

February 28, 2001

To: Solicitor
Assistant Secretaries
Inspector General
Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Robert J. Lamb \s\
Acting Assistant Secretary- Policy, Management and Budget

Subject: Attached DOI Policy Regarding Exceptions to Mandatory Use of a Travel Management System (TMS)

Since the issuance of FAM 2000-30 on December 18, 2000, we have received many comments from DOI travelers concerning the mandatory GSA requirement to use a Travel Management System for all common carrier, lodging and car rental reservations. Many of the concerns expressed by travelers involved the requirement to use a TMS for making lodging reservations in DOI's operating environment.

A review of the comments provided by DOI travelers reveals that GSA's mandatory use regulation has substantially increased the number of lodging reservations that are placed through a TMS, which has adversely impacted travel service. For example, many of the Department's 1,800 field locations are located in remote areas where lodging availability is limited to small, independently-owned establishments, which are exempt from the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act. Requiring the use of a TMS in these instances becomes problematic-- since these establishments typically do not participate in any centralized reservation system.

Other examples of lodging arrangements where the value-added by a TMS is questionable, includes overseas travel (where lodging arrangements are frequently handled by host country organizations), and pre-arranged lodging (for conferences and training)-- where direct booking by attendees is necessary.

To address these needs, the attached policy, issued under the authority provided in 41CFR 301-73.102, exempts the following four categories of lodging arrangements from the Mandatory TMS--Use regulation:

- o Pre-Arranged Lodging Accommodations
- o Overseas Lodging Accommodations
- o Lodging Accommodations for Unplanned Travel
- o Lodging Accommodations at Establishments Exempted by the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act

Implementation of the attached policy statement will mitigate a number of the concerns expressed by travelers, while keeping the Department in compliance with the statutory provisions of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act (5 USC 5707a).

Our goal is to provide the highest level of travel service possible to our traveling employees on an ongoing basis. We are continuing to review the Travel Management Center operations, and will take the necessary actions to ensure that this goal is achieved.

Attachment

DOI Policy Regarding Exceptions to Mandatory Use of a Travel Management System (TMS)

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Department's policies regarding exceptions to the Federal Travel Regulation: Mandatory Use of a Travel Management System, which became effective on January 1, 2001. The Final Rule (41 CFR 301-73.102) was published as an implementation regulation for the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act (P.L. 101-391), and requires travelers to use the Travel Management System selected by the Department for all common carrier, lodging and car rental arrangements.

The Department selected Omega World Travel in March, 2000 to satisfy the FTR requirement to use a Travel Management System. Given the Department's high level of decentralization (involving some 1,800 or so locations), booking hotel reservations through the TMS has proven to be problematic. Therefore, under the authority provided in 41 CFR 301-73.102, the Department will exempt the following types of lodging arrangements from the Mandatory TMS Use regulation:

(1) Pre-Arranged Lodging Accommodations - Frequently, it is necessary to arrange for a block of rooms to be set aside for a special purpose (i.e., Conference, Training Sessions, etc). To ensure that the set aside rooms are used, direct booking, by prospective attendees, is frequently required. Consequently, the use of a TMS for lodging accommodations is not mandatory in these instances.

(2) Overseas Lodging Arrangements - Lodging arrangements overseas are frequently handled by host country sponsors (i.e., universities, international organizations, conference sponsors, and the like). Thus the use of a TMS for overseas lodging arrangements frequently would not be practical; would add complexity to the logistics of itinerary planning; and thus is not mandatory.

(3) Lodging Accommodations for Unplanned Travel- The mandatory TMS- use regulation applies to official travel that can be planned. For certain types of extended field activities within DOI, it may not be possible to make advance hotel or motel reservations -- and thus the use of a TMS is not mandatory.

(4) Lodging Establishments in Remote Areas - Many of the Department's 1,800 field offices are located in remote areas where lodging availability is limited to small, independently owned establishments, of three stories or less, that are exempt from the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act. Additionally, these lodging establishments are not likely to participate in a central reservation -- which severely limits the ability of any TMS to book reservations. In these instances, travelers are not required to use a TMS.