Gen. 78 (1972) with respect to payment of temporary quarters subsistence expenses:

"We point out that in the past we have allowed reimbursement for charges for temporary quarters and subsistence supplied by relatives where the charges have appeared reasonable; that is, where they have been considerably less than motel or restaurant charges. It does not seem reasonable or necessary to us for employees to agree to pay relatives the same amounts they would have to pay for lodging in motels or meals in restaurants or to base such payments to relatives upon maximum amounts which are reimbursable under the regulations. Of course, what is reasonable depends on the circumstances of each case. The number of individuals involved, whether the relative had to hire extra help to provide lodging and meals, the extra work performed by the relative and possibly other factors would be for consideration. In the claims here involved as well as similar claims we believe the employees should be required to support their claims by furnishing such information in order to permit determinations of reasonableness."

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640 Under the above decisions we have held that expenses paid to friends or relatives for lodgings or meals must not only be reasonable but must be supported by information to indicate that the amounts claimed represent additional expenses incurred by the host.) Guy H. Carr, B-193130, May 3, 1979. (Based on the information submitted in support of ^{the employee's} Ms. Lewis' reclaim voucher, we would concur with the certifying officer's finding that the amounts claimed ^{are} ~~are~~ unreasonable.) As in the case of the claim rejected in 55 Comp. Gen. 856, supra, the \$34 amount claimed by Ms. Lewis appears to be designed to assure her recovery of actual subsistence expenses at the maximum rate of \$50 prescribed for Washington, D.C. Similarly, the \$25 and \$16 amounts paid for lodgings and meals in Seattle appear to have been determined on a basis designed to assure her recovery of approximately the same amount she received for actual subsistence expenses for the days she obtained commercial lodgings. The amounts claimed cannot be characterized as "considerably less than motel or restaurant charges."

Because the amounts claimed appear excessive and the claimant has provided no information indicating that any portion of the amounts paid bear any relation to additional expenses incurred by her hosts in Seattle and Washington, D.C., the actual subsistence expenses claimed by Ms. Lewis may not be paid.

Milton J. Fowler

For the Comptroller General
of the United States